

# MATCH REPORT

## League Game

18<sup>th</sup> September 2022

### Coulsdon Athletic FC 4 – 1 Newdigate FC Reserves

After a long and quite successful pre-season, there was a buzz of excitement around The Mount as today saw the eagerly anticipated return of senior league football to the home of Coulsdon Athletic.

The first game of the season was versus Newdigate FC Reserves.

We have put together a strong squad of 23 over the summer, and hopefully, this will mean good things for us, and an experienced 16 man squad was selected for the first Match Day, so as to allow the younger "new to senior football" contingent to take it all in from the side lines.

We set up with a 4-2-3-1 but looking to commit men forward as soon in attack and take the game to our oppo's.

We did exactly that and Nath was working the No 10 role well already, and was creating opportunities for our centre forward Josh. Josh was quick, but strong, the defenders were already realising he was a handful and were not enjoying this fella upfront. An early chance fell to Josh, but he just couldn't keep his low drive on target. Close to the first goal!!

A nice flowing move saw the ball move through to Nath and he sent a lovely through ball to Ry charging into the box. Ry was twisting and turning in the box, and the defender must've felt like he was riding Nemesis in trying to follow him. Only problem being he wasn't enjoying a sunny day out at Thorpe Park, oh no, he was in the middle of a football pitch at Coulsdon. The dizzying defender planted himself on the hallowed turf that is The Mount, and Duggs fired a rocket past their helpless Keeps, and after only 15 mins the mighty CAFC were off and running. 1-0!!!! Bosh.

We had started strongly. Our skipper Haz was definitely playing the skippers role, and getting the team organised for the first match in years for some of these lads. His partner in crime sitting in front of the defence was Big Rob, and between the two of them there was protection for our back four. There was an occasional break from the Newdigate lads, but if it was down our right then Charly and Billy, put paid to that, and if down our left Johnny and Liam were the second half of the brick wall. Really pleasing start.

We had an attack where the ever-energetic running of Liam down the left, overlapping with Duggs, was causing them problems, and from the next attack, we won a corner for Nath to swing in, and he did beautifully, only for Rob to meet the corner rising with intent, like a Scottish salmon leaping up and against the waterfall at Rogie Falls, and with a powerful header, gave us the comfort of a 2-0 lead. Get in. The boys were enjoying this. And so were we. the game was less than 25 mins old.

Just after the half hour, Haz and Charl combined and fed our right winger Georgie, and he in turn slid a ball into Ry's feet. Good old Duggs again, with his movement one way, then

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another, tangled the veins in the defenders legs, then hit a rocket with his left peg - and boom! 3-0! Oh stop it.

The last 15 mins of the half saw a Newdigate attack down our right. A good combination with their central midfielder, centre forward, releasing their left winger, it was a good move to be fair, sent him one on one with our very own legend, Xander. I've seen Xander grow as a keeper over 4 years now, and this was his introduction into senior football today. Nothing had changed though. He wasn't phased with the one on one. He sprinted, spreading himself well. The striker shaped for the shot quicker than he'd liked to, but hit it hard. But Xander blocked the shot well. However, it rebounded back to the same striker and he went to hit it instinctively back at goal and made good connection. The only problem was Xander hadn't stopped either, and his forward momentum saw him save, and gather the old onion safely in his hands- what a great double save!!

The incredibly hard-working Josh was committing himself to every challenge up top, but unfortunately a little too committed for the ref's liking near the end of the half, and he picked up an unfortunate yellow.

Half time. What a stormer. Easy half time team talk. Being super critical, the only negative was we were becoming overconfident. Not disrespectful, but we had to ensure that the confidence didn't change to cockiness, and we lose our composure.

The lead meant that we could make subs for the right reasons. Not out of desperation, or to have to find a solution to a problem with a new shape, nope, we could now give players some time on the pitch and much needed minutes.

The second half started off well, with Mikey now up top, with Kunz next to Haz and Thomps back from his hammy problems to be creative out wide. And that is exactly what he did.

Haz and Kunz combined in midfield and the latter fed Thomps, and resembling a free running cheetah moving menacingly towards his prey, but in this scenario, the left back was his gazelle. As with the ruthlessness he possesses, he left their left back dead on the deck, and squared the ball to Mikey. One thing we've seen is that Mikey is amazing at finding space, this lad could find space in a single bed with Gemma Collins. He met the cross just left middle of goal on the 6 yard box unmarked, and sent the ball to the corner of the goal..... but just wide of the upright - so close to 4-0!! We were buzzing now.

If I'm honest after this, the game, and our performance started to go and bit flat. But hey, this was the first game of the season and we had a 3 goal lead and it was the first game of the season! We had taken our skipper Haz off, and our right back Charl, and they were replaced with Georgie and Raff. As a team we were doing ok, but our 9/10 was now about a 6/10, can't explain why, it certainly wasn't down to personnel.

We needed to be a bit careful, as we were started to be put under pressure by Newdigate. We seemed to be dealing with everything, but they then won a corner on our right. The ball was sent in and with a bit of panic for the first time in our box Georgie swung a boot at the ball and a soft lob went over Xander's head and into the goal - 3-1! That was a shame as the clean sheet had looked on the cards. This caused us to be distracted, and maybe energy levels were sapping a bit, but Newdigate were having their time with the ball now.

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Time for us to do our bit, and after a discussion with my partner in crime Moz, we sent on Big Rob for a return to the very hard-working Liam and Haz was back in the mix with Nath in holding midfield positions.

We started to find our rhythm again.

We now started looking like adding to our tally. Haz was back controlling the centre of the park, and the ball was being played wide quickly and we were threatening. Mikey of course again found space from a through ball, but the chance was made very difficult for him by the defender and the keeper rushing out, and his lob went just over. Unlucky Mikey!

We then won a free kick just inside our oppo's half. Johnny stepped up, and this boy can deliver a wicked free kick. He sent a lovely arced ball into the box, and Mikey got up to win the challenge, the ball just got away from him - but he had directed into the path of Rob, who had also got up to attack the free kick, and with a lash of the right foot, he stuck bang in the Christian Horner, and it nestled nicely in the net. 4-1 to the Mighty CAFC.

We nearly added a fifth when a great marauding run from the strong Gallon saw a shot just drift wide, and George had the chance to square for Ry's hat trick and instead tried the shot, but that also flew wide. Unlucky on both counts. To be fair Xander had to be sharp a couple of times again to maintain the three-goal lead, but as always, he was as reliable as ever.

Great start to the season - we could easily have 6 or 7 today, but a win is a win. More importantly, senior football is back!!

Final Score: CAFC 4 Newdigate FC 1

Goals: Ry Duggs (2) Rob (2)

Assists: Nath (2) George Mikey

MOTM: Haz



FOOTBALL CLUB