

Season's Review

With Mark Pool having left the club during the summer, Kevin Spriggs and Mitchell Crawley being elevated to the First team squad and further losses likely in that direction during the season, Terry Miller brought in some new faces to strengthen his squad. Alan Kane, Paul Leech and Jake Watkins came from his previous club Thamesmead Town, old boy Tony Kyle returned to the club from Corinthian and Steve Sodje joined from Tunbridge Wells. Miller also introduced youngsters Nicky Cella and Mark Sabatino.

Three friendly matches were arranged against the first team squads of VCD, Larkfield and Slade Green. Whilst VCD ran out 4-2 winners in the first game, a creditable 0-0 draw was earned against Slade Green who fielded ex-Darts Kevin Alexander and Richard King.

August

The real business started on 9th August and, unlike the previous season, the Reserves had a flying start in the league. With the temperature in the 80's, and very high humidity, summer was still with us when Dartford sent Deal home defeated 3-0 exactly three months to the day after having beaten them 1-0 in the last game of the previous season.

A goal in the first fifteen minutes from Darren Blackburn was enough to take the points from Swanley Furness. Matthew Quinlan scored in the first minute as Dartford built up a 4-1 half time lead at Ramsgate, finally bagging four in a 5-2 victory. Beckenham Town were brushed aside 4-2 before the visit of Hastings Town on the 23rd. Hastings brought white shirts with them and were obliged to wear Dartford's unnumbered maroon training shirts to avoid a clash. Dartford won the encounter but were docked three points for fielding Steve Sodje who had not been properly transferred from Tunbridge Wells. Matthew Waters scored a hat trick in the 4-0 drubbing of Faversham Town but this will not go down in the records as Faversham withdrew from the league after just four games, their record being P4 W1 D0 L3 F5 A28. The month finished with a 2-3 defeat at Margate.

P. 6 W. 5 D. 0 L. 1 F. 17 A. 8 Pts. 12 (3pts deducted) Pos. 1st

September

Dartford were given a bye in the first round of the Kent League Division Two Cup and consequently, only three games were played during the month. A rather lacklustre performance at Herne Bay resulted in a 0-1 defeat. A Daryl Apps hat trick at Gay Dawn saw Dartford through 4-2 against ten man Corinthian; the traditional sending off occurring after twenty minutes. Although the Reserves beat Hythe United 4-3 at Oxford Road, once again the points were deducted, this time because Greg Hodson had not been signed on.

P. 9 W. 7 D. 0 L. 2 F. 25 A. 14 Pts. 15 (6pts deducted) Pos. 5th

October

Four away trips followed in the month of October. Beautiful autumnal weather prevailed on the trip to Dover where we were charged £2.00 to enjoy the superior facilities. Dartford built up a 2-0 lead before

conceding a goal midway through the second half and just managed to hold out for the 2-1 win. The game at Sittingbourne was brought forward to the Friday evening and a poor all-round performance saw the home side scoring five without reply. Next up was the First Round of the Kent Intermediate Cup at Fisher Athletic (London) of the Suburban League. In the same fixture last season, Dartford were completely outplayed and won 2-1, this time they were completely outplayed and lost 0-5. With Simon Vowles taking the week off, Marc Brown, the youth team goalkeeper made his debut for the Reserves and played well, only being at fault for the fifth goal. Normal service was resumed for the visit to Whitstable Town, a game which Matt Quinlan enjoyed more than most, scoring four in the 5-1 win. Jimmy Smith returned to the fold after his premature 'retirement' at the end of last season.

