

Press Release: April 2016

Southport FC Under 21s capture Cheshire Cup



Southport Under 21s, sponsored by Digitel Europe, emerged victorious in a thrilling encounter against Irlam in the final of the Cheshire Under 21 League Challenge cup. The game looked set for penalties until Tom Grimshaw's sensational winner sealed the victory in extra time after Irlam has cancelled out Billy Whittle's early opener.



Members of the coaching staff and Digitel Europe celebrated the win. From left to right, they are Dan Hayes, Goalkeeping Coach, Manager Jon Monks, Digitel Group Managing Director Tom Cullen, Assistant Managers Jay Williams and Danny DeBrabander, Digitel Network Services Director.

Irlam went into the game as favourites after their convincing victory over the Port 2 weeks previous but the yellows had other ideas and frustrated their opponents with some excellent defending by Sean Weston, Vita Mbolokele, Robert Cahill and Joshua Bonsu in the opening stages of the game as well as creating some good openings of their own.

Irlam nearly took the lead after 15 minutes, however, with Southworth's looping effort striking the top of the cross bar. Winger John Main had a good chance on the left but could only slice over the bar from 15 yards out. That was to be the closest Irlam would come

as Southport grew into the game as the half progressed; Striker Cameron Dagleish having the best of the chances firstly with a fine strike from 20 yards and then will have been disappointed not to make the Irlam stopper work harder with a headed effort from 8 yards.

The first half was a midfield battle with Port's duo of Jacques Stuart & Adam Thorpe having the better of their opponents; stifling every attempted attack and through ball and keeping possession superbly. The half ended 0-0 with Southport on top and looking more and more likely to create an opener.

The second half began with Southport in the ascendancy as they began to dominate the game with real attacking flair. The yellows deservedly took the lead just after the hour mark after Sam Trayer-Blackhurst latched on to Dagleish's slide rule pass to calmly square for Whittle to slot home at the far post.

Port nearly added another soon after when Trayer-Blackhurst found himself clear on the right, only to have his shot blocked en route to goal. With 10 minutes to go, Irlam were awarded a dubious free kick wide on the left. The ball was viscously delivered into the 6-yard box, Southport failed to clear and Irlam striker Michael Itela prodded home to equalise. This proved to be the last real action of the 90 minutes and the game headed in to extra time.

It was Irlam who had the best of the chances in the opening stages of extra time and actually did have the ball in the back of the net only for it to be ruled out for an earlier handball inside the box. The game looked destined for penalty kicks as both teams tired after a near 2-hour battle. With just over 4 minutes left, Ben Hatch won the ball back in midfield to prevent an Irlam counter attack and set Tom Grimshaw on his way.

The Port midfielder, recently promoted from the under 18 squad, picked the ball up 10 yards inside his own half and drove past 2 Irlam midfielders and continued his surge forwards; The Irlam skipper stepped out of defence in an attempt to nick the ball away only to see Grimshaw slip the ball past him and bear down on goal. The midfielder showed terrific pace to find himself inside the box and coolly slot past the keeper just before a desperate lunge from a recovering Irlam midfielder. Cue the celebrations.

With 3 minutes left, Southport had taken the lead and looked to be heading for glory. They nearly added a third when Isaac Jones found himself clear on the edge of the box, only to drag his shot wide. Irlam did have one last chance in the dying seconds and very nearly took it when an out-swinging corner was headed clear and landed at the feet of Irlam's number 12 who struck his shot quite superbly, only to see it whistle inches past the far post. That was to be the last kick of the game as the referee blew his whistle to crown Southport as cup winners.



Starting XI (4-2-3-1): Lavelle / Weston (C), Mbolokele, Cahill, Bonsu / Thorpe (Grimshaw 55), Stuart (McFarlane-Johnson 109) / B. Whittle, Trayer-Blackhurst (Hatch 95), Kunzwa (Gallagher 60) / Dalglish (I. Jones 117)

Goals: B. Whittle 64, Grimshaw 116

Team

Matt Lavelle
Sean Weston
Robert Cahill
Vita Mbolokele
Joshua Bonsu
Jacques Stuart
Adam Thorpe
Samuel Trayer-Blackhurst
Billy Whittle
Prince Kunzwa
Cameron Dalglish

Subs

Ben Hatch
Adam McFarlane-Johnson
Conal Gallagher
Issac Jones
Tom Grimshaw