



Lancaster on Top

After a comfortable win in their first North Lancs League game of the season against league newcomers Lancaster University, Lancaster faced a much sterner test in their second game of the season, against last years league winners Radcliffe at Salt Ayre last Sunday evening.

And the players did not disappoint the home fans with a display which demonstrated how much their maturity has improved compared to last season. And although Radcliffe maintained an interest for much of the game and were also denied by two fine penalty saves from Lancaster's keeper Zak Sly, only some wayward passing in the final third of the pitch and loose shooting prevented the home side from achieving a much greater victory.

Lancaster edged ahead when Rysz Detko calmly lobbed the keeper from the left wing during a relatively uneventful quarter in front of goal with both defences on top, Robert Simpson patrolling Lancaster's defensive area. Halfway through the quarter Radcliffe equalised but Lancaster ended the period ahead after Jake Starkie netted on the counter attack.

Early in the period Zak Sly made his first penalty save after inexperienced youngster Lawrence Daykin was outsmarted by his marker. Zak Sly stretched to his left to tip the ball onto the post with Daykin picking up the rebound. The spectators then had to wait until Michael Brown netted what proved to be his only goal of the game half way through the third period as the period finally came to life.

Decland Ellwood then scored a deserved first of the match just thirty seconds later after his marker was finally excluded for some over heavy tackling. There was then time for Radcliffe to pull two goals back before Lancaster's defence re-organised with Steve Smith and Sam Liver taking the lead. Before the period ended good mid bath play from Elliot Trafford and Stef Detko set up Ellwood for his second of the game, giving Lancaster a 5-3 half time lead.

When Radcliffe failed to convert a man up with a good block from Daykin early in the third quarter, Sam Smith sped away to power home Lancaster's sixth after finding space on the left. The opposition continued to battle on however and their spirits were buoyed after Brown, missed a couple of opportunities which he really should have scored.

The teams then exchanged goals with Ellwood netting his third, a powerful back hand from the centre forward position. The quarter ended as it had begun with heroics from Zak Sly with a second penalty save, only for Radcliffe to net just 15 seconds from the end of the period after elderly statesman Steve Smith's exclusion.

Steve didn't wait long to make amends however, a minute into the final quarter putting his team 8-5 ahead with a powerful shot from 7 metres out. After the home side had wasted one man up chance, young left hander Noel Howson scored on his debut reacting quickly to follow up his shot and push the ball over the line. Lancaster defended a man down with good blocking from Sam Liver, Trafford and Starkie. Anticipating the block the Uncle Detko broke away to bag his second of the game with a bounce shot over the keepers shoulder.

Radcliffe reduced the deficit with less than a minute remaining. Their strong centre forward powered home a back hand shot as Lancaster's mid bath players relaxed with the points in the bag and were too slow to assist the defence but the final word went to the home side when Sam Liver found the top corner of the net when the defence backed off.

Team: Z Sly, Steve Smith, Sam Smith, E Trafford, J Starkie, M Brown, R Detko, S Liver, J Starkie, L Daykin, D Ellwood, S Detko, N Howson.