

THE MERTON WAY

MERTON FOOTBALL CLUB ISSUE 12 – 17.12.2015

Can you guess who?



CHAIRMAN'S CORNER

BEHAVE YOURSELVES

So far this season we have made good progress on a lot of areas where we needed to put some effort in. Recruitment and finances have improved our situation but discipline has been a great disappointment. Despite the best efforts of Dave Laughton, our disciplinary officer, and a much improved administration of discipline we really need to improve our on field discipline.

I realise some bookings are inevitable Eg. mis-timed tackles etc. etc. but it is the needless bookings for dissent, ungentlemanly conduct that we can do something about and we must. Ungentlemanly conduct seems to cover a wide range of our everyday on-field activities EG. Delaying a free kick, kicking the ball away etc etc. These are often borne out of frustration but it is this lack of discipline that costs us.

Another area that would help is if we are genuinely welcoming and helpful with our visiting referees and a final word of thanks to David Laughton for his work in this area.

Max Herbet



DISCIPLINE

Dear Players,

It gives me great pleasure to come back to Merton FC in my new role as 'Discipline Officer' and importantly be part of a fantastic family club. (My youngest son – Oliver is the Goalkeeper for our U10s).

I joined Merton FC as a player back in 2004 with 6th Team – 2005/6 Manager for 5s where we gained promotion as Champions – I recall this was a very special time for me and all players involved.

Since then I focused on refereeing and been very lucky to have officiated at many senior games within Amateur Football circuit and been blessed with appointments with FA on Vase and FA Cup matches as an Assistant Referee.

For me – refereeing has always been about the players and has allowed me to be involved with the game I love so. I am not saying job is easy – it takes patience and a great deal of discipline to succeed – though I believe that is the case in many aspects of life.

How can I help you – Players/Managers (Bread of Merton FC?)

1. By working together – Call Me if you need to discuss any incidents or have concerns about player/referee.
2. Captains – Make your appointed referee welcome by introducing yourself and asking if they need anything?
3. Captains – Act as true role model/leader on the pitch and work closely with referee to apply conduct and let referee deal with misconduct.
4. Players – Allow your captain to work with referee – no point everyone shouting – show respect and trust me you will get it back from referee.
5. Avoid silly bookings – 'Unsporting Behaviour' - these were largest volume of fines from 2014/15 season. "Walk away – dust yourself up and allow referee to handle the opposition player who has put you up in the air etc."
6. Smile – Smile – we all love the game and so do all officials.

How Will Fines be issued to players?

1. Discipline Officer will be notified by county – AFA through the Online System – Whole Game
2. Fine will be paid immediately to AFA via club.
3. Players – will be notified by email of the fine and breakdown of the incident and costs incurred – Captain & Manager will be cc'd in the email as well.
4. Players will have 14 days from email notification to make payment to Merton FC – details of payment will be shown on email.
5. Player **MUST** Notify 'Discipline Officer' that fine has been paid and by what method and when. (VERY IMPORTANT).
6. Discipline Officer will update Master Tracker Report.
7. Failure to make payment on time could lead to a suspension and should this be case player will be notified and Captain and Manager made fully aware.

How can you help?

Last season 2014/15 Merton FC was issued over 54 fines and 4 of these were for serious related incidents. As a result the club incurs additional penalties and costs when club exceeds different tiers of penalty points (costly to club).

I urge every player to think about how they behave and how they speak to Referee/s – can you improve? Do you think your behaviour is acceptable? Can you be an Ambassador for club and support Merton FC – to win 'Fair Play Award'?

Together I believe we can and will – thank you again for all your support – I am here to help and want to!

David Laughton (AFA Senior Referee/FA Coach/Discipline Officer)

m: 07984 152070

e: mertonfcdiscipline@gmail.com



RAM'S HEADS UP!



1. I don't hate you... but let's put it this way, if I had a bucket of water and you were on fire, I'd drink the water.
2. I don't have a dirty mind, I have a sexy imagination.
3. All my life I thought air was free... until I bought a bag of chips.
4. When I said "I'd hit that", I meant with my car.
5. Hardest job ever: Working in a Bubble wrap factory. Imagine the self-control needed..
6. When nothing goes right... go left.
7. I'm in love with my bed. We're perfect for each other, but my alarm clock doesn't want us together.
That jealous whore!

EDITOR'S WORST KITS EVER

Scunthorpe United Home Kit: 1994/95

As worn by: **Can you guess?**
Manufacturer: **Alan Ward Sports**
Sponsor: **Pleasure Island**

Scunthorpe wore this horrendous kit during the 90's, safe to say Pleasure Island wasn't used as a sponsor ever again.

"Pleasure Island" indeed, Scunthorpe United. These beauties (sponsored by a nearby amusement park) bear the randomly-colored checks that filled so many 90s jerseys, but have the added bonus of seamlessly flowing right into the shorts as well. That pushes them over the top.



