

Saturday 23rd June 2018

Woking Pitts 3 – Ancient Britons 1

On a splendidly hot mid-summer's day the AB roadshow moved into Woking for the traditional fixture against the **Chairman's** home club. Normally the conditions would have been welcome but the AB squad had been decimated by World Cup fever (Barcelona that is; not Moscow!). We were down to the 'bare bones' to quote the great Harry Redknapp and required the services of local player **Jamie Elder** as a guest to give us the full complement of 11. We were going to be in for a tough afternoon. A brief pre-match social over a cup of coffee and the team plus our travelling support moved to the astro to warm up, not that much was required on such a glorious afternoon.

Captain Baron assembled the squad and used the **Chairman's** inside knowledge of the opposition to formulate the AB approach. "He's in the 1st team", "He is Captain of the 2nds", "he's quick", "he's very skilful" were some of John's demoralising assessments of Woking's youthful squad! A tough afternoon was getting tougher by the minute. However the ABs are always up for the challenge and are not without skilful players ourselves.

The first quarter started at a brisk pace with the home side having the vast majority of possession without any clear chances being created. **Phil Hall** was organising the AB defence to good effect. **Jon Beale** put in a couple of crunching tackles to break up some threatening Pitts's attacks at right back, while the two local lads **Steve Russell and Jamie Elder** looked comfortable at centre back and left back respectively. Gradually as the quarter came to a close the AB midfield began to get on the ball more having spent the first 10 minutes just chasing and closing down the opposition. Up front for **John and Paul** (without the support of George and Ringo!) it was slim pickings indeed. So the quarter ended goalless but the pattern of the game had become clear.

ABs would have to show disciplined defence and hope to catch Woking on the counter attack.

After a few positive words from the **Captain** and an opportunity to take some liquid on board 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. By threatening in this way it actually meant the ABs themselves were more open themselves to a counter attack and from one such move the Pitts moved forward quickly enabling **Tony Handley** to score with a close range shot that gave **Reg Sharratt** in the ABs goal no chance. The quarter was drawing to a close with the ABs absorbing pressure. **Paul Sharratt** launched a trademark clearance that took a Pitts deflection to give the ABs a long corner at the other end of the pitch. **Captain Baron** moved forward swiftly to take the corner quickly before the Pitts defence could assemble. The **Chairman** was on the same wavelength as the **Skipper** and applied a neat deflection to the captain's pass into the circle that wrong-footed the Pitts GK for a goal to draw the ABs level. There was barely time to restart proceedings before the half-time whistle blew. An excellent AB performance thus far.

HALF TIME: WOKING PITTS 1 ANCIENT BRITONS 1

Everyone 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 and the heat would make the second half difficult.

The third quarter was very entertaining and the standard of hockey remained high from both sides. Pitts were again the first side into their stride and

some early pressure saw the ABs concede a penalty corner. The ABs defence could not deal with the switched play and the wonderfully named Woking player **Grog** applied the final touch to the move to restore the home side's lead.

ABs then enjoyed some of their own pressure and half chances were missed. However **Russell Gates** and **Richard Turner** were working well in the ABs midfield and **Peter Gordon-Jones** was working tirelessly in linking midfield to attack.

Playing so resiliently there was every chance the ABs would get back into the match and it was difficult to predict which way the game would swing as the quarter entered the last few minutes.

Unfortunately for ABs it was Woking who were to strike next and gain a two goal advantage that would ultimately be decisive. A well worked move down their left wing followed by an accurate cross into the circle found **Tony Handley** unmarked. With time and space the chance was straightforward and ABs found themselves 3-1 adrift.

The final quarter was very hard work indeed for an AB side that was now visibly tiring. Two goals behind it was necessary to chase the game but equally the side had to keep alert to the constant raids from the comparatively fresh opposition. ABs pushed forward for the goal to bring them back into the game and **Paul Sharratt** forced a good save from the Pitts GK. The side also gained a couple of penalty corners but these were dealt with competently by the Pitts defence. This need to push forward often left the ABs depleted at the back but any danger was superbly thwarted by **Reg Sharratt** in goal who made several fine saves as the game became very stretched. **Reg** was assisted in his defensive duties by **Jon Beale** who made a

tremendous goal line clearance and **Jamie Elder** who tackled **Grog** when he looked certain to extend the Woking advantage.

Still the AB side refused to give up and kept up the pressure on the Woking goal and with time running out continued to throw everything forward but there was to be no more goals and Woking ran out deserved winners.

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 **Jon Beale** for his exemplary and uncompromising tackling and all round defensive play which broke up so main opposition attacks.

FULL TIME: WOKING PITTS 3 ANCIENT BRITONS 1

The squad and supporters, thank you for your attendance and encouragement, retired to the Clubhouse to relive the game and enjoy some much needed lubricating ale after the exertions in the heat. For some the party would go on into the night as the Chairman hosted his traditional post-match BBQ. A great day all round.

Reg Sharratt, Russell Gates, Bruce Baron (Capt), Steve Russell, Jon Beale, Richard Turner, Paul Sharratt, Phil Hall, Peter Gordon-Jones, John Peirce and Jamie Elder (Guest).

Man of the Match: Jon Beale.

Supporters: Sandie Hall, Angela Castleton & Alison Baron.

Thanks are also due to the following:

Woking Pitts & their captain Joe Dunne for again hosting this enjoyable annual fixture.

John Peirce for organizing & hosting the evening party much enjoyed by a number of AB & Woking members. Mukesh & Neeru Phakey for the provision of a curry.