

MATCH REPORT

Sunday Junior Cup Game R1

29th January 2023

Holland Sports FC 3 – 4 Coulsdon Athletic FC

Today saw the return to football for Coulsdon Athletic senior team after weeks of postponements due to the poor weather.

On the back of that break we had also lost 3 games in 4 after such a strong start to the season.

We needed to recognise that we had to come together as a team, become that formidable unit we had been presenting to our oppo's - We had to get our mojo back.

We decided today was the day to press the reset button and go back to where we were at the first weeks of the season.

However, we were not exactly being faced with an easy challenge. Today we were drawn away in the League Cup away to Holland Sports.

A team from the division above with a solid record in that division - just following the trend of us never getting an easy cup draw!!

We set up with a 4-2-3-1 and prepared ourselves for a tough encounter.

Holland Sports started on the front foot. They were certainly quick with the ball, carried it forward very well, and they were causing us problems from the off. Within 10 minutes we found ourselves 1-0 down from a very quick break from their midfield.

They were a strong team and we were taking our time to settle and our oppo's seemed intent on exploiting that and getting into the next round of the cup.

They showed that with the next attack, a smart move saw them burst into the box and we found ourselves 2-0 down. This was a tough.

However I knew from their past results that although our oppo's were in a rich vein of form, their wins had been high scoring 4-3's and 5-4's - so we definitely had a chance of scoring in this game if we could get at them.

Both Moz and me agreed that a change to a 4-3-3, with that flat 3 should give us the extra man in midfield to counter their breaks.

This had an instant impact and Holland were not so successful now breaking through our lines.

In addition, we were now growing in confidence, and passing the ball around well, with the play gradually becoming more in our oppo's half of the pitch.

MATCH REPORT

Thomps, our free roaming attacker, was cutting in from wide and making a proper nuisance of himself. Johnny played the ball to his feet and from a central position, just outside the box, with the defence backing off (not knowing what this fella had in his armoury) he unleashed a drive from a full 20 yards from goal. No keeper was stopping this - and it smashed top bins with the keeper flapping. 2-1 down. Yep, they were definitely vulnerable at the back.

We then had an attack on 30 mins that saw the ball played through the lines right from the back and from a neat interchange, it ended up at the feet of Thomps, a well worked move to this point. He had a look up and set a diag across the box to our tricky winger Duggs who was making a great run across the defender - and he flung himself at the cross. He connected with his right boot and guided the ball nicely into the back of the net. Bosh 2-2! That's what Coulsdon Athletic could do when we're focused. Superb goal.

Not forgetting in this time the middle three were doing the dirty work of stopping the Holland Sports attacks.

On 40 mins, again keeping the ball on the old Tera Firma, we moved the ball smoothly between defence and midfield, with a lovely one touch wall pass between Thomps and Josh playing with his back to goal, and the ball was fed from Thomps into the feet of Duggs. With a dip of the shoulder, he despatched a low shot angled across the keeper - yep, you know what's coming - back of the net 3-2 Athletic!! Oh stop it. Another great team goal.

The ref, who was having a stormer, blew for half time with us recovering from 2-0 to be leading a very good side.

The second half was very much a real bit of graft. Our hosts clearly didn't want to exit the Cup and were doing their best to make us work. Our starting back four of Char, Haz, Johnny and Liam were formidable, and were providing a right hard bunch to break down.

Whilst the ball was in our half more than theirs, we had our moments. But this was a proper shift by the lads. Header after header, tackle after tackle, our skipper was leading by example, and between him and Johnny, nothing got through. Xander was alert but the threat was being snuffed out before him by the back four and midfield three working their minerals off.

But as can happen, and with a break in the bounce of the ball, Holland scored with a cheeky little lob in the box. 3-3. Although Moz said he didn't mind, I really didn't want the lottery of spot kicks.

The temperature had dropped. The drizzle was on and off. The conditions were not great.

With 5 mins left, we kept pressing, and we won a free kick outside the box. Nath stepped up and knocked a lovely shaped ball into the danger area. Players rose into the grey backed skyline to meet the delivery, could a Black and Blue head meet this?? Nope, instead the yellow shirted oppo got his head to it. If only! No pens please lads.

The headed clearance looped wide of the Holland goal, heading to land just wide of their posts in the 6 yard box. And Johnny was waiting to pounce. Could he get there before the yellows could scramble this one away?

Yes he bloody could.

MATCH REPORT

He controlled the bounce and killed the ball.

Then with a swipe of his mud encrusted black boot, he connected with the ball. Mud flew in all directions. The keeper flew towards the ball.

No way keeps, you ain't getting to that babe!

In it flew - Rippling the back of the net! The keeper with his head down - and Johnny with his arms stretched out, turned celebrating.

Wait. The Lino. The bloody Lino. Not another one, please. He'd been good up to now. Tapping his arm calling for handball. No way. I'm not having that. The ref jogged over and after a few seconds chin wag dismissed any appeal from the Lino that it should not count.

Yes, we had 5 mins left - but we were 4-3 up. Holland knew they were right bang in trouble. Yes the last 5 was hard work. Immense challenges from our skipper, then Johnny, then Raff, then Ash, then Liam, bloody hell blow the whistle ref, he raised his arm. He put the whistle to his mouth. Come on - blow the bleeding thing!!!!

And then he did. Cue bedlam. Good natured bedlam. Not 'In Your Face' bedlam.

A shake of the hands with the oppos and we had done it. We had stopped the rot. We had put the poor attitudes and performances behind us.

Today man of the match could have gone to several. Duggs, Li, Johnny, Thomps, Ash, etc, etc. But what we needed out there today, in the heat of battle, in a 2-0 losing position, was a leader.

We had that. Haz stepped up and showed the lads the way. With positive encouragement and putting his swede on anything and everything that came his way, he picked the team up by the scruff of the neck and they followed, with immense performances through the side. And the best thing about giving him man of the match? His surprise. Well done skipper.

We were back. And we are determined to stay there.

Final Score:

Holland Sports 3 CAFC 4

Goals: Thomps, Duggs x 2, Johnny

Assists: Johnny, Thomps x 2

CAFC - You know it's true.

We're black and blue.