TV OF THE WEEK

Luther – BBC1 *****

RECRUITMENT

WE NEED YOU AT MERTON FC



Just a reminder to everyone that we are still on the lookout for players at all levels to join our club. So please put the word out to friends, family, work colleagues, people you meet at the park, at the bus stop, in the betting shop or in the fruit & veg aisle of your supermarket!

MATCH REPORTS – 05.12.15

2XIs

OLD STATIONERS 2 MERTON 1 (HT: 0-1)

SCORERS: Femi

MOTM: Connor

There were a lot of factors that conspired to try and spoil Saturday for me. First of all it was away at Old Stationers a trip from Merton that fills me with as much gloom as it probably does for them coming to us. So that meant a trip round the M25.

We left early, glad we did as there was an accident firstly on the A3 and then a 45 minute standstill on the M25 at Heathrow. So we arrived late with all the kit, balls etc after everyone else... then there was the weather, a real gusting blustery wind that was blowing straight down the pitch to make it a game of two halves.

There was the oppo who adjusted to the conditions better than us. We won the toss and had the wind in the first half, but we did not make enough of it and at half-time a one goal advantage never seemed enough.

We only had a really good goal from Femi to show for a lot of possession. He picked up a good pass on the left wing took it to the by-line and beat the defender and slid it past the keeper. In fairness they played pretty well in the first-half against the wind and adapted to the conditions better.

They equalised 10 mins into the second half and went ahead soon after when the referee gave them a penalty, the referee also contributed to spoiling the day. It was not an easy game for him to ref, but I doubt if even he thought he did OK, whilst he got the two big decisions wrong that happens... it is why he got them wrong he needs to think about. He was a young man with a long career ahead of him, who needs to learn from this experience that he that he must enforce the rules of the game. If he doesn't then he makes a rod for his own back and will disappoint a lot of honest teams on Saturdays in the future and won't enjoy himself. He failed to award a goal when we equalised in the last seconds of the game. He was the only person who did not think the ball had crossed the line. He apologised after but that does not really get you there does it.

What was really good and sustained me was the way our lads took it. Great spirit and camaraderie in

the bar after when Connor was deservedly man most handsome, but honourable mentions for some good looking boys, Joe Griffin, Femi and Clowesy.

So we left with no points a slight feeling of injustice but our heads held high as we had shown respect and upheld the spirit of the SAL.



3XIs

EBOG 1

MERTON 4 (HT: 0-1)

SCORERS: Dan, Dave, Tom (2)

MOTM: Pete Jennings

Merton made amends for the 1-1 draw in the return fixture by claiming a deserved 3 points at Barnet. The high winds and the inclined, boggy pitch all pointed to the game being unlikely to be a clean, passing game, but this was something the boars of war were prepared for. They lined up 4-4-2, with Joel returning to partner Vin in the heart of the defence, Lofty manfully taking over GK duties, and Ryan Gresty making his long awaited return to Merton colours by taking a spot on the bench alongside Tony.

EBOG won the toss and chose to kick into the wind, so the scene was set for Merton to take advantage and secure a sizeable half-time lead. However, like two weeks ago vs Old Blues, the reality was rather different. Merton started promisingly, camped in the EBOG half and using the pace of Tom and Dan to threaten a somewhat ponderous back 4. Dan had the first chance, latching on to an underhit goal kick only to fire at the keeper. Dave, Tom and Denys all had half-chances as well but once again our finishing was awry. Merton were also denied what looked like a clear penalty for handball as the ball was crossed in for a corner.

Merton's frustrations at not getting the breakthrough were rising, not helped by some very inconsistent refereeing (more on that later), and were duly compounded as EBOG took the lead midway through the half. After not awarding an obvious handball despite blowing his whistle prior to this every time the ball so much as looked at a Merton hand, the referee then penalised Merton for a fair challenge in the centre of the pitch. Two consecutive errors, and from the resulting free kick, an EBOG player flicked the ball on. Joel, standing just behind, couldn't stop the involuntary arm twitch towards the ball and the penalty (probably rightly) was awarded and despatched confidently. 1-0.

1-0 threatened to become two as Merton momentarily lost their way. Some good work from EBOG down the right saw them work the ball into the middle of the box for an onrushing player to strike, but Lofty was out quickly to smother before the defence cleared the follow up.

That scare avoided, Merton promptly went up the other end and got the equaliser. Dan latched on to a high ball, broke free of the covering defence, and for once took his time, dribbling to within his standard 6-10 yard distance from goal before slotting in at the near post, as the keeper helpfully decided to leave a nice gap by standing a few yards inside his post, 1-1.

