

Match Report - 03

The season begins...

After a long preseason starting in July, the first league game was facing Offerton Park. Mixed results in the preseason friendlies did not show the strength and depth we had developed in the squad.

With our first game being against last season's joint 2nd placed team Edgeley Villa at their new ground we knew it would be a tough game. With a great effort from Jimmy and Bill getting everyone in the squad signed on by Friday, we had 17 lads available.

With almost everyone there an hour before kickoff we had time to get a proper warmup and team talk while the other team managed tried to find a ref and some nets. The pitch was in excellent condition and perfect for playing the ball around. Debuting the new kit The Offy looked ready to go a slight change in the keepers uniform meant we had a new nickname for Hassan AKA Barney the Dinosaur.

Jimmy and Cal had some very tough decisions in who to select for the starting XI, settling on a 4-5-1 formation against a strong side it was felt would give us the best chance to build from a solid defensive line.



The starting XI is shown across, which left a stacked bench of Hodder, Thom, Kieran, Matt Oates, and Matt Kealy.

With the nets thrown up and everyone ready, the whistle was blown and the game kicked off. A high energy start from The Park meant that Edgeley Villa were coming under pressure high up the pitch, a good formation from everyone on the pitch meant that options were closed down quickly, forcing their weaker players to make mistakes. Chances were soon coming to Offerton with passbacks being chased down, notably the keeper under severe pressure managed to squeeze the ball through a tackle in his own 6 yard line lucky to escape the first goal but picking up a knock in the process. The Offy defence dominating Villa's strikers, gave them no time to bring the ball down and often won both the 1st and 2nd balls. With Newton picking up the pieces from any loose balls cleared out from the back line and using his vision to spray balls through towards our attack, Luke was busy chasing down the through balls and clearly had the edge on both opposing centre backs. Taking some heavy treatment from a few tackles left him on the floor more than once, and forced him off at around the 35 minute mark to recover from a knock.

This gave a chance to one of the bench players to make their mark on the game, with Thom coming on he immediately brought a physicality to the attack that worried the Edgely defence. Picking up a through ball and running straight through towards the box a last ditch fowl just as he was past the last man resulted in only a free kick, the ref choosing to let the Villa player go without a deserved yellow card. Jimmy N taking charge off set pieces with his dangerous balls into the box meant the Villa keeper needed to be on his toes to protect his net. The ref being very strict on offsides, calling the slightest hint of offside on freekicks meant a few good chances were wasted.

With half-time approaching JP and Keith providing good outlets but finding it difficult to get any clear cut chances and a lack of passes out wide meant that they had to fight to get involved in the game, both giving good accounts of themselves defensively. With no real threats on the Offerton goal all of the back four quickly shutting down the odd attack and corner, leaving a confident Hassan sweeping up and balls that came into his area.

HT 0-0

A positive team talk and the players all feeling like they could win this match with a little extra push, and a crucial role yet to be played by the remaining bench players.

Starting the second half with no changes to the line up meant OPFC could pick up where they left off with quality football being played across the pitch, Colin and Callum trying to link with with the wide men and joining in the attacks, and our taller players getting forward for set pieces. Some odd decisions on every side from the ref was getting to some players, but Offerton played the referee just right and stayed on his side, even when he got it wrong.

Jimmy N having a cracking game continued to play pinpoint through balls, Thom receiving them well and creating a goal threat, was through on goal having skipped past the defender but was pulled back at the crucial moment and didn't manage to convert, the ref not spotting the obvious foul. An almost identical through ball to Thom lead him to the edge of the box where a shot was unleashed, beating the keeper easily, but hitting the crossbar. The ball, rebounding out, and looping to Colin who took it on the volley and struck it cleanly, and only an outstanding full stretch save from the Villa keeper managing to stop the Park from scoring.

After 15 minutes a revitalised Luke came back onto the pitch to cause havoc, along with Hodder, in an ambitious double substitution designed by manager Jimmy to push us to a win.

The defence again looking rock solid in the 2nd half and Hassan dominating his area whenever called upon, with a few particularly notable moments, a diving save from a freekick 20 yards out superbly held under pressure and a flying challenge on the edge of his box to clear the ball from onrushing attackers, a complete performance and domination of his area stopped any attacks.

With the score still holding at 0-0 on the 70th minute a draw was looking more likely by the minute, both sides still evenly matched. At that moment Jimmy N with another trademark through ball to Luke, who took it down and fooled the last defender to leave a one on one with just the keeper to beat. A cool finish into the corner had OPFC rushing to celebrate.

72' 1-0 Offerton Park FC

The home side looking deflated after finally conceding turned on each other and the ref, with players losing their cool, and the old school ref playing to the letter of the law meant

that one Villa player was shown a straight red card for dissent. This made things easier for The Offy, who continued to stick to their gameplan, with the rest of the bench coming on to see out the game comfortably. A couple of late goals in the 85th and 90th minutes from Callum (Yes I am claiming that one!) and Luke with a 2nd, put the scoreline at 3-0 and a well deserved victory for Offerton Park F.C.

The Good

- Outstanding turnout
- All around performance
- 3 points to start the season

The Bad

- NONE!

The Ugly

- Captain Gaz at the wrong venue :)

Player of the Month - August - James Newton

Trophy will be awarded at the next game.

