

James Firsts off to winning start in Cup defence

The Black Swan were made to work hard for three points as Group B began with a bang



By Tom Harle, Deputy Sports Editor (2015/16)
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James Firsts **6 - 2** Halifax Fifths



Matt Singleton scored James' fourth in the second half to see them to victory against Halifax 5's. Image: James Hostford

College Cup holders James Firsts began their bid to retain the title with an absorbing 6-2 win over Halifax Fifths in Group B.

The scoreline was merely a reflection of the last twenty minutes of the game, before which the teams were tied at 2-2. Fax had improbably hauled themselves back into the contest from two goals down thanks to fine goals from Aidan de Guzman and Brad Picker.

Dec Tuite's side shared their strikes out evenly, with goals from Thomas Jobling, Sam Thorp, Joe Fox, Matt Singleton, Dom McCormick and Will McGuinness enough to see them over the line comfortably- in the end.

Although they ruthlessly exploited time and space afforded them in the closing stages, the holders will have to put to bed the weaknesses that saw them risk dropping points in their opening game.

Singleton nearly gave them the lead in the first ten minutes, forcing a shot on target from an angle which was parried back into a dangerous, central area by Fax keeper Joseph Shufflebootham. Winger Thorp was on the scene but left-back Cavan Trenerry was strong enough to clear his lines.

After Singleton had nodded Rob Carr's corner narrowly wide of the left-hand post, James opened the scoring with no small hint of good fortune. Jobling's free-kick to the right of goal took a wicked deflection off the outstretched boot of Sam Price, standing in the wall, and ballooned high into the net.

Halifax hinted at their attacking threat when rangy midfielder Jonny Broomfield's delivery was turned onto the near post by their onrushing captain Eric Farrington with Andy Balzan stranded.

Thorp made it 2-0 before the break; he was first to react when a goalline clearance from Wildman looped up into the air five yards out and nodded home under pressure.

Comfortable in the game as half-time came and went, James looked like a different team and errors begun to creep into their game that often relies on precise distribution from defence.

To their credit, Fax showed all the invention and industry needed to exploit such lapses. Aidan De Guzman assumed control of a long ball in the right channel and calmly lifted an effort over Balzan into the net for 2-1.

Five minutes later, Brad Picker latched on to a loose ball down the left and, despite Farrington being in a better position in the middle, took on Balzan and exquisitely lifted the ball over the UYAFC number one from some range.

It had been a day of shocks on the JLD, with Vanbrugh 2's overturning a poor Alcuin 1's 2-0 and Langwith 3's upsetting rivals Derwent 3's with a last-minute winner.

There was another one in the air as James looked to force an opening, with Dave Clarkson firing a drive over the top from thirty yards.

Dom McCormick fizzed a pass into UYAFC Firsts team-mate Joe Fox, who turned into space and fizzed a low shot in on goal- Shufflebootham made contact with his left foot but couldn't keep the effort out and James had a 3-2 lead.

As the Black Swan begun to assume control, Thorp and Singleton exchanged a clean one-two on the right hand side of the box that was simple too slick for Fax's defence, before the latter slotted a low shot into the bottom corner from eight yards to open his College Cup account.

Thorp then extracted a soft penalty from Jerome Legros and defender McCormick stepped up, who had just fired a free-kick narrowly wide, to drive home an emphatic spot-kick down the middle for the fifth.

It was six when the ball broke to Will McGuinness on the left-hand side of the area and his half-volley was too much for Shufflebootham who was utterly bombarded in the closing stages with shots he simply was unable to deal with.

James' next assignment comes against Vanbrugh Seconds next Wednesday, while Halifax face Langwith Thirds.

James: Balzan; Sangha, Tuite, McCormick, Clarkson; Thorp, Fox, Jobling, McGuinness; Singleton, Carr

Substitutes: Cox

Man of the Match: Sam Thorp

Halifax: Shufflebootham; Wildman, Edwards, Legros, Trenerry; Farrington, Broomfield, Price, Roberts, De Guzman; Picker

Man of the Match: Eric Farrington



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