Merton were back on top now and more chances to take the lead followed. Denys played Dan in with a lovely through ball, only for the shot to drift just past the post with wind and hill playing slightly contributory factors. Seb squared for Ricky to run on to the ball from just outside the corner of the box and his first time strike looked in for all the world before instead crashing into the crossbar with the keeper nowhere. Tom then got in down the right and his diagonal cross couldn't quite be steered in by Dan at the far post. Next, Denys blazed so wide the ball threatened to go out for a throw from a narrow angle. Dan then cushioned a header into Ricky who hit the crossbar again (!) from close range but was ruled offside anyway. Finally, Tom himself found the ball at his feet 6 yards out following some pinball in the box, but from the angle could only find the keeper.

So, 1-1 at half-time, and much like the game at Old Blues two weeks ago, Merton had it all to do in the second half against the wind. Lofty said as much in his half time team talk, but pointed to the fact we scored 5 second half goals in that game against the wind so we could do it again.

Ryan came on at half-time, and was involved within seconds, first passing to the opposition and then chopping down the oppo player nearest to him. We'll call that ring rust, although maybe the plan was to give them the ball so he could show them the sort of tough tackling they would be receiving for the rest of the game! Despite the wind, Merton still looked the more dangerous team. Where EBOG had failed to get even close to getting out of their half for most of the first 45 minutes, Lofty's clean striking from goal kicks was

Merton 3XI



SUBS:

Anthony Postlewaite – RB

Ryan Gresty – CM



giving Merton a platform to attack from. Similarly, when EBOG tried the ball over the top, they learned much as Merton had in the first half, namely that the wind would often take it off the pitch or to the keeper.

As Merton pushed for the goal to take them into the lead, Dan played Ricky in only for a combination of defender and keeper to deny him. However, a Merton goal was coming and the pressure finally told ten minutes into the second half. Some great pressing by the front 4 culminated in a rushed clearance by the keeper, and Dan sprinted in to rob the ball from the centre back as he waited for it to come down. Bursting into the box, for once he got his head up and squared for Dave Scott as two defenders desperately tried to block the shot. Dave elected to take a touch on the very tricky pitch, teasing both keeper and one remaining centre-back as it ran on a few yards. Things were all under control though and Dave (was very tempted to write Neal!) coolly slotted in from a couple of yards, almost dribbling into the net. 2-1.

On a heavy pitch, the front two and the wingers were being rotated regularly, and Tom, having come off at half-time, duly came on and scored with his first touch to make it 3-1. This time, some outstanding play down the right by Ricky saw him block an attempted clearance by the full-back, chase it down and hit a first time cross from the edge of the area to Denys. As with Dave, Denys decided to take a touch, and the chance looked to be gone as the defensive cover closed in on Denys with the ball now slightly behind him. However, Tom had sprinted into the box in support, and recognising this Denys instead used his body to hold off the defenders as Tom smashed into the roof of the net from close range. 3-1.

Despite the comfort of a two goal cushion, 3-1 was still a dangerous scoreline and with heavy legs and the wind against us, it was very important not to give EBOG a sniff of a second goal. Fortunately with war

boars Ryan and Pete in the middle, the opposition were slowly losing the will to fight. Both men were flying into tackles left right and centre. Pete was perhaps lucky not to be booked as he cynically stopped an EBOG break with a well placed shoulder, but the reality was that for many of the opposition players, seeing him bear down on them was enough to make them kick the ball into touch and evacuate the immediate area. Ryan was showcasing his full array of slide tackles in front of the man, stopping the ball with his leg, back, and shoulder on different occasions as he flew by, and often then getting up to win the second ball from the bemused opposition. Vin and Joel were also excellent, often heading clear a full 15-20 yards against the wind which helped enormously in stopping the opposition building any momentum. EBOG were getting frustrated at what they saw as rough treatment, and this boiled over into a full blown kick at Pete by one player, followed by a bit of a melee of pushing, which the referee somewhat mysteriously warranted no action whatsoever beyond a free-kick.

Merton were a little more defensively-minded now as legs tired, but there was still time for some further action. A swift counter attack saw Merton with 7 men forward, but a misplaced through-ball looked to have ended the attack. Right back Tony was having none of this however, perhaps enjoying the chance to get away from marking their tricky winger, and chased the ball down, stopping it on the by-line 10 yards from goal. Sensing a killer fourth goal, Seb screamed for the cross. Or if you listen to Denys account of this, he more mewled for the cross in a soft, quiet, pleading voice. Tooooooonny, Toooooony he pleaded (sound files of this are available). Tony was having none of this (or perhaps couldn't hear noises that highly pitched) and instead went for goal. This was somewhat ambitious considering he was standing on the byline with the post between him and the goal and no angle whatsoever, but to be fair he forced the keeper/post into a save. Seb was devastated.

