

BOXING DAY FOOTBALL- 26th DECEMBER 2015

Despite the threat of Storm Eva (from the North), on a surprisingly mild but breezy Boxing Day morning the villagers of Costock gathered together on the playing field for the Annual Costock village football match. It was again well attended this year with around 20 spectators cheering on the two teams.

At 11.00am the players gathered together near the centre circle for the teams to be selected by the two team captains. This year we had the magic figure of 22 players allowing a full 11 a side match to take place. It was an all-male affair with young and old taking their place in the two line ups. Well done to everyone for taking part and continuing this traditional Boxing Day fixture. A special thanks must go to John Collins for arranging the event and publicising it so well with the big banner outside the front of the Village Hall.

Once the teams were selected it was time for the re-emergence of the shirts from last year with the Red and Blue shirts of Barca battling it out against the off-white shirts of the Lilywhites.

Referee Ian Harbey was once again in charge of proceedings and did a sterling job throughout. Ian informed the teams that there would be 30 minutes play each way. The teams took-up their positions with Lilywhites attacking the Village Hall and Barca towards the swings. At 11.05am Ian, blew his whistle for kick-off and the game was underway.

KICK-OFF: 11.05am

The game started at a cracking pace with both sides both playing neat football. The first real attack came from the Lilywhites, when 'Arsenal Legend' Matt "Nutmegged" a defender, drew the keeper but blazed just over. It was a great piece of skill reminiscent of Cruyff in his prime.

The Lilywhites continued to have the lion's share of the early possession with Jordan possessing one of the sweetest left foot (s) ever seen at the Costock Rec pulling the midfield strings. After 8 minutes, Alex WB took aim for the Lilywhites but unfortunately his shot was 'high wide and handsome'. The Lilywhites continued to dominate the early exchanges and after 10 minutes Jordan again took aim but the Barca Keeper saved brilliantly with his legs. Shortly afterwards, Jordan 'pulled the trigger' but this time the ball was deflected for a corner.

After 15 minutes the pressure finally paid off for the Lilywhites as they took the lead. The ball was half cleared from a corner to the edge of the box and Ed struck the ball firmly and accurately low to the keeper's right and the ball nestled snugly in the bottom left hand corner to make it 1-0 to the Lilywhites.

It was now all Lilywhites and 2 minutes later they nearly went two up as Jordan met the ball 20 yards out and crashed a shot against the post. Shortly afterwards Jamie tried a shot which was well saved by the Barca keeper to keep the deficit to just one.

Pete 'The Cat' James in the Lilywhites nets who was having one of his quietest boxing day fixtures in years had his first scare after 20 minutes, when Barca at last, got their first foothold in the game with a great move ending with little Archie (who I believe is on Chesterfield's Books) poking the ball just wide at the far post. So close!!!

The sun broke through after 25 minutes and this matched the football on offer which was still very pleasing on the eye. Barca continued to ask questions and as the half drew to a close Pete 'safe hands' James made a good save. From that save, Pete kicked the ball out of his hands and making full use of the wind and the slope it was collected on the full by the other goalkeeper. For Barca to get back into this game, they would need to make full use of these attributes in the second half.

After 30 minutes of play the whistle was blown by Ian the Ref and it was half time and time to change-ends.

HALF TIME: Lilywhites 1 Barca 0

It is all very professional nowadays at Costock with several players taking the opportunity of being able to change their shirts for clean ones for the second half. Premiership here we come!!!

Lilywhites now kicking against the wind and uphill were finding life a little more difficult in the second half and Barca could see their opportunity. After an excellent long throw from Ali Collins caused panic in the Lilywhites defence, 5 minutes into the 2nd Half, Lilywhites extended their lead, when a good through ball was played to George Harbey and he coolly drew the keeper and finished with a smart shot in the top right hand corner. A splendid finish to make it Lilywhites 2 - Barca 0.

2 minutes later Barca immediately reduced the arrears when a shot by Archie was half cleared and the ball fell to Charlie who finished low into the bottom left hand corner with great aplomb to make it Lilywhites 2 Barca 1

GAME ON!!!!!!!!!!!!

The Barca team could sense this was their moment and started to play their best football of the match and were getting on top. A ferocious goal bound shot which was destined for the back of the net was bravely blocked by Pete 'the Cat' James who was now playing at the back, and took one for his team. Shortly afterwards Jamie was put through but shot just over.

Little Archie was now stepping up his work rate, demanding the ball and coming deeper to try desperately to get his Barca team back into it.

After 40 minutes the Barca Team were level. A corner was swung over and the ball was only half cleared and after several attempts, the ball ran loose to Charlie who made sure and gleefully rammed the ball home to make it 2-2. What a game we had now.

Just 2 minutes later, the Lilywhites responded in emphatic fashion by pricking the Barca balloon.

Jordan rode a couple of tackles and from a good 25 yards out he fired in a shot with such force it nearly took the net off its fittings. It was one of the best goals seen in Costock for many Christmases' and made it Lilywhites 3 Barca 2.

By now it was a fierce midfield battle, with two well matched sides playing good football and it was a real pleasure to watch.

Ali Collins desperately going in search of an equaliser fired in a low rasping drive which was brilliantly tipped round the post by 'Coventry City' Colin. 2 minutes later Colin repeated the feat with a wonder save from point blank range to keep his Lilywhites side ahead. Colin was by now running on adrenaline and shortly afterwards he coolly claimed a loose ball to relieve the pressure.

Referee Ian signalled that there was 6 minutes to go and the Barca team continued to 'crank up the pressure'. Ali Collins went probing for an equaliser ably supported by Archie in a Rooney like role 'in the hole'.

On the break 'Arsenal' Matt played a wonderful defence splitting pass to Hanan who nearly made the game safe but his low drive was just wide into the side netting for the Lilywhites.

As the final minute approached Barca played the last roll of the dice and only both a brilliant defensive tackle from Jamie just as Archie was about to pull the trigger and a great defensive header over his own bar by George 'saved the day' for the Lilywhites.

Referee Ian, blew the whistle signal the end of the game it ended up

FULL TIME: Lilywhites 3 Barca 2

So it was celebrations and congratulations to the Lilywhites and hard luck to the Barca Boys who pushed them so close in the second half.

Thanks to all those that played, including Lewis, Ali, Pete, Aiden, Jake 1, Jake 2, Callum, Samuel, Derek, George, David, Archie, Jamie, Colin, Jordan, Matt, Hanan, Charlie – Sorry to those I have missed!!

The game was played in a brilliant spirit and the spectators appeared to enjoy the morning's entertainment as they retired the GB for mince pies and some liquid refreshment.

Hopefully, we will see another strong turn-out for the repeat fixture next Boxing Day.

See you all next year

Graham Hunt (Correspondent)

Note from John Collins

Many thanks to Graham Hunt for another tremendous match report, to Ian Haraby for organising the teams and some excellent refereeing, to Ferdie from the Generous Briton for supplying the kit, getting players enthused and supplying mince pies afterwards and to Pam Wilkinson for supplying Tea and coffee during the match. Thanks all.



