

MATCH REPORT

League Game

20th November 2022

Coulsdon Athletic FC 5 – 2 Alexandra Utd

Coulsdon Athletic were at home today in the next round of the Junior County Cup. We were drawn against Alexandra United, who from their recent set of results seemed somewhat of a cup specialist, moving through the rounds of three different cups.

More importantly though, we had to shake off the poor performance we saw in the last game that ended up in our first league defeat. We spoke at length during the week and early Sunday morning before the match to make sure we got our heads straight and got over that one bad performance.

Alexandra Utd we're quick out the traps. They played in a very direct way, hitting their wingers and they had a lively centre forward and they were giving us some trouble. Problem was that we were not settling well and so we're under the cosh a bit early doors, but we were working very hard at the back, at the same time though we were still a threat when we took the ball forward, we just couldn't work the keeper. We did need to try to work him harder though because it was soon apparent that he was as comfortable as Dracula with crosses.

On 19 mins Alex Utd attacked down our right, and we should have dealt with the threat better but when the ball came across our box it was our oppo's striker that stretched out a leg to reach it. First blood was drawn by the away team and we were 1-0 down. Disappointing but probably fair on the start.

The reaction to the goal wasn't great. It seemed to rattle us, and we lost a bit of composure with a couple of personal battles lost putting us under pressure, the ball was moved out to our left, and their winger crossed a ball to hang up at the back post.... and it dropped in the net. Now luck was against us as well - could we get out of this? Two goals in two minutes. But the game was barely 20 minutes old, so to provide a voice of support from the side, I reminded the lads that there was a long way to go and to start to settle and play our game. I can't fault them for the reaction - it was excellent. But two goals down in the Cup, and no extra time - was penalties the best we could hope for? Not in my mind. I know these lads have got the minerals.

We had suffered a couple of early injuries, firstly our young left wing starting debutant Jakey, then Dan, only then for Kunz to hobble off with a twisted knee.

A quick shuffle round saw Rob come in left back and our Vice George slide into the left wing position - a position he's tried for the first time this season and he's become increasingly suited to it. We love to make players versatile. With his appearances in the centre as well, he's fast becoming the John O'Shea of Coulsdon Athletic.

Nath dropped into a holding midfield role in place of Kunz, and Josh came in at No 9. We were off again. We now needed to be more purposeful in attack. We kept the positive encouragement from the side, I still believed we could get something out of this.

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The signs were all positive and we were starting to show some good attacks being built from the back, no desperate long high balls. Let's stick to the ball being on the deck.

But we needed a goal.

A couple of corners, close to get the breakthrough, but not close enough, and with Dracula still flapping it was frustrating.

We then created a moment where Nath released Josh with a low pass between the defenders for him to run on to. Now it was a race. Josh with the ball at his plates, and the defenders panicking in his wake. Our strong No 9 was bearing down on their box when a lunge from behind from the centre back saw him bring Josh down. He took one for the team. He was last man. Ref blew up - and produced a yellow feeling it was a genuine attempt for the ball. Fair enough, no criticising the ref from us. Strangely thought that one attack seemed to unsettle Alex. No one likes it up 'em!

So we started to play a bit. After a nice little interchange of passes, the ball ended up at Tommy Gallons feet. With a sweep of his right foot he sent a slide rule 'Iniesta Like' pass through to our right winger Mikey. Mikey moved beautifully from behind the defender, he pounced to nick the ball and run on slot the ball in the net! Big goal. Massive. Now only a goal in it. The linesman for their side had the audacity to flag the goal offside, but thankfully David Blunkett wasn't the ref and the goal was given, although I think Dave would have even overruled Alex's desperate attempt to cancel the goal out.

Going in at half time 2-1 down was fine. I felt the oppo's were actually wounded from that goal. They trudged off. We jogged off.

The subs were made firstly Murf coming into central midfield for Galls, and now partnering Nath in the middle. Jack also came on a little after the start for his debut. We were blooding the youngsters well this season.

