

<http://www.dartfordfc.co.uk/reserves.htm>

Henno's Notes

16 April 2009 14:58

The last two weeks have been very busy with five games played since my last notes. We suffered our worst defeat in the two seasons I have been manager with a 4- 0 home defeat to Cray. Although our defending on the night was woeful, including an own goal, full credit must go to Cray who played very well on the evening and they deserved their win.

The response to that defeat has been exceptional however, and the team has shown great desire to try and finish the season as strongly as possible. We knew our remaining games were all against teams in and around us both in the league and midweek floodlit competition, and it was going to take a massive effort from the squad to try and win all our remaining games. Following the Cray game we have beaten Dover 2- 1 at home in the league, followed by an away win at Tunbridge Wells 4- 2 in the floodlit, then another home win in the league against Ashford town 3- 2,(having been 2- 0 down at half time). On Tuesday night we knew we had to beat Welling at home in the final Floodlit match to guarantee a place in the final, and although they fielded a side with 3 or 4 first team players, we won 2-1 to win the west division league and reach the final in early May. The midweek floodlit league is a tough competition to win because you never know what strength of team you will be facing as many first team players are used, and to finish the league with eight wins, two draws and only two defeats is a great effort by the players.

With only three games left to play in the league things are very close. We are away to Erith and Belvedere on Saturday followed by an away match at Thamesmead next Tuesday. If we were to win both games we would go top of the league with one game remaining. That would mean that Thamesmead would then have to win both their final games to win the title if we were to win our final game also. Three wins would however guarantee us runners up so an exciting final seven days to come for sure.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank everyone for their support, both in attending our games and also the flattering comments that are posted on the forum. Although I am the first to recognise that the level of football is not as it is in the first team, I feel strongly that the players should be allowed and encouraged to express themselves with pace and skill, and if you instil the right qualities and habits into them then it will stand them in good stead for their careers going forward. I think those of you that have kindly come along to support the players can see that we are doing just that, and as I said before in earlier notes, I feel strongly that there are players within the club already that can progress into the first team squad.

Thank you once again for your continued support.

Henno

26 March 2009 13:15

I must start by apologising for the lack of notes recently but where I seem to be involved on Monday's, Tuesday's, Thursday's and Saturday's, together with my day job, the notes have not been kept up to date, sorry! I worked out the other day that I have registered over seventy players this season which includes our three under eighteen teams who have been involved in our games, players that have come down from the first team, together with my own squad of players. The reserves is like no other team in the club, you are not working with the same squad of sixteen or so players week in and week out, at the moment I am averaging four to five personnel changes for every game we have played recently. With this in mind we have shown remarkable consistency in our performances week after week, regardless of these changes, and we have maintained a very high standard to our manner and style of play. To have only conceded only fifteen goals in our sixteen league matches so far shows great desire and discipline, allowing us a platform to impose our game on opponents. With only one goal conceded in our last five games, producing four wins and a draw, the team is playing with great confidence.

We are reaching an exciting end to the season. With six league games to go we are currently in third place. With only two points between six teams and with us due to play all those teams around us, starting next week with Cray at home on Tuesday evening followed by Dover at home on the Saturday, it promises to be an interesting final six weeks. In the midweek floodlit competition we moved back to the top of our division on Tuesday following our 2 - 0 win away to VCD. If we win our final two games we will top our division and play a final in early May against the other division winners which would be a nice final game of the season to be involved in.

The objective of the reserves as we all know is to support the first team and I feel we have done this with players like Sean, Husain Isa, Kieran Dingri, Robert Whitnell, James Taylor, Jason Ward, Deren, Danny Baigent and Robert Bartley all having been involved within the first team squad this season. This has afforded opportunities for players like Karl Dent, Connor Heffernan, Adam Molloy and Danny Crouch to come in from the younger squads and they have shown great maturity in their play. Having asked them to express themselves and be confident in their own abilities they have been a pleasure to manage and they have out played far more experienced opponents showing no fear or regard for reputations or physical intimidation.