The game went on... and on. 17 minutes to go turned into about 47, as the referee kept finding time from somewhere. It turned out that perhaps he meant 27 when he said 17, no one was really sure except Ryan who was convinced (and told the ref so) that "ball in car-park" time was not being applied consistently to both teams and more damningly that he being lied to. EBOG used this (extra?) time to play in a couple of very teasing free-kicks that no-one could apply a finish to, Lofty instead watching them coolly (outwardly at least) past his far post.

The icing on the cake that was the 4th goal duly arrived with 2 minutes to go. Mustard, having taken a week off from sniffing out danger, bagged an assist with a quick throw in down the left. Tom took advantage of some tired legs to beat the full-back and cut inside into the box before passing crisply into the corner as Denys and Dan waited hopefully for a square ball. So, 4-1 and once again a great performance into the wind and a proper battle of a game in the wind and the mud. Boar weather! Most importantly, the sheer desire and will to win of this team was once again evident and is playing a massive part of our success so far this season.

MOTM: Pete Jennings, for his tireless running, a succession of big tackles, and successfully scaring opposing players so much that they didn't want to play any more. Also a massive mentions to Ryan's dad for his vocal support from the touchline and also for the ill Mike Stone, who dragged himself to North London just to watch the game from beneath several layers of clothes and coats.

4XIs

MERTON 3 ACTONIANS ASSOCIATION 1 (HT: 1-1)

SCORERS: Mike Todt, Chris Outred (pen), OG
MOTM: Chris Outred

Dreadful, blustery conditions greeted the 4s as they arrived at the Hood on Saturday, with Storm Desmond (the quality of names of these storms seemingly deteriorating) baring its teeth. The grey skies summed up the mood for a side still looking for its first league win of the season, and coming off the back of a 5-0 reverse the previous week.

This was a gilt-edged chance to put things right given that they were up against fellow strugglers Actonians Association 6s. Sam starting in goal as ever, with a back four of Scholesy, Glen, Mike and John Gridley in front of him. Dan made a welcome return to central midfield alongside Jake, with Aaron and Chris Outred manning the flanks. Dulanie and Billy were all set to do the business upfront.

As the game kicked off, a Merton team low on confidence were tentative, and it showed. Actonians were much the better side in the opening quarter, and nearly went ahead but for a fine save from Sam. The goal was to arrive soon after though, as a pass somehow found its way through a sea of yellow, and the Actonian striker who picked it up made no mistake in dispatching his finish in the one-on-one with Sam. 1-0, and a crushing blow.

But heads stayed up, and so did the spirits and it showed in the play too, with Merton offering a palpable response. Jake was tireless in midfield, and Billy's relentless running eventually won a corner. The cavalry went forward, and after a delightful ball in from the skipper Chris, Mike managed to nod home; the keeper and the man on the post offering a lame attempt to keep it out. Either way, it was a much-needed equaliser, and the Yellows were right back in it at 1-1.

The rest of the half offered few chances, with the home side showing tremendous discipline and shape. One opportunity did come later on via a goalmouth scramble, with the wind causing havoc. Unfortunately Billy wasn't quite able to get enough on the loose ball, but when the whistle went for the interval, the chat was good. The 4s could sense that this one was there for the taking, and they were buoyant as they strode back onto the pitch.

It was about to get a whole lot better though, as a dream start to the second period was to follow. It was all Merton from the kick off, and five minutes in, Jake made a menacing run through the middle. With him all but through on goal, the hapless defender had little choice but to trip him up. In turn, the referee had little choice but to point to the spot, and this was their chance. The captain bravely stepped up to the plate, and clinically - nay, emphatically - hammered the penalty into the bottom right corner. 2-1, and Merton were soaring.

Barely three minutes later, a third was to come. Dulanie won a throw in on the right side in the opposing territory, and Dan spiralled in a beast of throw. The defender miscued his clearing header, and it sailed tormentingly over the keeper and nestled into the side of the net. A bonus indeed, but at 3-1, the home side cared little and had some much-needed breathing space.

What followed was one of the most committed and spirited displays of resistance you are likely to ever see. It wasn't necessarily backs-to-the-wall stuff, but the visitors had plenty of thrust going forward and spent a lot of time camped in the Merton half. Yet every man to a tee played above themselves, putting in the tackles, shutting down space, flying in for clearing headers and simply not giving Actonians an inch. The chat was tremendous, the high fives were constant, and with Glen in particular marshalling the troops, every player in yellow knew what their task was and stuck to it.

Yet even despite the rock-solid shape, the opponents carved out a late chance, but from point blank, Sam pulled off a peach of a save - eclipsed only, in fact, by the keeper's block at the other end after substitute Nick smashed a surely goal-ward bound effort, only to be denied by an outstretched palm.