P.12 W. 9 D. 0 L. 3 F. 32 A. 21 Pts. 21 (6pts deducted) Pos. 5th

November

The return game at Hythe United was hard on the nerves, the winner finally arriving in the 90th minute after a double substitution brought about the required breakthrough - a Simon Hancock cross being met in the six yard box by Matthew Quinlan. By now, Quinlan was heading the Kent League Division Two 'Golden Boot' table with eighteen goals, any further progress being halted by his call up to the First Team and subsequent injury. Jason Martin also found himself a regular in the First Team squad with Daryl Apps on the fringe. Second placed Folkestone Invicta journeyed to Oxford Road on a thoroughly miserable afternoon. A heavy pitch was matched by some heavy tackling from Folkestone with five players booked including one being sent off. The Reserves were 2-0 up just after the break but Folkestone came back to win 3-2. Dartford looked quite mediocre against Ramsgate and after having gained a fourth minute lead, once again squandered it, somehow contriving to lose 1-3 to rather average opposition. Wholesale changes were made for the visit to Deal with Terry Naden, Wayne Blackburn, Joe Wade, Jamie Porter and Robbie White all on the teamsheet. With the young players out to impress the manager, Dartford played Deal off the park, winning 3-0. The Reserves were awarded a walk over against Faversham in the Kent League Division Two Cup 2nd Round as they had already withdrawn from the League.

P. 16 W. 11 D. 0 L. 5 F. 40 A. 28 Pts. 27 (6pts deducted) Pos. 7th

December

Former Dartford youth team player Paul Waldron tapped in after four minutes to give Crockenhill a lead that they maintained until Jake Watkins took matters into his own hands, scoring a memorable goal from outside the area to level the scores. Corinthian were despatched 3-1, the highlight being Waters' goal - chesting down a Jimmy Smith cross and shooting all in one movement. Waters also scored the goal after thirty minutes at Beckenham Town that earned another three points.

P. 19 W. 13 D. 1 L. 5 F. 45 A. 30 Pts. 34 (6pts deducted) Pos. 3rd

January

Six consecutive league fixtures were lost during January, mainly due to the state of the pitch at Oxford Road but also because of the extra fixtures created by Cray Wanderers progress in the Kent Senior Trophy. The game at Hastings Town was postponed due to an 'unfit pitch' although a County game had been played on it the previous day. Dartford finally made their entry into the Kent League Division Two Cup at the Third Round or quarter final stage, the tie being played at League leaders Folkestone

Invicta. Folkestone were that little bit sharper in the first half and took the lead after nineteen minutes. Following the break, a revitalised Dartford, led principally by Daryl Apps, took the game to Folkestone but were unable to reduce the arrears.

P. 19 W. 13 D. 1 L. 5 F. 45 A. 30 Pts. 34 (6pts deducted) Pos. 6th

February

Into February and the next game was a midweek trip to Folkestone for a League game. Dartford put in another solid performance against the in-form opposition but lacked the inspiration to break the deadlock and a 0-0 draw resulted. Summer arrived early for the home match with Chatham Town with temperatures of 70° F being recorded. With each side being behind on two occasions, Dartford finally won this entertaining match 5-4, Stuart Nicholson bagging two goals. Sittingbourne were the next visitors to Oxford Road and they certainly gave Dartford a lesson in football, making the ball do the work and easing into a 3-0 lead before Dartford came back in the final ten minutes to grab a consolation goal. Well beaten and no complaints! For the visit to Tonbridge, Dartford fielded the inexperienced forward pairing of Matt Smith and Lee Bunce who were unable to hold up the long balls being punted forward from the back. Dartford went behind to a goal in the first minute and never recovered. Former Thamesmead player Mick Tilbury joined the club to lend a little weight and experience to the forward line.

P. 23 W. 14 D. 2 L. 7 F. 51 A. 39 Pts. 38 (6pts deducted) Pos. 8th

March

Not having played for a couple of weeks, match practice was arranged in the form of a friendly at Thames Polytechnic. The Reserves, not really firing on all cylinders, scraped a 1-0 win. Three League games then followed, all won without a goal being conceded. Hastings Town were despatched 2-0 at Pilot Field although Dartford might well have scored a few more. Hastings put out a young side whilst it was evident that Dartford also had one eye on next season with the inclusion of Jamie Porter and Terry Ratchford. Whitstable Town were beaten 1-0 and then a good performance against Paul Blades' Thamesmead Town side resulted in a 3-0 victory. Marc Brown deputised for Simon Vowles in this last game; brotherly love having earned Simon a 35 day suspension.

