

Sunday 23<sup>rd</sup> September 2018

**Bridgnorth 3 ABs 3**

The ABs season concluded with the traditional visit to Bridgnorth however the logistical blight that seems to affect this fixture struck again. Last season it was the Birmingham Velo closing roads all over Worcestershire delaying AB players getting to the game. This season Bridgnorth's cunning tactic was to switch the venue from their grass pitch first to Lilleshall then again to Harper Adams University. These repeated rearrangements were more than the whole AB squad could cope with and 15 minutes before the appointed start time **Allan Sutton** was feeling rather lonely at Lilleshall and **Jan Ahmed** was still weaving his way through the country lanes of Shropshire negotiating more road closures (due to accidents this time not cycling events).

Thankfully, after talking to the **President, Allan** realised he was at the wrong location and quickly got himself to Harper Adams in time for the team talk. ABs had a bare 11 players at this point (**Jan** still driving) as did Bridgnorth so it was agreed to abandon the traditional quarters and play a game of two halves.

The quality of the hockey from both sides was good right from the start and the ABs certainly had the majority of possession and several promising moves developed via **Robin Conway, Paul Woodward** and **Bruce Baron** in the midfield.

At the back **German Singh** was distributing the ball nicely, frequently using **Mike Handley** at right back at his outlet ball.

Any Bridgnorth raids were well snuffed out by **Clive Kendall** and **Allan Sutton** allowing more ABs attacks to be launched forward to the attacking spearhead duo of **Frank Colwill** and **Paul Sharratt**.

The first half's brisk pace continued and gradually the home side gained more of a foothold in the game without creating any clear cut chances to threaten **Graham Reynolds** in the ABs goal.

ABs forced a couple of short corners but these were dealt with well by the Bridgnorth defence and indeed their own counter attacks were becoming more threatening. As a result ABs were finding it harder to get the ball out from the back and from one 16 the Bridgnorth press forced an error and turnover of possession on the ABs left flank. The ball was quickly switched to the unmarked centre forward in the D who gave **Graham** no chance in the ABs goal.

The ABs response was a positive one and they again began to get control of the midfield. With five minutes left in the half the ball was worked out through **Mike Handley** who linked well with **Robin Conway** down the right wing. **Robin's** forward pass found the **Captain** on the edge of the circle. His ball into the circle found **Paul Sharratt** in a little space. **Paul** turned neatly and fired a shot under the advancing goalkeeper to level things up at 1-1.

The rest of the half passed off without incident and the two teams adjourned for words of encouragement and inspiration from their respective leaders. ABs were particularly pleased to see the sight of **Jan Ahmed's** car arrive in the car park at this point. **Jan** was introduced into midfield for the start of the second half.

HALF TIME: BRIDGNORTH 1 ANCIENT BRITONS 1

The second half began and followed a similar pattern to the first. Two evenly matched sides playing some open, entertaining hockey with the standard remaining high from both sides. ABs were the first side into their stride and 'impact sub' **Jan Ahmed** was soon to have....well... an impact. Taking advantage of the fact that his legs were 35 minutes fresher than everyone else **Jan** took his opportunity. As another move developed down the ABs right **Jan** read the play well and arrived in the circle with perfect timing to collect **Mike Handley's** pass and launch an unstoppable drive into the Bridgnorth goal.

This was the best phase of the match for ABs and had they scored again at this point they would have probably run out comfortable winners. The defence was not troubled in this period and the complete control of the midfield was supplying a lot of ball forward leading to a number of chances being created. Sadly none of these were taken and the old adage of not being safe when only one goal in front was to come true.

From a rare Bridgnorth breakout some confusion ensued in the ABs defence from a ball that should have caused little danger. The ball fell to the Bridgnorth left winger who had the simple task of pushing into an unguarded net.

Although a little aggrieved to be back on level terms ABs responded strongly and went straight back on the offensive. **Frank Colwill** went close with a shot from the edge of the circle and **Paul Sharratt** forced 2 good saves from the keeper – one from open play and the other from a penalty corner. It felt like a third ABs goal was inevitable and so it proved to be. The quality of the goal like the first two was again excellent. A lovely passing move involving four or five ABs players. **Paul Woodward's** involvement in the move was pivotal and it was fitting that the chance to score should fall to him. **Paul** finished clinically from the right side of the circle and ABs lead was restored.

Still the Bridgnorth opposition refused to give up and kept up the pressure on the ABs goal and with time running out continued to throw everything forward. Their persistence was rewarded with a last minute short corner – their first of the game. Although the initial shot was saved a scramble developed in front of the goal for the second ball. ABs had a chance to clear but when this wasn't taken a Bridgnorth stick emerged from the melee to prod the ball over the line to restore parity.

An excellent, entertaining game between two competitive sides played in a great spirit. It was a fine team performance with every team member playing his part. It was hard to select an individual for Man of the Match, but the verdict went to **Mike Handley** for his exemplary tackling and excellent link up play that helped launch so many ABs attacks.

**FULL TIME: BRIDGNORTH 3 ANCIENT BRITONS 3**

The squad and supporter (**Karen**, thank you for your attendance and encouragement!) retired to the pub to relive the game and enjoy some much needed lubricating ale after the exertions in the heat. An enjoyable entertaining game to conclude the season.

**Graham Reynolds (GK), Bruce Baron (Captain), Allan Sutton, Paul Sharratt, Frank Colwill, Allan Sutton, Clive Kendall, Paul Woodward, Mike Handley, Jan Ahmed, Robin Conway and German Singh.**

**Goalscorers: Paul Sharratt, Jan Ahmed and Paul Woodward.**

Man of the Match: Mike Handley