But while the fourth goal would have put the icing on the cake, the home side kept the focus and saw out the closing minutes impressively. The final whistle eventually came, and jubilation rightly ensued. Three goals,

Merton 4XI



SUBS:

Shaun McCullough – RB

Chris Papanastasiou – CM

Nick Papanastasiou – ST

MATCH REPORTS – 12.12.15

3XIs

MERTON 4 ST JAMES' OLD BOYS 0 (HT: 2-0)

SCORERS: Tom (3), Denys

MOTM: Tom Benham

DOTM: Mike Reed

Another full squad of 14 boars plus cheerleader Walshy lined up for Merton 3s against the howling wind and a somewhat rag-tag St James Old Boys reserves, sporting a colourful array of shorts and socks and only ten men. Always a tasty proposition but we didn't work the numbers particularly well in the first 20 mins, instead devoting 6 men to shut down their lone striker who really didn't warrant such suspicion. Once we'd worked out that we could afford to push on a bit, the pattern of the game was set; namely that we needn't have bothered with marking out the full pitch and putting both goals out as the game was only played in half of it.

The opener/nerve-settler came when Mustard evaded a challenge and bundled the ball into Ricky, who played in Tom to slot past the keeper, moments after Lofty had, in a moment of inspiration, hauled himself off and put Tom up front. Mustard is so committed to the Merton cause these days that he is actually beginning to take on the form of a boar, and this was evident as he burrowed down the left wing, head bowed, leading with the tusks. As defenders leapt out of the way presumably fearing for their own safety he suddenly found himself in the opposition box, where the boar analogies abruptly ended with an outrageous swan dive and hopeful look towards the referee. No pen; and DOTD sewn up before half-time.

The second goal was a contender for goal of the season in the coveted "team goal" category. Mike and Vin started the move on the half way line, working the ball out to Mustard, who passed it in to Pete in the middle, who shifted it wide to Neal at right-back, who knocked it down the line to Reece, who threaded it through to Ryan all alone on the 6-yard line, who hacked it across goal for Denys to smash in at the far post. MOTD analysis suggests 25 completed passes in the build up, but I could just be making that up. 2-0 at half time, more of the same encouraged for the second half as Ellis picked up his deckchair, walked it down to the other goalmouth and re-opened his Mills & Boom novel.

More of the same in the second half as Joel "Skippy" Van Oosten was introduced and boars of war Pete and Ryan pushed on in midfield in search of someone to tackle. Merton could sniff a goal-fest, and opportunities were being generated aplenty with nice triangles down the right between Neal, Reece and Ryan, running in behind from Tom and Ricky, and Denys, more bear than boar, leading the line out-muscling defenders and creating space. The third goal came when one of said defenders scythed the big Ukranian down just outside the box, and was then sent to the touchline to remove his earrings and think about what he'd done. That left SJOB with nine men, so the ref graciously said we'd wait for him to return before re-starting play. Except nobody told Pete, who curled in a delightful chip for Denys to head back across goal where Tom arrived, charging in at full pace to poke the ball past the keeper. 3-0, and the hat-trick beckoned for Tom when Ricky

Merton 3XI



SUBS:

Joel Van Oosten – CB

Chris Papanastasiou – CM

Reece Smith – ST

tricked his way along the touch line and squared for Tom, 3 yards out, to blast straight at the keeper's chest. He'd have to wait for the third, but in the meantime Merton poured forward, wasting a succession of corners, crosses and goalmouth scrambles. At one point, Chris "Big Papa" Papanastasiou was so dismayed to see Ryan's left-foot swinging for a ball just in front of him in the 6-yard box that he yelled "NOOOOOOOOOO" as if auditioning for a role in a Hollywood B-movie.

The hat-trick was completed with a goal Tom had been threatening to score all game, running off the shoulder of the centre-back onto a lofted through ball from Pete (after he'd won the ball and flattened his man, naturally) and slotting into the corner past the admittedly excellent keeper, without whom Tom could have had 6 and Merton 16. No sooner than the ball had hit the back of the net, and before he'd even had time to celebrate his achievement, Tom was hauled off as a reminder that no one player is bigger than the team. At this point there was still plenty of time left to run up a score, or at least there would have been had we been playing 90 minutes. Alarm bells should have been raised by the ref mentioning at kick-off that he had to shoot off straight after the game, and the fact that at one point he looked to the sky rather than his watch when asked how long was left. There were still chances to be had; Denys launched a thunderbolt from the edge of the box that hit the bar and fired straight upwards like a ground-to-air missile, then set up Chris P for a spectacular air-shot with the goal at his mercy. Meanwhile, Pete broke up a rare foray into the Merton half and dribbled back and forth past the bamboozled attacker who reacted by brutally hacking him down. Voices were raised, tempers about to flare as Pete got up, walked over the the offender and said "sorry for doing you there mate".

