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U11 League Cup, 09th October 2011

One week and thirty miles from the slopes of Lambourn, and once again the weather threatened to exert its influence upon the field of play. Not this time the threat of sunburn and dehydration, but the stiff wind threatening to play havoc with our long balls and hairstyles alike.

The big question on everyone's lips; how would our boys respond to last weeks defeat? Put simply, the answer would appear to be; resoundingly, relentlessly, and emphatically! (some would also argue the case for the inclusion of ruthlessly).

Broad Town won the toss and elected to start. From the whistle, a tidal onslaught of blue and yellow swept towards the Stratton Youth end, the ball snapping from player to player, middle of the park to the Stratton area to the *back of the net !!* Already? Surely not? The kick off whistle was still ringing in my ears. Heaven only knows who scored; I will give mention in dispatches to those on the score sheet at the end of this report.

And so, with the Stratton keeper having made his acquaintance with the back of his net for the first of what was to become many visits, the ball was placed again on the centre spot. The ref's whistle blows. Stratton are dispossessed. *Pass, pass, dribble, cross, shot, back of the net!!*

Taken at face value, the Broad Town game plan (go for the jugular, spare no quarter; pile on the pressure, attack, attack, attack) might appear to lack subtlety. But my word, it was certainly effective. As Beefy, Crossy, Grindley, and Georgey ran rough shod across a beleaguered Stratton Youth despite their early implementation of a six-one-one emergency damage limitation formation, the game was out of sight within the first quarter of an hour.

The first half became a demonstration of Broad Towns ability to retain possession, ride the tackles and move the ball freely about the Stratton half, with the opposition seeming to have no plan B to diffuse the pace of the Broad Town attack and break up play.

On the rare occasion the ball had the audacity to venture into Broad Towns half, it was pounced upon by Max, one of the two Dan's or JD and immediately returned to the circling pack of Colt's midfielders and forwards, each hungry to take another bite out of Stratton Youth (I started this review with a tenuously nautical flavour, and I'm sticking with it. Humour me).

With the break came the opportunity for Stratton Youth to regroup. It also gave Broad

Towns support the chance to compare notes and try to agree on a definitive scoreline (10-0 was the consensus of opinion), and Matt the time implement a few subtle changes and try out a more experimental line up.

Thus the second half started with Nathan leaving his goal and taking up a new birth as centre forward, Crossy departing the left side of midfield for goal, Beefy swapping from right to left, in fact everybody but Max and Hilly playing out of position, and poor Cam / Train /whoever else had a go at being captain of the Broad Town juggernaut somehow trying to hold things together and prevent the Colts from aimlessly drifting about the field like a rudderless vessel.

A few subtle changes then. What could possibly go wrong? As it happens, not a great deal. Despite Nathan being so far up the field he had a nosebleed (at last, a proper football cliché), he acquitted himself well up front, causing plenty of problems not only for the hard worked Stratton Youth defence, but also for Karen who, cut free from the shackles of tension that usually bind her as the parent of a goal keeper, became a splendidly vocal addition to the touchline chorus, and demonstrated a clear requirement for one or two more visits to charm school!

Crossy managed a kicked clearance, but otherwise had little opportunity to exercise his goal keeping chops, and had to make do with scraps of back passes from similarly untaxed defenders.

With Stratton Youth battered and beaten against the rocks of defeat, shots rained in from all sorts of unexpected places; Our goalkeeper threatening Stratton's goal with a shot from inside their area, Max striking from the right and just over the half way line and falling only marginally short (literally seconds after Matt had issued instructions to calm down, keep possession and stop lashing the ball randomly about the place. Coach, you need to get a grip of that dressing room). It all got a little surreal.

With the final whistle came incredulous looks from all quarters at the final score. 14-0! It is to the great credit of the Stratton Youth side that not once did they let their heads drop and stop competing, and they deserve much praise for their positive attitude in the face of adversity.

However, all we can assume about Broad Town Colt's is that they stopped pushing in the second half. To only score 4 goals after a first half which garnered 10 smacks of a lack of application and hunger after the break? Is that the attitude we expect from our boys. Absolutely not. More grit, fire and determination please, and don't take your foot off the gas next time! (I'm joking, of course.)

And so onwards to the next round , with confidence high and two weeks to come back down to earth before the next game. A great debut from George Jarmolinski was capped with a neat finish for the first of what I hope will be many goals for Broad town Colts, and a big thanks to Stu for stepping 'once more unto the breach' (holy cow, a quote from Shakespeare, surely a match report first!) as referee at the last minute, and despite carrying an injury from a hard fought hockey game the day before (He scored by

the way. High fives for Stu).

That leaves the small matter of the scorers. Deep breath, here goes; Cameron (x3), Grumpy(x3), Beefy(x3), Train(x1), George Jarmolinski(x1), Hilly(x1), Crossy(x1), and Wadders(x1).

To Max, JD and Nathan, excellent work on keeping a clean sheet and staying alert. To Liam, another good performance and great dedication to the cause, to turn up with only an hours notice.

And a big hand to the official referee for saving us £15 by not turning up. Could I have a second to the proposal to spend it on English lessons for me? I do seem to have meandered from past to present tense with gay abandon!

The Colts go marching on!!

(NB :- It's from Henry V, pub quiz fans!)