

## Match Report: Passmores 4-1 Roding Valley High



A die-hard travelling support of the Passmores Faithful Ultras were witness to a majesterio performance as Passmores' First XI

took the District Cup home for a second year in succession. Outstanding individual performances from Adams, McDonald, Boyce and Smith set the tone for a true team effort which was richly rewarded with jubilant celebrations at the final whistle.

The early game was cagey, with the air of a cup final, both teams feeling each other out without much space in the centre of the park. The first chance fell to Roding, a quick counter from a corner leading to a wonderful through ball from their diminutive playmaker but the first time shot skimmed the outside of the post and went wide.

The mini-maestro was making his presence felt and another peach of a through ball put Roding's number 10 clean through but Passmores keeper Bailey Adams was out quickly and saved smartly with his feet to keep the score 0-0.

Passmore's first chance fell to top scorer and PAFWPOTS\* Harry Smith who shot quickly from the angle but saw his snap effort bounce off the post and out of danger. The game was coming to life now and a great sliding challenge from the flowing locks

of midfielder Joe Parker fell to the engine room of the side, Jack Boyce, whose shot from distance was well saved.

Keeper Adams was called upon again shortly after when Roding's pint-sized playmaker put the striker through towards the left-hand side of the area. Adams was out quickly and bravely to palm the ball away and received an almighty clattering to his face for his efforts as the striker followed through. Adams was left prone on the ground, in some pain and possibly even concussed but the referee Stevie Wondered the whole situation and somehow forgot to blow the whistle.

In the resulting chaos the ball was thankfully smuggled away for a corner and Adams bravely got to his feet, shaken, but determined to carry on. The corner was whipped in, and a towering centre back rose to head across the goal towards the far post. Adams, no doubt still woozy from the hit to his head, nevertheless stuck to his task. With the ball going one way and his momentum the other, he shifted and dived to his left, threw out his hand and somehow kept the ball from crossing the line. It was Donnarumma vs. Arsenal, Seaman vs. City, Banks vs. Brazil, all in one and then some as our concussed keeper kept us in it again. The danger was still alive though and after some back and forth in the box Roding's midfielder managed to volley onto the post.

Halftime was called, it was 0-0, both teams had come close but Passmores had their hero between the sticks to thank for keeping them in the game. Something had to change.

The second half started with a bang as Passmores suddenly found the midfield quality that they'd



been lacking for the first 45. Mikey Willet showed great feet in the middle to make some space where there was none, he then strode forward and put Harry Lee through down the left-hand side. With the crowd all expecting a shot Lee unselfishly pushed the ball forward for the onrushing 'R9' Smith who slotted coolly into the far post to give Passmores the lead.

The goal invigorated the boys in blue who quickly created a flurry of chances. First, a long goal kick from 'Beckenbauer' Bobby McDonald came to Smith who smartly dummied to spin his marker and volleyed low to the left, but it was well saved.

Next, a free kick, again whipped in by McDonald, came through to Parker who leant in Harry Kane style on his defender. With both players missing the ball, it looked like it would float harmlessly away for a goal kick, however, out of nowhere the pacy Smith reached out a telescopic right leg and managed to somehow poke it home for 2-0.

Smith was clearly enjoying his football now and the sideline appreciation club in the crowd could sense the hat-trick coming. Roding kicked off and immediately Smith's relentless pressing stole the ball. He weaved past two hapless defenders but was cynically fouled just before he could pull the trigger. His free kick sailed over, but the warning signs were all there.

Roding were doing their best to come back into the game and Adams was called upon again to save low to his right from a free kick. Moments later another freekick was sent goalwards and Adams, diving salmon-like at full stretch, managed to fingertip the ball out. However, the follow up found a yellow shirt before a Passmores defender and Adams cruelly lost his clean sheet, through no fault of his own.

At 2-1 the game was in the balance. The Roding support were fired up and Passmores could feel the nerves settling in. This was cup final football at its finest.

Mikey Willet, sometimes derided as a luxury player, then showed his true worth. Picking the ball up in the centre under some pressure, he dragged back and pushed forward, bamboozling the midfield duo.

Driving forward with Harrys either side of him he found the space to shoot, and the Roding keeper's tame effort to save wasn't enough. 3-1 Passmores.

Next, Jack Boyce, known more for his athleticism and grit than his guile produced a moment of magic that stunned support and management in equal measure. He was found on the edge of his own half, back to goal and being closed down by two midfielders. An outrageous Cruyff-turn later and he was free, floating into acres of pitch ahead of him. A sublime through ball then released Smith who was just too late, however enough pressure on the keeper forced the drop and Smith could finish into an empty net, complete his hat-trick and receive the adulation from the travelling fans.

With mere minutes left of the game Boyce again showed fine feet in the area and was clipped

winning a penalty. He stepped up himself, perhaps with ideas of aiming to match Smith's hat-trick but sadly saw his effort blaze over the bar, a small black mark on an otherwise excellent performance.

The final whistle was a mercy to Roding who'd been overpowered and outgunned in the second half. Captain Bobby McDonald held the trophy aloft and the boys in blue went home champions, not just of the District, but out hearts.

#### **Men of the Match:**

Bobby McDonald & Harry Smith

**Travelling Support:** Harvey Bacon, Jo Glover, Jude Jackman, Connie Kearns, Zak Kane, Mario Olarum, Harvey Smith

\*Passmores Academy Football Writer's Player of the Season