The final whistle sounded shortly after on a convincing win, built on the solidity of Joel, Vin and Mike at the back (we've now conceded just 1 goal in 3 games) and the pace of Tom up front, who scooped a deserved MOM award. Also worth recording that the referee was actually very good and the opposition were good sports in difficult circumstances for them. Less than a season ago, it was Merton 3s who were turning up for away games with 10 men and now here we are with a full squad every week, great team spirit and difficult selection decisions to make. There will be tougher challenges ahead, starting with 2nd versus 3rd in the league next week. Bring it on.

4XIs

MERTON 3 OLD WILSONIANS 2 (HT: 0-2)

SCORERS: Jake Hewitt (2), Dulanie Richards

MOTM: Jake Hewitt

There was a certain swagger about Merton 4s as they arrived at Old Wilsonians, and understandably so after a first win of the league campaign the week before. And while Saturday's opponents had hammered them 5-0 only a fortnight ago, the belief was there that a different outcome would be in the offing. Relegated to the windswept, secondary pitches away from the clubhouse, it became clear that it would be a game of two very different halves. A huge slope, backed up by a stiff breeze meant that the team with the elements at their back had 45 minutes to make it count.

Lining up for Merton was Sam in goal, Mike and Steve Burchell at centre back and with John Gridley and Scholesy at fullback. Dan Gridley and Aaron were to occupy the centre of the park (although Aaron was replaced by Mike Elgar early on after an unfortunate injury), with Billy and Chris on the flanks. And it was left to Dulanie and Jake to provide the goals upfront.

After the coin toss, Merton were into the wind first half. Very quickly it became clear that this 45 minutes would be purely about damage limitation, and a lot of hard work. But the Yellows started very well, keeping their shape impressively, dealing with the enormous goal kicks, and largely restricting Old Wilsonians to passing it around in front of them, failed through-balls and hopeful long-range efforts.

Unfortunately, on 25 minutes, it was one of those hopeful long-range efforts that provided the opener. The hosts' striker made great contact from 25 yards, and despite Sam getting a good hand on it, the awkward bouncing ball snuck into the bottom-left corner. 1-0, but no cause for panic. Certainly a single goal had been bargained for in these conditions, and the 4s thus kept their heads up, and stuck to their tasks manfully. There were even some handy moments upfront, reminding Old Wilsonians that there was still a goal threat to consider.

But it was at the back where much of the good work was being done, and for all of the home side's dominance, clear-cut chances were actually few and far between. John in particular was outstanding in cleaning up loose balls, and keeping the left winger in check.

It's what made the circumstances for the second goal all the more unfortunate though. With just two minutes to go until the break, Sam played a goal kick short to John, who was immediately under huge pressure. He tried a dummy stepover, but unfortunately the Wilsonians striker read it, intercepted, and calmly slotted the one-on-one past Sam. 2-0, and a crushing blow. 1-0 at half time would have felt like a lead, but a two goal deficit felt no better than par. The chat was good at the break, and Merton knew that with the wind at their backs, the chances would come. But, in truth, they were a little flat when the game resumed. By no means poor, but for 20 minutes there just didn't seem to be much happening. No sustained possession, no real opportunities. In fact, about 10 minutes in, the ball fell kindly to a Wilsonians striker at the other end, and he ought to have done better with his shot from close range.

With the clock ticking, something inspirational was needed. Or so we thought. Dan did ever so well to win a free kick on the edge of their box, and after a bit of conjecture, it was decided that Jake would be the man to take it. He'd probably admit it wasn't his career-best strike, but somehow it bounced and bobbled it's way past the keeper and into the net. 2-1, and Merton had a lifeline.

But if the first was fortunate, the equaliser was pure class. The ball was scrambling around in midfield, and 25 yards out Dulanie did ever so well to control the ball. What followed was sensational, as he smashed it with his left foot into the right corner of the net. One of those strikes where it's in from the second it leaves his boot, and no keeper in the world had a chance, let alone the host's average one. 2-2 it was, and Merton were jubilant. They had all the momentum, and could smell victory. Yet with 10 minutes to go, disaster nearly struck at the other end, as, from open play, the ball ended up loose in the Yellows' box. Fortunately, their two strikers rather got in the way of each other, and when the trigger was eventually pulled, Sam was able to make a good save.

Moments like that confirmed in the lads' minds that maybe, just maybe, this was to be their day, and with

Merton 4XI



SUBS:

Mike Elgar – CM

Ryan Burchell – RB

five minutes to go, that magic moment arrived. Wilsonians were becoming increasingly troubled by long balls, and one found its way to Jake near the edge of the box. He controlled, he stopped. Time stood still. And then he dispatched it gloriously home, rattling the side netting, and setting off massive celebrations. 3-2, what a sensational comeback!

