

## Chadli fires Halifax Firsts to opening victory

Cup contenders Fax defeated James Thirds in the opening stanza of their campaign in Group C



By Tom Harle, Deputy Sports Editor (2015/16)  
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Halifax Firsts **1** - **0** James Thirds



Image: James Hostford

Halifax Firsts fought their way past a stubborn James Thirds side thanks to Omar Chadli's first-half strike on the JLD.

Archetypal cup specialists Fax are seen in some quarters as the favourites to win this year's competition and to lift the trophy for the third time in four seasons.

They completely monopolised possession and control of this contest from the first whistle against a James side who were happy to sit deep and let Halifax play in front of them.

The Black Swan barely mustered a shot in anger but were highly disciplined in defence and succeeded in frustrating their opponents for long periods, although Chadli's close-range effort would prove sufficient for three points in the end.

Garo Heath, ritualistically top scorer in the college leagues, broke into the left channel repeatedly in their early stages. He drew a low save from Simon Littler from a tight angle, who parried firmly across goal to send the ball away from danger.

Heath received a pass from Lukas Girzadas and stepped in from the flank, but his low shot from 20 yards

was meat and drink for Littler low to his right.

In a game of few chances and little goalmouth action, Halifax maintain possession very well in midfield areas but struggled to translate this into penetration behind James' back four.

Fax's midfield are a triumvirate of astute ball-players. Will Knifton-Smith is an adroit distributor at the base of the three, while Rune Bore is a compact reader of the game. Captain Elliot Tester has opted to have 'Hoolahan' printed on the back of his shirt and bears many of the same qualities as the Norwich schemer; namely, a fine balance and creative instinct. The three were in concert for most of the game, rarely seen far from one another.

Perhaps the best chance of the first-half came when Heath whipped a cross into the box and James Axford intervened ahead of Charlie Dunning. The left-back's clearance fell to Girzadas five yards out, but he could only divert an effort high and wide.

Halifax broke the deadlock when Bore played Heath into space and he forced a shot on target which Littler couldn't hold- Chadli was on the scene to plant the loose ball into the net for 1-0.

The second-half was fairly uneventful but James managed to continually disrupt passing moves. Norman Vitarigov is one of the best off the ball operators in the competition and seems to arrive on the scene regardless of where play happens to be. His midfield colleague, fresher George Staddon has the intelligence of a player who could- and perhaps should- operate several teams above.

George Waring was introduced from the bench in the second-half and he had a couple of chances to put the game to bed. First, he couldn't quite turn Heath's low, first-time cross in and then he sliced a loose ball over the bar after Mark Howarth's centre broke to him in the box.

Elsewhere in Group C, Langwith's terrific start to the College Cup continued as their Seconds beat Goodricke's 2's 3-2 thanks to goals from Tom Leach, Ope Teffy and Chris Anderson.

The group's other game saw Fax's fellow top seed Vanbrugh 1's thrash Derwent Fourths 7-0.

***Halifax: Basu; Birtles, Chasteauneuf, Marsh, Girzadas; Knifton-Smith, Bore, Tester; Dunning, Chadli, Heath***

***Substitutes: Howarth, Waring, Johnson***

**Man of the Match: Rune Bore**

***James: Littler; Mitchell, Pugh, Trewartha, Axford; Vitarigov, Staddon, Lawson; Lansana, Badeshia, Hosier***

***Substitutes: Yu, Gray***

**Man of the Match: George Staddon**



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