

Older Nicks Last Spring Match (6/22/22) and Season results

June 23rd, 2022. Good Thursday Evening Gents—

Here we are again at the end of another season of soccer. We the Elders seem to have finally begun to hit our stride on the 8 v 8 pitch. We ended up with a 3-5-2 record. The only game which was really lopsided was against IPS when we went down 0-6. It was the second game of the season and we were still sorting out. We still have a way to go to be as effective as I think we can be at scoring. When all was said and done, I am happy with the result. I am sad that Al, Roy, Richard, Roberto and Rock weren't present for last night's match. We had four teammates including yours truly in civvies.

That being the case the 9 Elders who took to the pitch acquitted themselves admirably. The game started off on a cranky note. We were in our gold n black kit as usual. Paolo's posse (meaning the people he could round up) were in their traffic safety green-yellow jerseys. The ref said they needed to change. They said they had no alt jerseys. I said white cotton tees would be good enough—we were not gonna switch.

They finally ended up in 'dark' jerseys. A motley crew.

As the game started, the sun was drilling the northwest corner of the pitch and looking in that direction was painful. Brink was in goal at the east end and I know it must have been difficult from his POV. Both team had limited bodies to put on the field but I thought we were largely well-matched. About half of the Clark-Lewis players were people who'd played against us for several other teams and also Jim Bennett who played for us two matches back.

From the start the play on the field was scrappy. Perhaps the heat tweaked the central nervous systems of both teams. We were playing the 3-3-1 formation that seems to suit the personal we can bring to the field. Jim Hilliker was the holding forward up top. Glenn and Kim and Mark Vogel comprised the midfield. Jack Hevel and Patrick and John Mayfield anchored our back line. And Brink stood in goal. Even more invaluable because he was able to make many moves that didn't involve standing. In the second half a shot to the low left corner sent Brink diving to his right and landing with a graceful tuck and roll. Through the entire game, he parried shots. Shouted to warn his defenders to leave the ball. Covered his corners. Grabbed and held shots. And in one instance nearly sat on the ball to stop it. Before many minutes had passed in the game, however, Andrew from their side tapped a loose ball into goal during a melee at close range. Jim didn't have much say in the issue.

Nicks walked back out to the restart and I watched their progress thinking 'don't let this get you down'. And they didn't. Regrouping, the Nicks came out of the restart with purpose. Glenn and Mark settled into a resolute intensity moving the ball up the field and tracking back to break up the opponents' attempts to organize through the midfield. Bob Dolphin and Jimmy Go for the opponents were looking to pick up the ball and make quick attacking runs on our flanks, but Pat and Mayfield were effective disruptors there. Jack Hevel positioned himself effectively to cut off passing lanes. While the dark team did get the ball in close to our goal, the high work rate of the midfielders added depth to our defense. Glenn was particularly unstoppable going end to end.

Tim Leslie gave us a single sub and his presence made a difference. He was relentless providing passing outlets on the wings for our runs upfield and he was dogged in not giving their players space when they came his way. The first half got more interesting though when a long ball from the back dropped to Jim Hilliker who was effectively holding high up the field and looking for opportunities to feed the ball to a teammate. In this instance, Mark Vogel had broken from our end toward goal with dark shirts on his heels. Hilliker's pass to him was gathered quickly and he was alone with the keeper to put the ball in the back of the net. We were tied when the whistle blew.

At the half, spirits were upbeat. We agreed that we needed to take a little more time to get passes to teammates. Brinkman was praised for his efforts. The team returned to the field to face a frustrated dark team. The competition got more chippy with shoulder to shoulder and toe to ankle contacts. The referee stepped in as players exchanged words. In particular, Paolo unleashed an exclamatory profanity that stopped everyone in their tracks. The ref allowed that he'd been fouled but told Paolo he was not to take the free kick. Glenn was rolled ass over teakettle at one point but restrained in his response. Mark and Jimmy Go began to get feisty but then settled their play when admonished.

The dark team made little progress toward another goal though they had chances. Kim showed off his best crossing balls on three or four corner kicks for one of which Glenn hyperextended in an attempt to pop in the far corner of the net. It went just wide. When the final whistle blew, the match was still tied and the mood on the Nicks' bench was exuberant. We had finished the season with a string of wins and ties and more confidence in the field configuration and the capabilities of our teammates. The ref kindly took a series of team photos. The two best are attached.

I'll see if we can get Photoshop Master Dillon to insert missing players. Well done, gents! Well done.

Mgr
David