

MATCH REPORT

League Game

4th December 2022

Real Holmesdale FC 3 – 2 Coulsdon Athletic FC

It's been a week of long hours and it's taken some time to put together the match report from last week, but with no game today due to a frozen pitch, it means we have a bit of time to recount the match which saw us make the trip to neighbours Real Holmesdale.

We had already beaten them 4-1 in the first league meeting, so we were hoping for a similar outcome if we put a shift in.

It also turned out however that our oppo's had gone on a bit of a run since we beat them, winning all of their games. Something that we had to be a bit wary of and make sure we match them in all areas of the pitch. It also showed how well we played in the first game to beat them as convincing as we did.

It was an evenly matched game for a long period in the first half and there were not many clear-cut chances for either team.

We were unlucky on about 15 minutes when a ball from our hard-working no 10, Nath, found its way to our Centre Forward Josh.

With a dip of the left shoulder and moving the ball right, he made some space for a shot. He hit a high and true shot dipping towards the opponents goal but the keeper had his eye on it, and scrambling across desperately, managed to get his fingertips to the ball which did enough to deflect it just over the bar! Very close! It was a great attack from the Coulsdon lads.

On 30 mins, Josh had a break and made way for Thomps, coming on as a straight replacement, and he was immediately proving effective.

On 34 mins Real Holmesdale managed to get the ball to the feet of the no 9. He was deceptively quick and just nudged the ball past Charly who was filling in at central defence. But Char had worked him well taking him wide of our goal, and with the chance looking as though it's been made too difficult from our movement, However the striker smashed the ball with his left foot, and it rocketed past Xander and into the net. To be fair it was a very good finish and no blame could be put out our feet, however it's always tough to see a goal get scored against you.

With what was remaining of the half we put together another good move which this time saw our skipper Haz, work the ball from deep in midfield, again through Nath. Nath slid a lovely ball for Thomps to run in to but unfortunately, he just drilled the shot the wrong side of the post! So close to the equaliser!

Then on 40 minutes we had an absolute disaster. Our hard-working central midfielder, Kunz, stayed on the ground after a fair challenge and looked in considerable pain. He was in obvious agony with his knee, unable to bend it. He was carried off the pitch very carefully and taken to the nearby hospital - it really did look painful, and it was horrible seeing one of

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the lads in so much distress, well any player for that fact. We had to be positive, but our initial feeling was that we could be losing Kunz for some time.

Half-time and 1-0 down. We were still in this game.

We wanted to really work the ball through the wingers - and getting them as wide as possible to stretch the pitch and make our opponents work for any points that they might hope to get from us.

Again, the team were playing well second half and we were putting together some lovely moves.

Our tricky winger Duggs was starting to make waves in the game. On 55 minutes he carried the ball well forward and squared a ball to Thomps, who turned very smartly and smashed an unstoppable drive high and into the oppo's net! The breakthrough! 1-1!

It had been a tight game, but we did deserve to be level. Five minutes after the first goal Charly played the ball to Li's feet. Our right back advanced with the ball, dancing along the white line into the opponent's half. There was a lovely little exchange of passes where he played the ball into Duggs feet and he swivelled and played the ball back into the path of Li's overlapping run.

Li continued to carry the ball forward, but with Duggs just behind him, he knocked a backheel back to Duggs. He moved the ball quickly onto his left foot and from just outside the area in a wide position hit a beautifully curving shot high across the keeper. The ball flew high and was dipping with power, and it evaded the outstretched arms of the diving goalkeeper and flew into the net! The shot may have been an on stoppable drive but the build up to that goal and the interchange of play between fullback and winger was an absolute joy to watch!!

We were now 2-1 up it had been a great turnaround!!

What happened next was typical of some of the luck we weren't getting at the moment. First of all, Li went down clutching his knee and had to hobble off the pitch, only next for the referee to deem the nose stud being worn by our influential winger, Ryan Duggan, being against league rules and unbelievably was stuck in his nose, and therefore we were ordered to substitute him, which was the last thing we wanted to do at that point.

With Kunz, Li and Duggs now lost it was not turning into a good day in terms of the injuries to personnel.

All these changes unsettled our shape and balance, and our opponents took full advantage of this. In fact, credit where it's due, they were working their socks off and making it very difficult for us at certain points.

They hit us on the break twice in the last 15 minutes and with some clinical finishing we found ourselves 3-2 down!!

With a minute of time left Coulsdon won a penalty!! Unfortunately, the keeper guessed the right way and palmed it away for a good save. That was our chance to come away with something, but it wasn't to be.

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One thing we were finding out about this division was that although we had an incredible start, there were three or four teams very evenly matched at the top, thankfully of which we were one, and with the game finishing in defeat we could now recognise how tough it it's going to be to challenge for the league title, but then again that should always be the case, you need healthy competition and not have one team just run away with it.

This certainly looks like it was going to be an exciting season, all the way to the end.

On a low point from the game, we found out that Kunz had damaged his MCL so hence the pain, and unfortunately a lengthy time out on the side-lines. Along with Murf fracturing his ankle at training, it hadn't been a good week on that front. We just had to hope that Li would recover quickly, and we didn't have another casualty.

Unlucky lads, we go again, we win as a team and we lose as a team, that won't change, the most important thing now again was the reaction that we see to that defeat.

Goals: Thomps and Duggs

Assists: Duggs and Li

