

Match Report

Date

22/01/06	Hartswood Stars B	3	V	3	U15 White
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Jekyll and Hyde

After a long break of 6 weeks, the season finally started again at Shenfield.

Within minutes, the debutant, Nathan Clarke made a dramatic impact into the game. A long clearance from Elliott Thwaites in goal caused some confusion in the Hartswood defence. A weak header back towards the keeper saw Nathan's pace intercept the header, sneaking in to head it past the oncoming keeper, and then, unchallenged, slide the ball into the back of the net for 1-0. Forest's confidence rose and they began to pass the ball around although the heavy surface was making this a little difficult.

Hartswood did however have one weapon that Forest had trouble coping with. The Hartswood striker was at least a foot taller than any Forest player. Hartswood used this advantage well by hurling the ball from throws and kicks at him. After 15 minutes a Hartswood throw 10 yards inside the Forest half went towards the striker at the edge of the goal area. The Forest defenders backed off and the Hartswood player tried a speculative overhead kick. The ball looped high into the air and over the stranded Elliott for the equaliser.

Worse was to come after another 10 minutes. Forest had been defending competently but disaster struck when Hartswood attacked down the Forest right. The cross from the corner flag came in low but slow as it crossed the six yard box. It looked like an easy cross for either Stuart Thorn, at left back, or Elliott to cut out. However, in what looked like a scene from a 1920's silent movie, both players looked at each other then the ball and then back at each other. All this delay allowed a Hartswood player to run in and nick the ball from between the two Forest players and from a yard out tap the ball into the net.

It didn't look like it was going to be Forest's day. They continued to pass the ball around the Hartswood team and created at least 10 1-on-1 chances against the keeper. But in what is becoming the story of the season, either the keeper pulled off a good save or the shot missed the goal by inches. It was going to need something special to get Forest back into the game and just as halftime approached Forest played some simple football on the left. Stuart Thorn threw the ball into Jack Hawthorn who held it up well before laying it back to David Keen 30 yards out. His first time shot went like a rocket and the keeper had no chance as the ball flew into the top left-hand corner. Halftime came with the scores level.

Forest continued to dominate the game in the second half. More chances were created for Jack Hawthorn, Andre Kotov, Grant Cumming and Nathan Clarke. Hartswood did have a couple of chances, one that saw Elliott pull off a good save, but the Forest defence were now beginning to get control of the Hartswood strikers. Lewis White was frustrating the big striker with his excellent defending. Even when Hartswood forced a couple of corners the defence stood strong and defended them well. But a moment of madness with 10 minutes to go saw Forest fall behind again. Forest's confidence saw the midfield push forward. The ball was then carelessly given away at the edge of the Hartswood area and Hartswood broke quickly. They soon outnumbered the Forest defence, after a couple of passes Hartswood were in the Forest goal area and a well placed shot beat Elliott.

Even this setback didn't weaken the resolve or confidence of the Forest players. The team was switched to a 3-4-3 formation in an attempt to force the equaliser. It looked like the pressure had forced the equaliser almost immediately but the Hartswood goalkeeper pulled off a string of good saves, one where he looked as if he had finally been beaten but just managed to drag the ball back from behind him before it crossed the line. With minutes left the Forest pressure down the left forced a weak clearance. David Keen picked up the ball and had another long range shot. This time he didn't hit it as sweetly as the first but the shot was still powerful enough to carry it over the keeper and into, this time, the top right hand corner.

Even with seconds left Forest could have grabbed a deserved winner when Andre Kotov had a chance from inside the six yard box. But the ball was stabbed directly at the keeper. So Forest failed to get the victory that they deserved. **Hopefully now that the cobwebs have been blown out of the system the next few games will see fewer needless mistakes and some better finishing up front.**

Team

Thwaites	Chapman	Fedden	Pearson	Thorne
Keen	White	Barker	Clarke	Hawthorn
Cumming	Kotov	Baker	Meads	Huckle

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