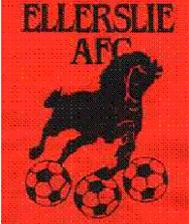


ELLERSLIE AFC - CLASSIC MATCH

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 <p>ESTABLISHED 1999 METRO FOOTBALL CLUB AUCKLAND • NEW ZEALAND</p>	<p>Attacking Prowess Fires Metro Into Last Four <i>by Jeremy Ruane</i></p>	 <p>ELLERSLIE AFC</p>
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The greater attacking prowess of Feltonmix Metro proved the key difference between themselves and Broadway Tavern Ellerslie when the two Bluebird Premier League frontrunners clashed in the quarter-finals of the Chatham Cup at Albie Turner Field on July 18.

Metro triumphed 3-1 in front of a 500-strong crowd, reversing the league result between the two sides at this venue earlier in the season in the process.

The first fifteen minutes saw Metro peppering Grant Robertson's goal with a stream of crosses, both high and low, from both left and right flanks - clearly Sean Hird's side was playing to a game plan, one which looked to exploit a perceived weakness in the aerial abilities of Ellerslie's defence in an effort to score an early goal.

But the visitors stood firm, giving no quarter, despite giving away a string of free-kicks around the edge of their penalty area as Metro's aerial bombardment intensified. And as the home side regathered in order to apply 'Plan B', Ellerslie surged forward through a Dave White free-kick. Richard Harrison flicked it on for Gary Harrington, whose dipping volley on the turn caught Grant Schofield by surprise as it crashed against the top of the crossbar.

Carl Jorgensen and Harrison exchanged efforts on goal in the next ten minutes, the latter's flashing inches wide of the upright after Harrington had combined with the pacy Craig Jessup.

It was at this point that Metro cranked up the pressure still further, and it paid off within minutes. The initial charge came in the 28th minute, with a splendid move which began deep inside the home team's half.

Jason Thompson, Jorgensen and Nigel Curties combined to release Willie Thompson down the right. His cross was touched on by Steve Nickson for Neil Harlock, who hammered his shot past a wrong-footed Robertson but against the upright, the ball rebounding back into the hands of the grateful goalkeeper.

Seconds later, Ellerslie had conceded possession, and it was to prove costly. Willie Thompson was again the source of the visitors' frustration, scurrying down the right before whipping in a cross from the byline which dropped perfectly for the fast-arriving Harlock. His header bulleted into the net to open the scoring.

Within four minutes, Metro had the ball in the net again through Nickson. He raced clear onto a Jason Thompson through ball and slotted home beyond Robertson, only to be pulled up for an offside decision which must have been extremely close, to put it mildly.

Jessup blazed wide of the target in the 34th minute, before an incident on the sideline resulted in a report to referee Paul Smith by his assistant, Roy Philpott, the outcome of which saw Metro substitute John Lawler being sent-off, this despite not having yet come on the park.

If anything, this spurred Metro on, and after Robertson had blocked with his legs to deny Nickson once again, the home team struck their second goal in stoppage time through Curties. He smashed the ball home from under the shadows of the crossbar, after a teasing Harlock free-kick had not been dealt

with by Ellerslie's defence.

Gareth Rowe charged through early in the second spell, only for Schofield to smother his 25-yard drive. From his clearance, Danny McHenery's persistence retrieved the ball close to the byline, and laid it back for Nickson. His cross was a horror ball for Robertson to deal with, dropping out of the floodlights. The 'keeper misjudged it, much to Harlock's delight - he thumped home a right-foot volley to stretch Metro's lead to 3-0 in the 51st minute.

Ellerslie staged a fightback, starting with a Robbie Allen-led raid which Metro somehow scrambled clear, Shaun O'Mara and Stuart Mair performing outstandingly at the heart of the home team's rearguard throughout this cup-tie.

Then it was Darryl Ward's turn to chance his arm, only for his shot to whiz across the face of goal. Allen tried again, in the 64th minute, and did everything right up to and including rounding the prone figure of Schofield. But his finish was anything but vintage Allen, allowing O'Mara to rescue the situation, albeit briefly.

For from Allen's corner, Rowe rose at the near post to head Ellerslie back into the match, the ball looping under the bar to send the visiting supporters, whose enthusiasm and commitment to their club deserves everyone's applause, wild with delight.

The team also gained visibly in self-belief from the All White's 65th minute effort, with Ellerslie going all out for a second strike in the minutes immediately after the goal. But O'Mara and Mair were not going to be beaten again, and their rock-like solidity proved too great an obstacle for the visitors to overcome, the home side closing out the game for an overall deserved 3-1 win, and a place in the Chatham Cup semi-finals.

Metro: Schofield; Van Dort, O'Mara, Mair, J. Thompson; W. Thompson, Jorgensen, Curties (Hird, 80), Harlock; McHenery, Nickson (booked, 38). Non-playing substitute: Lawler (sent-off, 38)

Ellerslie: Robertson; Ward, White, Rowe, Lewis; Harrison (Twiname, 54), Walton, Harrington (booked, 38) (Ashton, 84), Allen; Russo (Jennison, 75), Jessep.

Referee: Paul Smith