P. 26 W. 17 D. 2 L. 7 F. 57 A. 39 Pts. 47 (6pts deducted) Pos. 7th

April

With ten games to be played, we learn that the season has been extended into the middle of May. Dartford fit in five games during the month, the first of these at home to Lordswood coming on Tuesday 21st. This was something of an end of season affair with Lordswood taking the lead courtesy of a headed own goal in the first minute and Daryl Apps earning the penalty, converted by Lee Miller, that salvaged a point ten minutes from time. Terry Ratchford put in a good performance during this game whilst Tommy Martin gained his first taste of reserve team football. Two days later at a wet and windy Garrison Ground, Mick Tilbury opened the scoring with his first goal for the club, curling the ball into the net with the outside of his boot. Daryl Apps(2) and Lee Miller (penalty) ensured the points in a 4-1 victory. Dartford made hard work of it against a young Dover Athletic side with Tony Kyle heading home in the 89th minute to make the score 2-1. On the last day of the month, Thamesmead Town paid the compliment of fielding their full first team and whilst they were perhaps not completely committed,

the Dartford players, one and all, played on the top of their form, Simon Vowles having a splendid game back in goal. The game ended 0-0 but each side had several good chances.

P. 31 W. 19 D. 5 L. 7 F. 64 A. 42 Pts. 56 (6pts deducted) Pos. 6th

May

It's May and there are five games to play. Motivation doesn't seem to be a problem though with the team looking to finish as high as possible. A strong Dartford team including Crawley, Martin and Quinlan thoroughly outplayed Margate, who seemed more interested in the afternoon's Kent Senior Cup Final, to record a 5-1 victory. After a long break from reserve team football, Matthew Quinlan grabbed two more goals to bring his Kent League total for the season to 21, hard on the heels of Ernie Batten (Herne Bay) and Roy Godden (Dover Athletic). Dartford moved above Swanley Furness and into 5th place in the table with a 3-0 win over their near neighbours.

Appearances (to 6th May 1998)

MILLER Lee	33 (1)	SPRIGGS Kevin	5 -
VOWLES Simon	31 -	BROWN Marc	4 -
APPS Daryl	25 (1)	CELLA Nicky	4 -
NICHOLSON Stuart	25 (6)	LEECH Paul	4 (3)
SABATINO Mark	25 (2)	NADEN Terry	4 (3)
KYLE Tony	23 (7)	PORTER Jamie	4 (3)
CHALLIS Rob	22 (6)	WADE Joe	4 (2)
BUNCE Lee	16 (4)	ABBOTT Stuart	3 -
MARTIN Jason	16 (2)	BLACKBURN Wayne	3 (1)
QUINLAN Matthew	16 (2)	RATCHFORD Terry	3 (4)
WHITE Robbie	15 (3)	PROBETS Clayton	3 -
CRAWLEY Mitchell	13 (1)	PILFORD Lee	2 (4)
SMITH Matt	13 (4)	PAYNE Glen	1 -
WATERS Robbie	13 (4)	WHITE Stuart	1 -
WATKINS Jake	13 (4)	HODSON Greg	- (2)
HANCOCK Simon	12 (10)	MARTIN Tommy	- (2)
BLACKBURN Darren	10 -	CHALLIS Paul	- (1)
KANE Alan	8 (13)	McTAGGART Glen	- (1)
SMITH Jimmy	7 (2)	SODJE Steve	- (1)
TILBURY Mick	7 (4)	VITHANE Dhilan	- (1)

Goalscorers

23 Quinlan; 14 Apps; 6 Waters; 5 Miller; 4 Nicholson; 3 Crawley, Smith M; 2 Challis R, Hancock, Kyle; 1 Blackburn D, Blackburn W, Bunce, Leech, Pilford, Tilbury, Watkins, White R