

Grays 5  
Tilbury 0  
Chadfields  
ATT-305  
Stan Veness Memorial Trophy  
Tuesday 23<sup>rd</sup> July 2024  
Report by Mason Hutchinson

It was that time of year again as Thurrock's two oldest teams came together for the annual Stan Veness Trophy. The last time the two teams faced, Tilbury came out 3-1 victors to set up their title winning season.

The opening 20 minutes were exactly what you would expect from a derby match with very few chances. However, Grays were the more likely of the two sides with two balls fired across the face of goal that both lacked the final touch.

The Dockers managed to construct an attack of their own as Jamie Reynolds clipped a beautiful pass toward the back stick where Sam Bantick was waiting. Unfortunately, Bantick's deflected strike flew over the crossbar.

On the stroke of halftime, Grays players protested for a penalty but the referee was quick to award Tilbury a free kick and book The Blues attacker for simulation.

Following the break, Grays came close to opening the scoring as Elliott Sartorius chopped onto his right foot and whipped a shot that was denied by the far post.

And just after the hour mark, Grays found the opener as Alejandro Machado lined up a strike from distance and saw his effort nestle into the bottom left-hand corner.

It didn't take long for The Blues to double their lead through Luke Hirst who was slotted through brilliantly by Bobby Unwin following his weaving run, evading the challenge of Joynes.

Tilbury managed to work their way up the other end as Sam Bantick won his side a free kick just left of the penalty area. Bantick was the man to take the set piece and forced a good save from Danny Sambridge down to his right-hand side.

But it was Grays who once again scored from a long range effort through Machado once again. Despite his previous goal, Tilbury handed Machado acres of space to recreate his strike and The Blues player obliged, this time picking out the bottom right corner and netting his brace.

Then straight from kick off Harry Girling had to pick the ball out of his net once again as Tilbury played themselves into trouble and Joynes was forced into a risky back pass which was anticipated and intercepted by Luke Hirst. Hirst calmly took the ball past Girling and casually strolled into the goal for his second of the game.

In the dying moments there was still time for Grays to increase the deficit as Jack Hayes went down in a lot of pain. Luke Hirst took this opportunity to burst past the back line and fire into the net for his hat trick.

That was all the action at Chadfields and Grays had run rampant over their landlords in a statement victory ahead of the season. The Dockers are back this Saturday as we travel to Herne Bay in our penultimate pre-season friendly.

SQUAD: North (Girling), McQueen, Hayes (Hall), Clark L, Joynes, Clark J, Spooner (Donovan), Carter (Meado), Bantick, Manor (Knight), Reynolds (Bell).