

Playing **Masterbooters** is never to be taken for granted. In the primeval depths of our minds we remember the season when suddenly our friendly opponents had acquired a wily forward named Nunn and we were hard-pressed to manage his impact on the field. So on this day, we gathered and scanned the opposing ranks to see if they'd picked up any ringers for the match. Happily for us, they were just the usual suspects including Lajos Balogh, the 12th man. We took to the field with numbers though there was some confusion as to player positions—yours truly had penciled Mark Vogel in to the Midfield array but failed to recognize how hard that would be from his location at a Thanksgiving feast in Canada.

Nicks set out with a reasonable rhythm of passing and running, running and passing. We had a flow going forward that was only interrupted when we began to get anxious about the success of our passing and mishit a ball just to test the idea. Booters were not passive participants—with Mike Charles and Clare on the back line they were hard to break down. And when they got the ball, they had players who were capable of jetting down the field. Fortunately, they did not have great shooters.

The first goal unfolded with our attack getting ball in close to the six yard box and one of the Booters clearing it back toward midfield where it was picked up by Glenn who made a small number of spatial adjustments as he headed forward and put the shot into the goal. **(1-0)** He was well on his way to a hat trick at that point. His second goal came not much later with a long through pass from the midfield. He doesn't recall who launched the ball, but it fell into middle space and while the keeper (Greg?) came out hard, Glenn got the ball first and pushed past on the left side slotting his shot into the right side netting. **(2-0)**

At the end of the half we were up 2-0, a position we don't often find ourselves in. And as the manager, it's a disturbing place to be—easy to give up an early counter and then find the other team has the momentum. In our half time talk we encouraged each other to go out and score another early goal to close the game. Somehow, though, having the upper hand went to our heads a little and a wave of casualness swept through the players on the field. Passes began to go awry and the Booters, not willing to let the game get away, were passing and scrapping and attacking. Roddy led the charge some minutes into the half. He dribbled through players down the left attacking side of the field and then cut in to pressure the center defense. The intensity of the attack ultimately led to the Booters scoring. **(2-1)** Suddenly the cobwebs afflicting our crew were blown away and we returned to the more organized and varied attack with which we'd started the game. The payoffs came with Glenn tallying his hat trick on an extended run into space to pick up a ball that was up for grabs. The Booters' keeper made a rush to collect but Glenn stuck out a toe and the ball arced over and into the goal. **(3-1)** To match that effort, **Bruce Soderberg** did a display of interval dribbling up the right side of the field all the way to the box where he forced the keeper to come out and then slotted our fourth goal into the net at a very narrow angle. **(4-1)** The crowd on the sidelines roared their approval—all ten of us as loudly as we could.

Kudos were due to the entire squad. Jack Hevel had one of his best games—I think the attack Glenn scored on might have started from Jack's clearing ball. Al was stalwart and took several strong kicks into the attacking end, but he also was smart keeping attacking players a little off balance with his positioning and poise. Bruce Soderberg and Anatole were completely disruptive of the Booters' attacks. When Bob or one of their other forwards made a run, our center defense disrupted. Roy gave his usual dogged display nipping at the heels of Booters runners but on at least two occasions turned on the jets and kept stride with their fast attack. Bruce Barclay as always was dogged and persistent with the ball and made his presence known when Booters tried to go through midfield. Jim Brinkman, coming back from time away for family affairs,

showed his focused play, again giving us options—Jim made himself available and then found a person to pass to. Russ and Rock had important moments in the attack, creating chances, and at the half Eric showed up and demonstrated his ability to gallop end to end with the ball, giving us a different style of attack from the back. Tim Leslie, who has not been able to join us for a couple of games made his presence known pushing our attack up the outside from midfield. Pat McCormick made his presence known as well and his smart play through the middle, looking to keep the ball wide and crossing in for the attack created chances we could not quite close out. Patrick Marcinko had a notable game—his speed going forward and assertive defensive play helped control the outside channels through midfield.

Not least important in the game was the presence of Greg Bost who stopped a PK and also several other dangerous forays from the Booters. While we were not heavily under pressure in goal, Greg's quick hands and alert reactions kept us solidly in the winning mode.

We were cheered on the sidelines by the arrival of Mark Dillon and Kaiser Siddiqui—as well as Joanne Brinkman and Suzie, loyal followers all.

The match ended with the 4-1 win and the congenial members of both teams departed to partake of cold beer.

David Porter

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