The second half started where WE left off this week. On the attack, taking the game to the oppos.

Oh I was liking this. I said to Rob before he came on earlier at left back "you scored from this position the last time we played you there - go and attack a set piece and get another."

We had an opportunity of a long throw into the box from our right and Nath took it. The Rory Delap throw was launched into their box, and with The Count floundering yet again it flew over his outstretched arms, and looped to the ground behind. It was met by the Black and Blue of a certain left back. Rob knocks it in - bosh 2-2 and nothing more than we deserved!!!! And the crowd goes wild.

Now we are in a position in the match where we were buzzing again, and our oppo's were getting frustrated and unnecessarily physical.

We started to attack in waves, ending up in quite a few free kicks. I was so proud of the lads as they were keeping their heads and playing. The next attack saw Raff release Josh, he beat the defender, and was now just outside the area and one on one with the Vampire, a certain goal when - bang!! He was clattered from behind. The defender taking one for the team, and this time he knew. He

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was walking before the ref produced the red. It was coming, and now time for him to get his bottle of Matey out and run the bath, whilst we carried on playing.

The next attack came from our centre back Johnny picking out our left winger, and our Vice, George with a pass, and with a smart turn with back to goal, was now running towards goal. Hang on. He looked up. The keeper's had gone on a wander to the edge of his box. The Vice has clocked it. Then very decisively, he has lobbed a ball from 30 yards over the hapless geezer, and with what felt like an age, it hit the net. What a fantastic goal! 3-2 to the Black and Blue! And deserved.

We carried on with the same tempo. Of course Alex tried to attack but now they met the wall of Nath and Murf. Protecting the back line very well. And if they did play wide around them, the back four was yet another wall. Billy and Johnny were partnering back in the middle and doing a sterling job. And not only were Jack and Rob formidable at full back, but Mikey and George were tracking back from the wing position and doing that bit of dirty work of breaking up play. Forget we were against a now an ill disciplined 10, this was what we were capable of.

Although Xander was now a spectator, a long desperate ball was punted through to him. He collected and hit a long direct kick towards Josh.

He collected the ball and left the defender for dead. Very quick feet.

The oppos goal had recently reported the keeper Absent Without Official Leave. Has anyone seen their keeper?? Oh no, hang on, here he was rushing out with Josh 20 yards out. A beautiful Cantona-esque chip saw the ball float over this Travelling No 1 and into the onion bag. 4-2. A direct goal but a stunning finish. Josh was also very lucky as Dracula left the ground knee high and Josh only just got out the way in time. Disgusting challenge, if the ref didn't put the context of the score and the number advantage into his decision he would have seen red. Horrible attempt to injure our player. In fact Josh did well not to react.

Josh then got free once again and he drew the defender out well wide to our right. Kunz was bursting to get in the box, and with the oppos half asleep not tracking, Josh squared the ball and Kunz duly obliged slotting the ball coolly past the Keeper that was firmly in our Bad Books. Now I was pleased he had 5 go past him. He was getting a sore back picking the ball out the net.

It only left time for a bit of handbags where Murf muscled through two of their players in midfield for both to bring him down. For some reason their skipper thought Murf was the offender and got in his face, only for Murf to stand tall and get right back in his. Don't think he was expecting that. With an onrush of Black and Blue to back him up but to also diffuse, their skipper and lads backed down. They weren't going to win that either.

With that the ref, put the silver whistle to his lips and blew for full time.

We won more than just a game of football today. We won a battle out there. Of character. Of attitude. Of physicality. Of discipline. But of course, more importantly, of ability and talent.

We march on in a tough Cup competition.

Final Score:

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CAFC 5 Alexandra United Athletics 2

Goals: Mikey, Rob, George, Josh, Kunz.

Assists: Galls, Nath, Johnny, Xander, Josh.

MOM: Mikey