I hope you can attend and support the reserves when possible in the final weeks ahead as we try and continue to develop players already within the club. Maybe the future success of the club is from players already amongst us.....I think so anyway!

Henno

28 December 2008 20:32

I am pleased to report that since my last notes the success and progress of the reserve team has continued. On the pitch we have now won our last six games in a row, which has seen us move up the table, progress through to the quarter final of the league cup, and also retain top position in the midweek league competition. We have also won the Molten Boot award from the Kent League for being the highest scorers during November.

I am also delighted with the progress of a number of my players who have started to feature for the first team during the last few weeks. Sean has impressed everyone in the way he has stepped up and fitted into the first team. He has been patient and waited for his opportunity, and in the eighteen months he has been with the club he has learnt and improved as a player. This progress gives others the belief that they too can push through from the reserves.

Robert Bartley, Danny Baigent, Husyain Isa, Kiran Dingri and James Taylor have also featured in the last few weeks and are pushing hard for further first team opportunities. I have recently signed Jason Ward, a player I have been chasing since our pre season trials, very talented, with Ryman Premier experience, who did not sign at the time as he was offered good money elsewhere, but has since returned and scored two goals in his recent impressive debut. Another player who has also returned is Robert Whitnell. Having produced outstanding performances during pre season, Robert returned to America to complete his four year scholarship. Now home, Robert has come back to the club to also try and push through and feature for the first team and was on the bench last week at Canvey.

Wishing you all a happy new year,

Henno.

Sat 22/11/2008 20:41

Since my last notes we have played four games and I am delighted to report that we have won all four, scoring thirteen and conceding only three.

I mentioned before how frustrating things had been in previous games but at last we have been rewarded for our efforts in term of results, but also we have played some very attractive football along the way.

In the league cup we trailed one nil at home to Ramsgate, had a player sent off and yet with ten men went on to win 3-1.

Chatham away in the league we found ourselves 1-0 down at half time but turned things around in the second half, again winning 3-1.

In the floodlit trophy we faced the majority of the first team sent up by Tunbridge Wells who fancied a night at Princes Park rather than training, fell one behind then with great style and tremendous finishing went on to win 5-1.

Finally, our league game at home to Erith and Belvedere saw us run out 2-0 winners in what was a tough and bruising encounter.

When you consider we have had many senior players unavailable these last few weeks either through first team call ups, loans to other clubs, injuries and suspensions, it has given opportunities for others to step in and stake their claim for a permanent place which gives me, as manager, great problems to have when it comes to team selection.

Henno

Sun 09/11/2008 21:08

The last four weeks have proved difficult and have probably been the most frustrating time as manager of the reserves since I took over. The performances we have put in have been decent, but the results have unfortunately not reflected what I think we have deserved. We lost 1-0 at home to Whitstable, a game we dominated, and then 1-0 away to Welling in the floodlit trophy, who were represented by a number of first team squad players. However last Saturday we beat Ramsgate 3-1 at home in the league cup, having had a player sent off after only thirty minutes when the score was 1-1. In between these games we had the pleasure of a journey away to Folkestone where the game was abandoned at half time due to a waterlogged pitch.

On the playing front my top scorer Ashley Dunkley tore his knee ligaments during the game with Whitstable and won't be available until Xmas at the earliest, with another forward, Reiss St. Hilaire, a long term injury also. My remaining forward, James Taylor, has joined Chatham on a month's loan, with the opportunity of first team football, giving him useful experience and hopefully Tony confidence that he is ready to make the step up to our first team should he need him.

Unfortunately two of my players are due to start thirty five day bans this month for red cards they have received, which in hindsight they both regret their actions, but the word I used earlier, frustration, got the better of them in the heat of the moment and I'm afraid with youth comes inexperience.

Therefore, all things considered, things haven't been dull, and while I may have spent the last month pulling chunks out of my hair at times, the good moments out weigh the bad every time.

Thanks for your support

Henno

23 October 2008 09:12

Looking back over the first eleven games of the season our record shows five wins, three draws, two defeats (both 3-2 away to the current two top teams), and a further draw after extra time which led to losing unfortunately on penalties. We have used during those games in excess of thirty different players, ranging from the under 18's, first team, squad players and trialists.