The home side were beaten, and they knew it. They offered nothing in reply in the final minutes, other than a nasty challenge on Chris. But he was okay in the end, and when the final whistle went, joyous scenes ensued. What a tremendous win! Two on the bounce, and evidence that, on their day, this spirited Merton side can beat anyone. One more game to go before the Christmas break. Can they make it three in a row? In this kind of form, you wouldn't bet against it.

MOTM: Again, bloody tough... the whole team. Steve and John outstanding at the back, and Dan Gridley immense. Probably has to go to Jake though, great effort son!

SEASON SO FAR...

Well we are half way through the season and there are lots of good things to report and a few disappointments.

THE SEASON SO FAR

Our major targets were on Recruitment and Finances. Like lots of clubs we struggled last season to field on a regular basis the teams that we had entered into the League. Our recruitment campaign has been rewarded and the selection difficulties have been eased but our erratic availability does bring weekly difficulties that cause a lot of work for our captains and managers and Clappers and Mark Chappell to sort out. But on the whole there has been a significant improvement. Our finances have improved as we have a larger membership and have been able to collect the subs and match fees better. Also we have more people drinking in the bar and a few good club nights, quiz etc. So at this stage of the season we are showing a small surplus which is very promising but we need to keep being careful with expenditure.

On the pitch it has been a little disappointing with only the 3s really doing well. Both 1s and 2s have suffered from availability issues and need to get runs going in the second half of the season to do their ability justice.

Discipline generally has been another issue with too many yellow cards and four red cards. Dave Laughton, our club Disciplinary Officer has done a great job in the administration of this but we need to stop getting silly yellow cards. I realise some bookings are inevitable Eg. mis-timed tackles etc. etc. but it is the needless bookings for dissent, ungentlemanly conduct that we can do something about and we must. Ungentlemanly conduct seems to cover a wide range of our everyday on-field activities EG. Delaying a free kick, kicking the ball away etc etc. These are often borne out of frustration but it is this lack of discipline that costs us. If we don't improve on this we will be called up in front of SAL committee and punished. And this is not what we want as a Charter Standard Club. Another area that would help is if we are genuinely welcoming and helpful with our visiting referees. And a word of thanks to David Laughton for his work in this area.

The Youth Section has been going from strength to strength driven on by Steve and Mckenzie. As required for Charter Standard clubs all our teams have qualified coaches running them with assistants with first aid qualifications and Child safeguarding badges but recruitment of players has been an issue. All teams are now pretty much up to strength although U13s and U14s could still do with a couple more players. The U14s in particular have had a rough start but now they have recruited a few more players, performances are starting to improve. Thanks to all the managers and helpers for their efforts.

THE CHALLENGE FOR THE REST OF THE SEASON

We need to improve our discipline and availability. So we need to get less disciplinary points and more league points. We need to carry on our recruitment campaign with a particular emphasis on goalkeepers.

The bar, as both a focal point and fund raiser, is a very important part of Merton Football Club and over the past years it has been brilliantly managed by Peter Kemp who with Jasper have been terrific servants of the club. Understandably, Peter has told us that as from Christmas he can no longer carry on with the full time Saturday job that this has become and we now need to make other arrangements. Jasper will continue to make his invaluable contribution but we are now urgently seeking alternative arrangements for the bar and catering for the rest of the season and beyond.

THE CHALLENGE FOR THE LONG TERM

For 11 aside football the storm clouds are gathering and we are not immune to the dangers to clubs. This season the SAL has already suffered some major casualties. Old Westminster Citizens have gone and other big clubs are teetering on the brink. It is lack of members and facilities that are the major factors in the decline of 11 aside football in London. So we would be foolish if we thought that this could not happen to us and we must work harder in these areas if we are to survive. So we need to focus on our priorities. We need to recruit more members and we need to tackle the problems with our facilities. We have been pursuing the Morden Park Community trust scheme with the Council but we need fall back positions if that does not happen and make the most of what we have at The Hood at the moment and try and secure our position here and improve it.

These are all serious and major challenges for our club that could threaten our continued existence but

what we are formulating plans to manage these threats but we need more volunteers to step forward to help. So thank you to all those who are helping but if you love playing for Merton and care about the future you may need to do more than just join up and play you may need to put your name forward and help us work to secure our future as best we can.

So on that note I wish you all a very Happy Christmas. I thank you all for your contribution to the club on and off the field but during the break when thinking about new year resolutions see if you have the time to step forward and do a bit more.

HAPPY CHRISTMAS EVERYONE AND LETS WORK FOR A SUCCESSFUL 2016 AND BEYOND!!!



