

ELLERSLIE AFC - CLASSIC MATCH

Ellerslie vs Pukekohe

Michaels Ave

29th July 2008

2.1 up and into injury time against 4th placed Ellerslie and we had earned it. Without a doubt we should have won this one. Last time we met Ellerslie they were 4.0 up at half time, running out 6.0 winners delivering a footballing lesson. This time we had them worried, panicked, frustrated and yes we had our share of some luck (nice for a change). However, as Dave always says 'football is a 94 sometimes 95 minute performance?', 97 minutes in this case!

All credit to Ellerslie the pitch was in good condition despite the conditions and the call was always going to be with the officials. Little did we know that the weather was going to be a major contributing factor during the game!

The Maroons played into the wind in the first half with some of the goal kicks reaching half way then coming back to the 18yard line! This forced us to bring the ball down and play football. Some excellent midfield work from Andy Hey and Robbie Leonard disrupted Ellerslie's pattern, whilst some superb technical skill and patient defending from Dave Allan and Jason Paranihi provided a solid platform on which to build. Once again Keegan Saville worked hard up front and we started to create chances. After 35 minutes we had defended well, moved the ball out wide and had the Ellerslie back four under pressure. Dave Allan had two excellently taken free kicks well saved by the keeper and put in a couple of corners. Ellerslie were still pressing and attacked our flanks dangerously, however, most of their shots were restricted to 20-25 yards. What was becoming apparent in the first half was that most of the opposition's chances came from our mistakes, we were putting ourselves under pressure. With 0.0 at half time and the wind in the second half it was clear that we would be masters of our own destiny.

Ellerslie came back strong in the first 20 minutes of the second half, with the weather forcing their hand to keep the ball down. The Maroons held firm in midfield and survived the Ellerslie pressure. It was becoming clear the opposition were getting frustrated. Rash tackles, (alleged) spitting and foul and abusive language being the indicators. On 75 minutes the opposition's pressure was rewarded. Defensive naivety allowed their leading scorer clear in on goal. Our heads went down and all our hard work had been cruelly punished. But wait, things were not over and on 80 minutes, Jamie Clarke launched a goal kick into the opposition's half. The wind caught the ball carried it towards an oncoming goalkeeper who misjudged the bounce and watch in disbelief as the ball hit the back of the net. Unbelievable! How many people can say they have seen a goalkeeper scoring from a goal kick live? This was the fortune we needed; we were back in the game and heads back up once again. On 84 minutes our belief provided a period of pressure on the Ellerslie penalty area and when an opportunist strike from Joseph Morris hit the back of the net the feeling was that this was going to be our day. There we were 2.1 up going into injury time; however, we were to be masters of our own destiny. On 90 minutes we were caught napping at a corner and in went the header ? 2.2. Ok so we would settle for a point, not to be. On 93 minutes a lapse ball in midfield provided an opportunity for Ellerslie to go through on goal and to pinch a 'gut-wrenching' third. Further woe was incurred by a very harsh and undeserved second yellow for Robbie Leonard on 94 minutes. Oh how quickly things can change in football, Ellerslie

had got out of jail (as mentioned by their coach) and two of their goals came from our clear mistakes.

However, onwards and upwards and to be in a position to say we should have beaten the fourth placed premier league chasers is positive indeed, we have come a long way. The Maroons have shown in their last two outings (against 6th and 4th placed teams) that they are no push over and not just another aberration.

A huge thank you to our small band of very vocal and dedicated supporters who provided great support from the sidelines and to Ellerslie for their hospitality. Furthermore, thank you to Josh, Chris and Trent for your support and to James Wright (it was a shame your last game for the club didn't quite finish on that high note, we wish you well). Finally well done to the team, we fought hard to put ourselves in a winning position, this was the one that got away, it won't next time!

Team :- Jamie Clarke, Ben Johnstone, Dave Allan, Jason Paranihi, Brad Frost, James Wright, Duncan Moxon (Eddie Bignell, 64), Andy Hey, Robbie Leonard, Joseph Morris, Keegan Saville (Jethro Conway, 67)

Subs not used: Chris Mahoney, Josh Wright, Trent Hirst.

Man of the Match: Robbie Leonard- a gutsy, mature performance demonstrating some intelligent and ?gritty? football in midfield.
