

Bethel United 2 vs 2 Eldon Celtic

Bethel were hoping to follow up their impressive victory last weekend and gain the maximum 3 points in the league after 3 consecutive draws.

Just one change was made to the starting 11 with **Kevan Tampling** coming in for **Tim Gash** at Left Back but Bethel did also welcome back **Jack Bowyer** and last season's top scorer **Sean D'oliveria** who were both on the bench.

Full Team: Anthony Roach, Paul 'Torres' Alexander, Michael Haynes! , Adrian 'H' Hudson, Kevan Tamplin, Ben Haines, Dominic Atherley-Smith, Stuart Newton (c), Mark Montgomery, Siarhei Bahdanovich, Danny Lynch

Subs: Mashelle Kawishe, Sean D'Oliveira, Jack Bowyer

Both teams started the game well attempting to attack each other at the first opportunity. However, it was the home side who managed to sustain their pressure for longer periods forcing corners and throw in's deep inside the attacking 3rd.

1 – 0 - It was from ! their 3rd corner that United finally made their pressure tell as Ben Haines clipped the ball in right-footed allowing **Michael Haynes** to attack the floating cross. Although he was unable to get a clean header on the ball, it deflected wide to **Siarhei Bahdanovich** who helped the ball back into the 6 yard box for **Mark Montgomery** to nod over line.

The game continued in the same fashion as it was prior to the goal with both teams looking dangerous when attacking, although neither were really able to open up a clear cut goal scoring chance.

1 – 1 - Set pieces were clearly going to be the best route for the away side to get back into the game and ! after a few minutes of sustained pressure, they hit the net after a scramble in the penalty area, a snap shot ricocheted past the helpless **Anthony Roach** in

goal.

Paul 'Torres' Alexander missed a great chance to put Bethel back ahead after another delivery into the box was cleared to **Bahdanovich** who again swept the ball back into the danger area for the unmarked **Alexander** who disappointingly only headed wide from 10 yards.

Both teams were still causing each other plenty of problems with long throws and set-pieces with their height and aggression, but it was Eldon who managed to snatch the lead just before half time.

2-1 – Another corner was defended well and cleared by the Bethel defence. However, the loose ball was picked in the inside left area and with insufficient pressure applied by **Ben Haines**, the Celtic man burst into the box drawing 2 Bethel Defenders before teeing up his team mate to strike the ball sidefooted from 15 yards which was again deflected past the stranded **Roach** and **Tampling** on the goal line.

Bethel had their goalkeeper to thank for keeping the score at 2-1 as he reacted brilliantly to deny the Celtic winger from adding a 3rd when 1 on 1 with **Adrian 'H' Hudson** on hand to mop up the loose ball.

Half Time

After the break, United got back to their basic game and begun to stroke the ball around as they have been for the majority of the season .

Midfield duo **Dominc Atherley-Smith & Captain Stuart Newton** were becoming increasingly influential and **Paul 'Torres' Alexander** was making more and more of his trademark gallops up the righthand touchline....an anonymous sign for the away side.

Some very good approach play and good crosses into the box were not being converted into clear goalscoring chances, but the host

now! had Eldon on the back foot and were dominating all around the pitch winning every 2nd ball and 50/50 challenge especially defenders Haynes, Hudson and Tampling.

2-2 – Bethel finally drew level thanks to another **Mark Montgomery** header. More good football down the right-hand side between **Alexander, Haines** and **Lynch** resulted in **Lynch** getting to the byline and crossing for strike partner and substitute **Sean D'Oliveira** who and replaced **Siarhei Bahdanovich**.

Although **D'Oliveira** was bundled to the ground for what was surely a clear cut penalty (although, the referee was not actually going to award it) the ball found it's way right to the back post where **Montgomery** looped his header back over the stretching Celtic keeper who could only watch as the ball agonisingly evaded his fingertips and dropped into the back of the net.

At this point there was only going to be one winner as Bethel laid siege to the Eldon goal. Manager **Greg Lyford** decided to try the pace and direct running of **Mashelle Kawishe** as he replaced **Ben Haines**.

Another great run and cross from **Alexander** should have been headed on target by **D'Oliveira** but his misdirected attempt fell kindly to the edge of the box for the onrushing **Atherley-Smith** who could only blaze over with his weaker left foot.

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Captain Newton then attempted to drive his side forward as he first combined well with **Montgomery** before bursting between the Eldon Celtic defenders, into the box but the goalkeeper was quickly off his line to scoop the ball up after a slightly heavy touch on the run, then drove forward from midfield after collecting a pass from partner **Atherley-Smith**, played a neat 1-2 with **D'Oliveira** before appearing to be bundled over on the edge of the penalty area. Although the game seemed to stop for a couple of the seconds with everyone expecting a freekick, the referee waved 'play on' to the disbelief of the hosts and shock of the away side.

Bethel continued to dominate but were unable to find the goal their general play deserved as the ever willing **Alexander** squandered their last half chance as he also blazed over as the ball bounced on his weaker left side.

In fact, there was almost a sting in the tail for United as a corner to Eldon in the last seconds was headed against the cross-bar as the game ended level.

A tough, physical and entertaining game ended in another draw for the hosts who remain unbeaten, but have now drawn all 4 of their league games.

MoM – **Anthony Roach**. Although he did not actually have too much to do, especially in the 2nd half, the save to ! keep the game at 2-1 was fantastic and showed his great reflexes.

Dominic-Atherley Smith also put in a spirited display as tried to push the side forward, but his yellow card for dissent towards what was a poor referee on the day and his general frustration towards the end of the game put a blip on his general effort and performance.