

Saffron Walden Town 0 Tilbury 0 (Tilbury win 5-4 on penalties) FA Vase 3rd Round ATT 278

Saturday 16th December 2023

Report by Mason Hutchinson

On the third time of asking, Tilbury finally got to play their third-round FA Vase fixture against Saffron Walden. With no game for three weeks for The Dockers and many players missing through suspension and injury, Tilbury named a side with three substitutes, one of whom was a goalkeeper. As for the starting eleven, Igli Metalia filled in at right-back and Harvey Browne started in midfield to replace the injured Oli Spooner.

The visitors found joy down the left-hand side early on, with Alex Clark having the beating of his full-back every time. On two occasions, the winger skipped away from a challenge before standing a cross up at the back stick. Both times the ball was headed away but only as far as a Tilbury midfielder lining up a volley which was blocked and put out of play for a corner.

On the half-hour mark, The Bloods came close to breaking the deadlock when familiar face, Darnell Kithambo, did brilliantly to get past his marker and blast a rocket toward the far corner which narrowly flew wide. And moments later, Saffron Walden saw a similar story, as Danny Norton's snapshot from just inside the area rolled the wrong side of the post.

The Dockers continued to fight looking for the breakthrough and created two identical chances just before half-time. A cross from the left wing into the corridor of uncertainty which was just missed by a late-arriving Tilbury player who could not reach the ball before it fizzled out of play.

However, there was enough time before the break for the hosts to have an attempt on goal when McLaugh's free-kick wrongfooted Christian North and looked to be dipping over the keeper. But North did fantastically to backpedal and get a fingertip on the strike and keep the scoreline level, heading into half-time.

Starting the second half, The Dockers looked much livelier and thought they had found the opener when Carter's early cross found Clark unmarked at the back post for the winger to head home. But celebrations were cut short when the linesman confidently put up his flag to deny Clark of his third goal in two matches.

With 20 minutes to go, The Bloods were inches away from advancing to the next round, when Joni Vukaj fizzed a low cross toward Norton who got down low to connect with a diving header attempt. But he couldn't test Christian North.

The rest of the half was filled with little action until Alex Clark was sent to the sin bin for dissent after contesting a foul he committed, but by the time he was waved back onto the pitch, it was time for a penalty shootout.

The shootout went to sudden death as the score was 4-4 after 5 penalties each and up stepped Coby Miles for Saffron Walden. But his spot kick was denied by Christian North who allowed Igli Metalia the opportunity to send Tilbury through to the last 32 of the FA Vase. And our Albanian General made no mistake, firing home to win the game for The Dockers.

Tilbury are back in action on Saturday 23rd December as we host Takeley FC for our last game before Christmas, so make sure to come down and support the lads!

SQUAD: North, Metalia, Joynes, Hayes, McQueen, Carter, Donovan, Browne (Salter), Clark, Trendall, Campbell.

SUBS UNUSED: Page, Baker.

PENS

Campbell – O

Clark – X

Carter – O

Salter – O

Donovan – O

Metalia - O