I think it is important to realise that the reserve team is like no other team within the club. Other teams have looked to add quality to what was already a good squad by adding maybe two or three additional players. As you are all aware we took a decision to release the majority of last year's successful team when we could have retained them on false promises, which has meant putting together almost a complete new squad. In our last two games for example, only one player featured in each match who played last year, therefore when I look at other teams who we have played so far this year and recognise most of their players from last season, I think the decision taken by the Dartford management team to start again with fresh players is the right one, giving the opportunity for many who might not have the chance to progress from within or through trials.

I am personally having to be more patient and understanding with players and the mistakes that have been happening, as we don't have the experience within the squad that we had last year, and I am trying to be constructive with any criticisms that I make. We are trying to play football in the right way and we are trying to install the right qualities and habits into the players, but with sometimes five or six personnel changes every game it isn't always going to be perfect and I hope that people watching the games are understanding of that fact.

Thank you to all of the supporters who have followed us in the last week especially, all the players and staff really appreciate it.

Henno

6 October 2008 16:16

Looking back over the last few weeks and the results achieved in that time, I am pleased with the progress made so far by what is still, a very new team. In our last six games we have won three and drawn three, although on Saturday our draw with Margate after extra time did lead to us losing on penalties. Having started the match without Sean Eferakho and James Taylor, both of whom were called into the first team squad, we unfortunately lost Danny Baigent at half time who went to hospital with a suspected broken bone in his wrist, then two further players with muscle injuries after an hour. We were already missing Luke Smith who watched the game on crutches as a result of an injury sustained from the week before at Maidstone, so in the circumstances, the players worked hard for the draw, and after two hours of football and I had no complaints afterwards although everyone was obviously disappointed to lose in the manner we did.

Steve and I have discussed at some length our targets for this year and we feel that this season we will be looking to use more players in the squad, and rotate the side more than we did last year, as we are keen to give as many players as possible the opportunity to show if they are capable of playing at this level, and beyond into the first team. This will mean that results will possibly suffer as the team will change from week to week, but we are prepared to sacrifice results in our aim to provide players of the required standard. This has been emphasized to the players and it is up to them to show us that they should be part of our squad and not waste the opportunity that they have been given. As I mentioned earlier, we now have James Taylor and Sean knocking on the first team door, with Deren pushing hard and improving all the time, Danny Baigent having sat on the bench in the F.A. cup, and also Danny Crouch not too far away. Therefore we can show that there are opportunities for those and others to progress from within the club, which is so important to the future success of Dartford FC, as I feel many supporters would love to see home grown talent go on to represent the club at first team level.

Thank you for your continued support.

Henno

15 September 2008 14:23

It would be fair to say that following the success of last years reserve team, it was always going to be a hard act to follow. Having only retained four players from last season, and then to have lost my newly appointed captain Luke May after only one game, has meant that the first few weeks have certainly been tough. However, having looked at what feels like hundreds of players during the summer, I now feel that the current squad are reaching the level and standards required to support and compete for first team opportunities as and when they come.

The biggest difficulty is trying to have a balance between giving young players opportunities, while at the same time having experience and knowledge of how to deal with opponents who are quite happy to put young talent into row Z. This year more young players will be given that opportunity, as was the case last week when two seventeen year olds and one sixteen year old from Andy's under eighteen team played and did very well at Lordswood, a game we won 3- 2. This followed a 1- 1 draw the previous Saturday at home to Maidstone, a result I was especially pleased with as their team was most of the players who we had played last year and were as a result, very strong opponents.

Therefore in summary, I am optimistic that the reserve team will this season progress the young talent currently within the club, and if by giving players that opportunity means that we are maybe not as successful in terms of results as we were last year, I think that this year's success will be measured in many other ways.

Your support towards me and the players since I have been manager has been fantastic and I am most grateful to you all, we all appreciate it and I hope to see as many of you as possible at our games, subject to first team commitments of course.

Best Wishes

Henno