

Football – Spartans WFC lose at home



by Edmund Brown

FORFAR SPOIL SPARTANS 100TH GAME CELEBRATIONS

Spartans 100th league game celebrations were cut short as Forfar were victorious in the Scottish Women's Premier League game, beating the home side 2-0 at Ainslie Park to go three points clear of their Edinburgh rivals and into third place in the league.

With neither side able to break the deadlock in the first half, it was the away side who took the advantage on the hour mark with Nicky Grant heading home prior to substitute Caroline Heron chipping the ball over Rachel Harrison to seal the victory five minutes from time.

It was the away side who created the first opportunity with Captain Nicola Davidson hitting a shot from the edge of the area that sailed inches past the far post. Julia Scott picked the ball up on the right wing and charged towards the bye-line before sending in a cross to the far post that was flicked back by Nicky Grant into the path of Davidson who smashed in a fierce first time shot that flew past the near post.

Spartans were gaining a lot of possession in the middle of the park and with ten minutes gone the home side were awarded the first corner of the game after Bobbie Beveridge had a cross charged down by Rachel Small. Lana Clelland's out-swinging cross was met by the head of Claire Crosbie but flew wide of the far post.

With both midfields battling to gain the upper-hand within the

first 20 minutes, it was the away team who came closest to breaking the deadlock however Davidson's shot was again wide of the post. Caren Webster collected the ball on the left of midfield and played a through ball to Grant who, after holding the ball up, laid it into the path of Davidson for the captain to hit a first-time effort which whistled past the post.

The game was becoming stretched with both sides looking for that elusive opener and the home side came close again. Clelland, who was gaining more and more time on the ball, flew down the left wing before sending over a cross to the bursting run of Molly McKean. However Samantha Milne managed to get a challenge in on the midfield maestro with the ball only going straight back to Clelland who flicked the ball past one defender and fired in a right foot shot that ended up in the arms of Catherine Fitzsimmons.

Straight from the keeper's kick Forfar themselves were close to breaking the deadlock as Davidson fired in a fierce shot that Harrison palmed around the post for a Forfar corner. Fitzsimmons kick found Grant on the edge of the area and, after holding off the attentions of Crosbie, the striker flicked the ball out to Davidson who sent a shot towards the Spartans goal only for Harrison to turn the ball around the post for a Forfar corner.

With half time fast approaching Spartans had two opportunities to score in quick succession with both Sarah Ewens and Louise Young firing shots in from the edge of the area. Louise Mason collected a Young pass and flicked it infield to Ewens who, after escaping the grasps of the central defence, fired in a fierce right foot shot that Fitzsimmons, at full stretch, managed to palm away from the danger zone.

Minutes later Spartans Captain Young sent a shot from 22 yards out that again Fitzsimmons was equal to it. Clelland sent over a corner to the far post for Crosbie to head back into the six yard box which was eventually cleared by Small. However the

ball landed at the feet of Young who took a touch before sending in a shot that was pounced on by the diving Fitzsimmons.

Minutes before the half time whistle Forfar charged up-field only to see a Small shot fly over the Spartans goal. Scott picked the ball up on the right wing and drove at the Spartans defence before sending over a looping cross to the far post to Grant. Grant, who was quickly closed down by Crosbie, cut the ball back to the advancing Small who evaded two challenges before firing in a left foot shot that flew past the right hand post.

And it was the away side who took the lead on the hour mark as Nicky Grant headed home after some great wing play by Davidson. Davidson danced down the left wing before playing the ball back to Small who sent over a cross to the unmarked Grant to head past keeper Rachel Harrison into the top corner of the net.



Spartans, straight from the restart, piled the pressure onto the Forfar goal with Ewens, after taking on two defenders, gained a corner after her low cross was deflected out of play by the legs of Small. From the resulting corner keeper Fitzsimmons outstretched fingers flicked the ball clear from the eagerly awaiting head of Crosbie.

With only 15 minutes to go Spartans created their best chance of the game as Diana Barry, who had come off the bench on the hour mark, went clear through on goal only to see her shot expertly saved by the advancing Fitzsimmons. As the ball broke back to the forward, two Forfar defenders, including Kelly Clark, got back on the line to clear the second Barry shot.

And it was Forfar who sealed the victory five minutes before the final whistle as substitute Caroline Heron, with her first touch after coming off the bench, flicked the ball over the advancing Harrison to give her side a 2-0 win. As Spartans were pressing for that elusive goal, Forfar broke clear with a lobbed ball over the home side's defence to the feet of Heron who looked up and chipped the ball over the advancing Harrison and into the back of the net.

Spartans Assistant Head Coach Mike Ross was disappointed to lose but felt his team played well overall. He said: "I thought we created some good opportunities in the first half and after going in all square at the break I felt we had enough chances and enough pressure in the second half to win the game. However two bad decisions cost us two goals and ultimately the three points."

Forfar coach Kevin Candy was pleased to get all three points with his team's defending as strong as it's ever been. "I thought we played extremely well today and I was particularly pleased with our defending. Every player put in so much effort and commitment and having never previously taken any points from Ainslie park it's great to leave victorious today."

Teams:

Spartans: Rachel Harrison, Ashley Nicolson, Claire Crosbie, Chloe Fitzpatrick, Louise Magilton, Lana Clelland (Trisha McLaughlin, 45 mins), Molly McKean, Bobbie Beveridge, Louise Young, Louise Mason (Diana Barry, 60 mins), Sarah Ewens.

Unused subs: Ann Taylor, Nichola Sturrock, Louise Moultray, Heli Hakkinen, Victoria Farquhar

Forfar: Catherine Fitzsimmons, Samantha Milne, Rachael Small, Fay Hughes, Julia Scott (Caroline Heron, 85 mins), Nicola Davidson, Iona Colville, Caren Webster (Emma McCulley, 75 mins), Lucy Graham (Joanne Collier, 65 mins), Nicky Grant, Kelly Clark.

Unused subs: Gemma Collier, Clare Garrett, Danni McGinley, Stephanie Milne

Report by Edmund Brown

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