

Sunday 14th April 2019

Chipwrecks 2 - Ancient Britons 2

On a pleasant spring afternoon the ABs assembled for one of their most popular fixtures down in Chippenham. Calls to various representative hockey trial matches had left the squad somewhat depleted – in fact there was no squad just the bare 11 players, including a debut for guest player **Steve Ellis** from Stourport HC. This at least saved the **Captain** the headache of having to organise substitutions. The side assembled in the clubhouse along with our resilient contingent of supporters for a pre match coffee before decamping to the Astro turf.

Captain Baron announced his game plan identifying the somewhat younger age profile of most of the opposition and that Chipwrecks are always hard opposition who are particularly fast on the counter attack. We had lost here narrowly last time out and we were keen to return to winning ways this year. After the team talks it was the obligatory shot of port and then into the action.

The first quarter started at a brisk pace with both sides having decent possession and showing good technique. **Russell Gates, Steve Ellis and Bruce Baron** were combining well in midfield and supplying the front line of **Richard Turner, Brian Hopkins and Peter George-Jones** although no clear cut opportunities were created by either side in these opening exchanges. Defensively ABs looked solid with **Paul Sharratt** organising **David Bedford, Steve Taylor and Mukesh Phakey** in front of him while getting some friendly guidance from behind from brother **Reg**. All Chipwrecks forays were adequately dealt with and the manner in which they took the lead shortly after was bizarre but extremely amusing. The ball had gone out of play harmlessly for a 16 yard AB hit out and all players duly assembled to restart play. **Paul** stood confidently over the ball assessing his options and decided he would take advantage of the 'self – hit' law and started to bring the ball out from the back. Unfortunately after a few paces with no player friend or foe within 10 metres of him his legs failed him and he ended up prostrate on the ground after tripping over his own feet! Jürgen Klinsmann at his peak could not have dived better – unfortunately while most of the AB side dissolved into uncontrollable laughter the Chipwrecks centre forward was less charitable, he picked up the loose ball advanced into the circle and fired a shot past the bewildered **Reg** in goal. ABs quickly regained their composure and the rest of the quarter continued to be a very even contest. The best chance in this period of play came when a Chipwrecks move down the right wing resulted in a penalty corner. Chipwrecks went for the direct strike option and a powerful shot was well saved by **Reg**. ABs finished the quarter going forward but had still not managed to trouble the opposition keeper.

After a few positive words from the **Captain** but no changes of personnel obviously, the second quarter began. ABs now seemed more assured of their touch and patterns of play and some nice moves down both flanks brought some pressure to bear even if clear cut chances were still at a premium. **Brian and Russell** were now a real threat moving down the left and **Bruce and Steve** were becoming more influential in midfield. **Mukesh** too was now displaying his silky skills at the back and the side as a whole was playing some very attractive open hockey with good retention of the ball, passing and movement. In this phase Chipwrecks opportunities were few and far between and any counter attacks were competently broken up and dealt with by **Steve Taylor, David Bedford and Paul Sharratt**, now he had regained his equilibrium. As the first half drew to a close ABs forced a couple of penalty corners. **Paul's** efforts were on target but both were well saved in the Chipwrecks goal. Both sides were cancelling each other out at this point and the game was being played mostly between the two 25s. The quality of the hockey however was high and there was plenty of individual skill and flair shown from all players.

The half ended then with Chipwrecks still holding a narrow lead but ABs were encouraged by their performance and remained positive the result could be turned round in the second period.

HALF TIME: CHIPWRECKS 1 ANCIENT BRITONS 0

We all agreed we had responded well to going behind and that the side was playing well and producing some entertaining hockey. Chances had been made and the side was certain more would come, although we were aware that the younger age profile of the opposition would make the second half difficult.

The third quarter was very entertaining and the standard of hockey if anything improved on what had gone before. Chipwrecks were the first side into their stride and some early pressure saw the ABs concede a penalty corner. The AB defence dealt well with this and cleared their lines.

ABs then enjoyed some of their own pressure in their longest period of control in the match thus far. A couple of half chances were missed before the equaliser came. **Steve Ellis** picked the ball up just outside his own circle after breaking up a Chipwrecks attack. **Steve** then started to run and run and run and run this was no mazy Indian dribble however just an unopposed 70 yard carry in a straight line towards the right corner flag. Thankfully realising he was now on the outskirts of Bristol; **Steve** stopped and through sheer exhaustion decided to get rid of the ball and cross it hard into the D. His aim was true and he picked out **Brian** who had supported him on his marathon. **Brian** controlled the ball nicely and slotted it past the advancing keeper, we were level.

Play restarted (once **Steve** had recovered) and ABs immediately went on the offensive again. The ball was being moved quickly and accurately in all areas of the pitch – it was high quality hockey that would be rewarded with a second goal.

This time the move started on the right with **David** and following further passes from **Russell, Peter and Bruce** the ball again ended up with **Brian** just 7 or 8 yards out from the Chipwrecks goal. Again **Brian** showed great composure as the keeper advanced and found the corner of the goal to give the side a deserved lead.

This stung the Chipwrecks into action but now the ABs' steely defensive game came to the fore as all opposition raids were snuffed out.

It was still difficult to predict which way the game would swing as the quarter entered the last few minutes.

Fortunately for ABs the Chipwrecks finishing failed them on the one occasion they were able to manufacture a shot at goal. A well worked move down their left wing followed by an accurate cross into the circle found an unmarked attacker with time and space. The chance was straightforward but fired wide.

The final quarter was nervous stuff with both sides having pressure and possession. ABs pushed forward to try and kill the game while trying not to over commit and leave them open to the counter attack. Deep into the quarter the defence held firm with **Steve Taylor** being particularly attentive to the Chipwrecks centre forward! With the clock running down Chipwrecks threw everything forward and one move down the right wing penetrated the AB circle and from the well placed cross the ball was swept home from close range to give the hosts the equaliser.

That was almost the last action of the game and not long after, the final whistle sounded and the spoils were shared.

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 our **guest Steve Ellis** for his tireless running, exemplary passing and sound defensive play when needed – and of course for THAT run!

The squad and supporters (**thank you for your attendance and encouragement**) retired to the cricket clubhouse to relive the game and enjoy Chipwrecks' magnificent hospitality.

Reg Sharratt, Steve Ellis, Steve Taylor, Russell Gates, Richard Turner, Peter George-Jones, Mukesh Phakey, Bruce Baron (Captain), Brian Hopkins, Paul Sharratt & David Bedford. **Umpire – Chris Kitto**

Supporters – Karen Daly, Jane Kitto & Angela Castleton.