

NPR Prems hosted Wellington Utd for Saturdays Chatham Cup 3rd Round game with 7 wins and 1 draw under their belt in the local league competition. The hard work organizing the day started at the beginning of the week, behind the scenes to make it a great club day and a big thank you goes to all involved. There are way too many to mention but you know who you are, and just know that I and the guys really did appreciate it. It makes me proud to be involved in the club. Saturday we were facing our toughest test so far as Wellington Utd who were relegated from Central League and had recruited (\$\$\$\$\$) heavily in the off season had only 1 defeat all season and were sitting top of the Capital League. The boys were keen not to spend all this time and effort to go and make the numbers up, so decided we should train twice during the week.

The game started off with Wellington coming out for the first 20 and having a real go at us they were by far the best footballing team we have faced this year. I felt that we matched them and the boys settled down and started having a go themselves, started getting the ball on the deck, the movement and passing were great to watch. Jeff Yates was on fire and anything that was near him he was dominating. Scotty Smith started getting into the game and slotted one nicely but was called offside not from where I was standing, 1 of many terrible decisions made but the referee during the game. The first goal came after about 25 mins from a rushed clearance from ourselves which found their wide man unmarked and hit a low cross over the 6 yard box, their striker miss hit the shot and it hit the unfortunate Joe Bailey and deflected into the far post. To the guys credit they didn't drop their heads and came storming back again we found the net from a great ball through from Mark Wood, Scotty latched onto it went to the byline for Matt Goodey to finish nicely. Yet again the Ref (loose term for this guy!!!) found a reason to disallow the goal. By this time the boys were starting to get rattled as we could see we weren't getting much from this Ref anything 50/50 or even 30/70 was going in favour of Wellington and maybe a more experienced team could have handle this better. Wellington still pressed and to their credit started finding their danger men more and more out wide. Our wide men Mark Wood and Ryan Munro and back 4 of Matt Sigurdsson, Matt Thomson, Joe Bailey and Liam Munro were outstanding as was Matt Goodey and Michael Somers and up front James Graham and Scotty Smith were causing all sorts of problems. 1-0 at half time and the good thing was the boys hadn't been outplayed and felt like we could still get a result in the 2<sup>nd</sup> half. Wellington kept pressing after the half but just couldn't get past our determined defending, until that was when their striker got put through Joe Bailey went in, in a great ball and all tackle about 5 yards outside the box, their player went down like he had been shot from the sniper hiding on the grassy knoll and dove into the box and with this ref he pointed straight to the spot even though we could show him exactly where the tackle had been made from the indent in the ground. No justice for the boys. Wellington finished it nicely not much Jeff could do. We lost our shape a bit after the second again the boys started getting rattled with some of the decisions or maybe it was the change bringing on super sub Kidby or maybe that should be superannuation Kidby. Wellingtons 3<sup>rd</sup> came after apparently I kicked a player which I hotly disputed (Yellow Card) set up a free kick just outside the box. They took the kick and not mentioning any names (Scotty Evans) someone jumped in the wall and the ball squeezed in the near post under the wall. By this stage Wellington's superior fitness was clear to see, I had used the other 2 subs of Gareth Turner and Scotty Evans who were outstanding and worked for the team when they came on. With time almost up Wellington moved it quickly through the middle of the park nice 1 touch football the Wellington player finished nicely 4-0. The boys came off feeling dejected with the result but they should be proud of themselves for what they had done not only in the previous Chatham Cup game but also during that game, 4-0 was not a true reflection of the game, not denying Wellington shouldn't have beaten us but 4-0 was hard to take.

It was hard from a coach's point of view giving M.O.M after again I felt every player gave his all. Not 1 single person let their team mates down. Matt Thomson, Liam Munro and Matt Sigurdsson at the back was composed and played some nice football and Scotty Smith up front gave Wellington headaches all day. But for me the M.O.M was Jeff Yates this week he was everywhere at the back stopping attacks and worked hard defensively. The boys have a bye this week then away the following week to NPBHS in the League. Well done again to my lads.