



HotScots Football Club

Birmingham Blaze vs HotScots Sunday 11th October 2009 12:30 pm ko

HotScots starting 11:

Thomson, Sinclair, Curling, Black, Simpson, Rogers,
Fraser, Parnham, Sutherland, Fleming (c) and Anderson.
Subs: Gucluer, Amos and Rowe.

The Hotscots went down to Birmingham on the back of a morale sapping defeat in the first round of the GFSN Cup of which we were the holders, winning it only 5 months previously, therefore a very poor defence. This result was reflective of our season thus far, but despite not winning matches we played well in large spells in our season openers, therefore not much was broken that needed to be fixed. Confidence was relatively high.

On entering this difficult away tie the philosophy was one of back to basics. We had to remember that we only achieved success last season by working as a team. Gladly this shone through in the performance that was to unfold that afternoon.

This was not apparent in what was a bad first 5 minutes of the match for the HotScots. It was firstly to witness the loss of their Player of the Season Craig Parnham to injury which meant a debut was given to new recruit Chris Gucluer in the potentially crucial and difficult area of central midfield. Also at this time the HotScots lost the first goal, this seemed unfortunately symptomatic of our season thus far, some slack play was coupled with the ill-fortune of a deflection which saw the ball cruelly spin over the helpless Thomson in goal and ripple the net.

However, whereas earlier in the season and maybe even in our previous match this did not lead to a capitulation, demoralisation or panic. Instead the HotScots took it in their stride hoping that they would get similar luck which they had not tasted for some time. A bit of that was to come their way within 10 minutes. Manager Simpson picked out Rogers on the wing with a slide-rule pass from which he delivered a pin point cross towards the back post taking out all the defenders, leaving Anderson with a clear header at goal. The equaliser went in through the goalkeepers hands. A good goal in terms of response and team play but most would have expected the keeper to have dealt with the goal more effectively, but lets give credit to the power of the Anderson header, and a little fortune the HotScots were happy to accept.

The first half was interspersed with some good interchanging of passing, footwork and missed opportunities for the HotScots. On the downside Blaze were presented with some opportunities due to individual error, an aspect the HotScots would do well to cut out if they are to have a more successful latter half to the season.

One such gilt-edged chance came from a long clearance which the HotScots defence did not deal properly with, allowing the ball to bounce in the box and travel on to hit the bar. Thereafter the ball managed to somehow evade firm contact from the onrushing Blaze players and squirmed past the thankful Thomson's right-hand post. Again a lucky break for the HotScots, however it was not to hold out. Blaze were soon to make it 2-1.

Again though the HotScots were partly architects of their own downfall, things were not dealt with effectively in the heart of the HotScots penalty area. A scramble had many opportunities to be cleared with a few players guilty of not managing to do so. The upshot being a Blaze player was the first player to connect properly with the ball, and unfortunately for the HotScots this led to it trickling over the line. However, gladly again this, while met with some derision, was used again to gel the squad together in what was to be an impressive second half display.

Half time: Birmingham Blaze 2-1 HotScots

The second half started with the HotScots believing that the game was far from over, gladly for us, with a positive team talk and great effort this proved to be the case. Again they dominated, but this time pressure was turned into goals.

HotScots domination was reflected in the fact that goalkeeper Thomson did not have a save to make in the whole second half. The main danger came from HotScots own frailties and a few dangerous Blaze corners, one of which again slipped past the thankful Thomson's right hand post.

In an attacking sense the HotScots befitted for the return of Cup Final MOM Stewart Fraser who's athleticism, nonce and touch were there for all to see. He linked well with the midfield and also did well in feeding the flanks which were dominant for much of the rest of the afternoon. Here Rogers was delivering some great balls and Sutherland's tireless work-rate was also proving a handful on the other flank. Indeed the goal came from the latter with trademark athleticism which saw him race clear of the Blaze defence and deliver a great ball into the box met by the onrushing Fraser and Anderson, the latter of which securing a brace with a finish through the defenders legs on the goal-line.

Soon after this welcome equaliser the HotScots were dealt with another almost literal knock-out blow. Sutherland came off worst in a sickening clash of heads with the big Blaze centre half. No quarters were given or asked for in this match.

But while the Blaze defender was ok after treatment Sutherland had to leave the field with a gash to the head, from which blood was flowing. He had to go off leading to yet another HotScots reshuffle, Amos deputising. Thankfully however this was not for long, Sutherland returned after being bandaged up. This let the HotScots revert to their original formation with Amos remaining on the field, Gucluer making way.

The remainder of the match saw the HotScots push for the winner however being mindful of the Blaze breakaway which was a constant threat throughout the match. In the meantime the HotScots pressure was giving them many goal scoring opportunities, however as in the matches thus far this season this was not transferred into goals, yet.

The winning goal when it did come, was rather unorthodox and to the unbiased observer, probably justified. Fraser took a corner on the right wing, which in swung to settle in the far corner of the net probably assisted by the craft of Fleming. As welcome as it was bizarre. The match was thereafter played out with the HotScots still in control and looking the most likely to score again. However the final whistle was very welcome when it did come.

Writing this of course as a slightly biased reporter I do feel that the HotScots were well worth their victory. Their effort was reflective of what had come before this season the difference was that we just had a little more self belief and things just went our way a bit more though I don't quite think it can be said we were the luckiest team.

The main difference to me was in team spirit. The togetherness that was lacking a couple of weeks ago mirrored sharply with that which was present on this day. This saw us maintain belief in what was a difficult match. A lot has to be said for coming from behind twice and finishing so strongly. There are still aspects we can improve upon but continue this and we should have a more positive second half to the season. For us that starts here.

Management verdict: An excellent team display and weekend to which all played their part from the players to the BAPs substitutes and supporters.

On the playing front we feel that it was an excellent team display and that it may be slightly unfair to pick out any individuals for praise but we will anyway.

Congratulations to Chris on his debut, being thrust into the frame a lot sooner than we/he expected, and doing well against a very strong and mobile Blaze midfield. Mention also goes to Michael Black who again had a good match, helping to shackle a dangerous Blaze attack. Alan Rogers also worked tirelessly, with some excellent delivery into the box, one a goal assist of course. Stu S also had an excellent match, his mobility causing the Blaze defence all sorts of problems, also providing an assist. The referee gave the MOM to a certain mister Stew F (never heard of him a week ago! 😊). I'm not going to argue this time with the referee. We welcome back what he can give to the team and hope to see a lot more of that from him and likewise from the rest of the squad. This includes team spirit, Blaze showed us a year and only two weeks ago that that can take you far. We all need to keep working hard and together to get the results we desire for the remainder of the season. 😊 CS