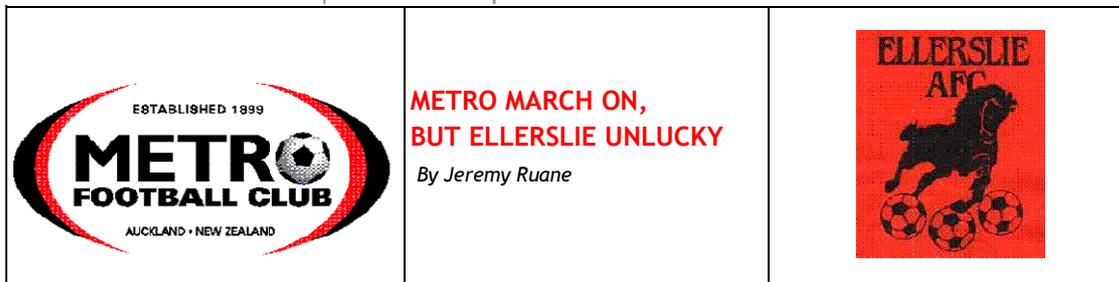


# ELLERSLIE AFC - CLASSIC MATCH

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A goal in each half earned Feltonmix Metro a 2-0 win over Ellerslie at Alby Turner Field on April 4, as the home team baptised their new floodlights in the Bluebird Premier League.

The score line, however, does not reflect Ellerslie's strong second half showing, which owed much to the efforts of substitute Malcolm Twiname in attack. He replaced the injured Rab McNeill just before the half-hour mark, and such was his performance that you had to wonder why he wasn't in from the start.

The defending champions, however, were a totally different proposition in the first half, and should have led by more than one goal at the interval, so dominant were they. Shaun Omara and Paul Grogan exchanged efforts early on, the latter's only being denied by the combined efforts of Sean Hird and Omara to clear the ball off the line.

Metro quickly regrouped, and responded with their first goal, in the 15th minute. Benny Hall exploded into action down the right and whipped in a cross. A scramble ensued, until Steve Goddard offered some clear direction with a shot at goal. Evan Claxton, Ellerslie's goalkeeper, had it covered, until a deflection took it past his diving frame - just - and into the opposite side of the net.

Willie Thompson and Stu Roberts went close before Hird sent Roberts scooting away in pursuit of a measured through ball in the 26th minute. Danny McHenry, alert to the possibilities, kept pace with his tear away team-mate, whose low cross just evaded the outstretched leg of the hard-working striker, and was cleared to safety.

On the half-hour, Hird got himself into, then out of a tight situation in defense, and played the ball back to Wayne Roach. The goalkeeper's hefty clearance sent Roberts and McHenry scampering forward again, with Roberts unwittingly standing on the ball as it dropped! But he quickly showed his presence of mind to try a chip, and the effort wasn't far away.

Steve Nickson sent one sizzling past the post five minutes before the break, after which Ellerslie came out with all guns blazing. Grogan and Twiname saw Roach's fist punching the ball off their heads in the 58th and 62nd minutes respectively, while Twiname's close-range reflex header three minutes later, following Gary Walton's header on a Grogan corner, cleared the crossbar by inches.

Referee Chris Carter was letting go a lot of offences which other match officials would, I'm sure, have seen fit to punish with more than just a talking to. So it was a bit harsh on John Van Dort, when he found his way into the referee's notebook in the 61st minute for what was, given what had gone before, an innocuous challenge.

Two minutes after this, Metro, in a rare second half foray, almost netted a second. But Goddard's luck was out on this occasion, his diving header ending up above the crossbar, following Willie Thompson's well-flighted free-kick.

This apart, it was almost all Ellerslie. Joel Facon, on three occasions, Thearou Thou, and the effervescent Twiname all went close, as the visitors pounded on a door which Metro simply would not allow to be opened.

Victory went to the home team, with a stoppage time goal clinching it. After Richard Harrison had blocked a close-range Van Dort shot on the line, Metro, moments later, sprung forward at pace, and fully exploited the gaps Ellerslie left behind them as they pursued an equaliser.

McHenery - a sound game from him - scuttled off down the right and delivered a lovely cross towards the edge of the penalty area which appeared to favour Claxton, as he came off his line to gather it. But Roberts hurtled in, seemingly from nowhere, and left the goalkeeper totally bemused at the sight of the ball nestling in the back of the net, the striker having stooped to conquer with a deft header. Ellerslie deserved better, but 2-0 to Metro it remained.