

Robins U12 Red 2-2 Supermarine

2nd October 2016



Scorers:

Zak 18
Lewis 51

Player of the Match:

Zak Rawlins

Although Supermarine are a new team, there were still plenty of familiar faces as we've played against most of their team in various different teams over the years, so it was more a case of welcoming old friends than anything. The venue was a little unfamiliar though as although this was our home fixture, a fixture clash with a Cup game at our normal home ground meant we had to decamp to temporary accommodation at St Joe's. The pitch could have done with a bit of a trim and the grass was quite a bit longer than we'd usually like, given our passing game, but it was the same pitch for both sides, and I'm sure Supermarine would also have preferred a closer crop too for the same reason.

The game started with a high tempo and Supermarine obviously hadn't come to sit back and soak up the pressure as they were on the front foot from the off. We started a little more slowly and much of the early pressure came in our half of the pitch as we defended well but seemed to struggle to clear our lines properly. Sonny, Zak and Josh all did a cracking job at the back, with Tom and Jowan working well as a pair in front of them. Will and Lewis were working hard out wide to press on when we attacked but always available to track back when needed – given we were soaking up a fair bit of pressure in the opening exchanges that quite often left Sam ploughing something of a lone furrow up front, but it's a role he plays well and he worked hard to create chances and bring others into play.

There was plenty of good play from both sides, with a fascinating tussle in midfield developing, but it was Supermarine who broke the deadlock as sloppy marking from a corner gifted them a free header from close range and it was a gift they took full advantage of. Disappointing, but all credit to Supermarine, they'd edged the play so far and it was just reward for their better start to the game. We worked hard to redress the deficit and made some promising attacks, some excellent play from Jowan and Tom to control the midfield, and great play from Josh at right back. An uncharacteristic mistake at the back let Supermarine in for their second, as a pass to the keeper was slightly underhit and didn't quite reach Chivs – the Supermarine striker pounced as the ball slowed in the gap and tapped in from close range. To be fair, it would have been a decent weight of pass on a normal pitch, just not quite enough on what was more like a shagpile carpet!

It seemed this second goal was the spark we needed to up our game and we came roaring back out, and now it was Supermarine who were having to soak up the pressure. Alan and Noah came on to join the resurgence and both made an impact on the left, while on the right Morgan worked his socks off up front, had a great game and worked really hard for the team. The fresh impetus was rewarded with just over 10 minutes remaining of the first half when Zak won a free kick just inside the Supermarine half, and walloped a great kick into the area that bounced in front of the keeper and skidded up awkwardly, the keeper couldn't hold it and spilled it into the net. Zak claims (and we're inclined to believe) that he'd deliberately tried to create an awkward skid in front of the keeper so full credit to him for a clever free kick.

So we went into the break with the deficit reduced to just the one, and pleasingly, with the players calm and simply determined to take control of the game in the second half. That's easy said, of course, but Supermarine were always going to have their own ideas about that and so it was. Both teams came out firing in the second half and it was a really entertaining game, ebbing and flowing as each team in turn pressed their attack and both team's defences doing a fantastic job of keeping them out.

Chivs pulled off a couple of stunning saves when Supermarine seemed certain to score, and Zak was on fire today, some stunning last ditch tackles, brilliantly timed and perfectly executed. That's not to say the other defenders were any less effective – Sonny is always class at the back, Josh right at the top of his game, Alan and Noah both playing really well at left back. We were looking decent in attack too, with Will and Morgan flanking Lewis down the middle and all three working really hard to try and break down a determined and resolute Supermarine back line, but it just wouldn't come. As the half wore on, Sonny came out into midfield and that seemed to freshen us up a little, creating more openings as he worked alongside Jowan and then Tom. Wilesy came back on up front and was unlucky not to score as that shagpile pitch came into play once more, his shot rolling agonisingly close to going in but, as our players wheeled away to celebrate, it came off the post and was cleared by the Supermarine defence.

More excellent work from Zak and Chivs, with Noah and Josh playing out of their skins on either side, drew applause from the crowd and admiration from the opposing coaches. But we were still a goal behind and it



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took a determined run from Lewis, one of many throughout the course of the match, to create the chance to draw us level. Supermarine simply couldn't deal with his tricky run as he skipped through a tired midfield and defence and eventually, inevitably, a tired defender put in a clumsy challenge that brought him down. Nailed on penalty and fair play to Lewis, like Will a couple of weeks ago, he showed plenty of nerve to step up and bury the spot kick.

This was a great game to watch, two very good teams and the game always in the balance. While we're never going to be happy to go two goals down in the first quarter of the game, we were delighted with the way the boys responded. They showed a character and a resolve no-one has any right to expect from 11 year olds and they'll all have learned far more from battling their way back to earn a draw than they'd have gained from winning the game. Supermarine are a decent side who are starting to gel well already and on the evidence of this game will be a worthy and welcome addition to the top flight of N Wilts football in this age group. All in all, a useful and productive morning's work from a development perspective and a very entertaining game of football to watch on top of that – you can't ask for much more really.

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