2015/16 NOT THE QUIZ

1. Which is the worse portent of what is to come when you first see the ref?
 - (a) He turns up in a suit
 - (b) He is accompanied by his family
 - (c) He is being assessed
 - (d) He insists on giving the team one of those Mary Poppin's pre-match chats

2. Why was the England v Australia game in our bar so poorly attended?
 - (a) Everyone knew England was going to get slaughtered
 - (b) We don't have enough (or too many) Aussies in the club
 - (c) No one gives a F—K about egg chasing
 - (d) Word had got round that the Gladkows were coming and word had got round that they had both scored

3. Now Vanny has started coaching the youth section what is the major impact it has made?
 - (a) They play down the wings with penetrating runs and crosses
 - (b) They play down the wings with no penetration and no crosses
 - (c) A team photo takes 10 times longer as they all want to adjust their hair
 - (d) They are only fit for half the games

4. Which of the following do you think is cheating?
 - (a) Carrying on playing when you know the ball has gone out of play
 - (b) Shouting 'He's off' at the ref when you know he isn't
 - (c) Pretending that you have been tripped and diving
 - (d) Pretending the ball hasn't crossed the line for a goal
 - (e) Wearing the wrong colour tape on your socks

(Ed – It's OK, It does not matter but they are all unacceptable at Merton)

5. What is your response when your captain asks you to write the match report?
 - (a) A report, recording it all I have been trying to forget about it
 - (b) Well it would be a bit embarrassing, I was obviously Man of the Match, set-up all our chances and nearly stopped most of their goals
 - (c) Do we have reports? Whats that for?
 - (d) Nah I've tweeted it
 - (e) Since I got clattered I cant recall too much to be honest. What was the score?
 - (f) I was always taught if you cant say something nice don't say anything at all. "I say Nothing"

6. When you receive the Whatsapp text from your captain, what is your reaction? Do you...
 - (a) Text him back immediately telling him whether you are available or not
 - (b) Think whats up with this dude its only Thursday evening how should I know what I am up to at the weekend we haven't got past Friday night yet
 - (c) Ignore it I told him four weeks ago that it was the Boss's birthday and I was out.
 - (d) Ignore it as he knows he can usually rely on me

7. When it comes to putting the dirty kit into the washing bag what is best to do with very muddy socks that you have walked back in from the farthest pitch with your boots off?
- (a) Stretch them out shaking/scraping off any extraneous mud and placing them singly into the dirty wash bag with all the shirts and shorts that have been placed there in the same way
 - (b) Scrape them up from the floor in the way they have been ejected from my foot but inside out or not tie them up together in a knot
 - (c) Well after cleaning my boots with them I am not quite sure what happens to them
8. Whilst on the subject of socks do you know where sock tape comes from?
- (a) It starts off on a Saturday morning about half an hour before kick off in the kit bag and then somehow half an hour after the match it is in my kit bag Simple Magic
 - (b) No idea it is one of those wonderful things that the Kit fairy does but there it is and it's the right colour.
 - (c) They sell it in shops like Maplin and B&Q. (You are kidding me)
9. Watching Mustard playing fullback the other day (it is not for the squeamish), what is the biggest influence on his football has been in the last 10 yrs?
- (a) The Peter Kaye 'Have it advert'
 - (b) His dramatic change in shape
 - (c) Louis Van Gaal's appointment at his beloved United
 - (d) Advancing years
10. How is it that the 2s have not had any bookings or sendings off this season?
- (a) They blackmail/bribe the refs not to put them thru when they get in the bar
 - (b) They are a very polite handsome bunch of guys who do not transgress in any way
 - (c) Ben Cook and Liam Stevens have been playing for the 1s who seem to get all the bookings

UPCOMING FIXTURES – 19.12.15

1XIs

Merton v Weirside Rangers
(League)

2XIs

Crouch End Vampires v Merton
(League)

3XIs

Merton v Old Parkonians
(League)

4XIs

Merton v Ibis Eagles
(League)

5XIs

South Bank Cuaco v Bank of England
(League)

MERTON FC CLUB SHOP

MERTON FC CLOTHING NOW AVAILABLE AT THE NEW CLUB SHOP

New Merton FC clothing range, now available at the link below. From training gear to leisure wear for men, women and juniors take a look and get kitted out the new season. For better value take advantage of the bundle packs.

Order now from the [Merton FC Club Shop](#)



CHRISTMAS IS COMING!

Get your partners to the Merton FC Club Shop, pick-up some club attire instead of a Christmas jumper!

Some great bargains and new stock for all your football needs.

Click on the image above to take you to the club shop and look the part at training and your next match on a Saturday!



TRAINING BUNDLE

- 1 x Black training shirt
- 1 x Black training short
- 1 x Black/Yellow training sweat
- 1 x Black long length training pant
- Embroidered Merton FC badge on all applicable items

Price: £59.99



MERTON FOOTBALL CLUB

Joseph Hood Pavilion, Joseph Hood Recreation Ground, Martin Way, Merton, London SW20 9BU