

Life's a Beach for Sandy!

In what was their final game together as a team, Redborne's Year 11 boys dusted off their shirts and ties to turn up for their second cup final in three years. With a vuvuzela ringing out from the decent sized crowd, memories of the World Cup in South Africa were reignited, only on this occasion, a bitter taste was replaced with one of sweet success. Having taken the disappointment of being demoted to AFC Kempston's second pitch on the chin, the much anticipated game against Sandy Upper got underway.

In fairness, it was Sandy who had the best of the early exchanges, with Redborne failing to get into their stride. After some decent interplay, a clever through ball dissected the Redborne defence putting their striker through. However, to the delight of Redborne's raucous supporters, he rounded Sam Foad only to put his shot inexplicably wide. This let off seemed to stir Redborne into life and soon they started to create some chances; a deep Charlie Cullen free kick was swung

into the Sandy penalty area and met firmly by Harry Peacock's head, only for him to be denied by an excellent save by the keeper. Shortly afterwards, another chance was created by Cullen's cultured right foot, when he whipped in a corner and Matt Hill headed narrowly over.

Redborne persisted to press forward, stringing together passes well and playing some excellent football. However, it was the tough tackling of Matt Hill rather than the slick passing midfielders that led to the first goal; his typically crunching challenge gave possession to Dan Yip who drove into Sandy's area and was brought down resulting in a penalty. Having worked on penalties in training, up stepped the confident Captain Cullen, 1-0 Redborne – he doesn't miss from there! The goal certainly settled Redborne and the introduction of Jamie Black on for Nathanael Johnson almost paid dividends immediately, as his fiercely struck shot was well held by the keeper and shortly after, his pace and direct running resulted

in a corner that came to nothing.

Refusing to roll over, Sandy pushed hard for an equaliser, with them playing some decent football at times too. Having again tried a through ball, Foad came out bravely to gather but collided with Sandy's striker and Peacock's leg, resulting in a stoppage in the game and what looked to be a broken nose for Foad, who soldiered on regardless. The impressive Black was tormenting Sandy's defenders and had a further two shots saved by the keeper before a surging Harry Peacock ran with the ball out of defence, into the opposition half and unselfishly played it to Cullen, only for the move to break down. Half-time.

As the second half began, light began to fade but Redborne's determination was as bright as ever. Johnson, on for Yip, flicked a delightful ball for Harry Highland to latch on to and he finished with a sumptuous chip over the keeper and into the gaping goal. 2-0 Redborne. Clearly intent on maintaining their lead, Redborne's defenders

were imposing themselves on the game, Kyle Burles, Mark Gilbert and Eric Edwin as so often this season, were putting in an excellent shift and made countless vital interceptions and blocks throughout the game. Such exertions began to tell though as Black suffered a bout of cramp, one of numerous players to suffer, causing Coach Kouwenberg to draw from his bench of able deputies throughout the second half. Another excellent break from Cullen resulted in a decent save from the Sandy keeper but shortly afterwards, Cullen's corner was met by man of the match Matt Hill, leaping like a salmon to power home a header and give Redborne a bit of breathing space: 3-0.

To Sandy's credit, they didn't cave in and enjoyed a spell of pressure; a volley from the edge of Redborne's area was gathered well by Foad and a free kick from the right-hand side clipped the top of his bar. With further players suffering from cramp, on came Arron Cowie and James Freeman to sure things up. While Freeman certainly played well, Cowie's cameo role deserves to be singled out for praise in particular; he ran tirelessly for the cause

and along with the ever impressive Lee Kemp, held the ball up well when necessary. Despite the comfort of a three goal cushion, fingernails amongst the Redborne fans (and management) were at a premium; the referee, perhaps being paid by the minute, had turned a half that was supposed to be forty minutes long into one lasting over fifty, time ticked by as slowly as in a Kouwenberg English lesson... Nevertheless, for the final few minutes, Redborne continued to comfortably combat Sandy's attack while threatening them on the break. The shrill shriek of the whistle was music to Redborne's ears, they were champions.

Throughout the game the entire Redborne side showed extraordinary spirit, togetherness and will to win that deserves the highest of praise and has characterised their performances of late and indeed, over the past three years. Deserving champions on this occasion and more importantly a group of lads as gracious in defeat as they are in victory, this was the most fitting of ways to end the season and time together as a team.