

Last weekend [ *May 11, 2019*] the **Nicks** gathered up at Gladstone, the familiar pitch, to give our best effort against Royals a familiar foe. Two days before the game was due, your Manager was unsure that we'd have more than a baker's dozen players to assemble on the field—way too few to give a fair account against the Royals, a side who are formidable if given the space. As **Nicks** are Grail-seekers, adventurers, and occasional victims of injury and influenza, I was concerned. None of the trio from Pierre's who'd helped us the week before were available (or willing to risk another face-off against Nunn). However, I received an inquiry from Seig otherwise Seigfried Wutte, recently seen in opposing jersey with WVV (aka New Kings). Seig was languishing as WVV was on a break and he offered to help if we were in need. Thursday's thirteen seemed a grim and ominous number, so I said "yes" we'll be happy for the help.

When Saturday arrived, the day was warm and springlike—perfect for a match. Thanks to Glenn's reminder to players to tell the manager their status, our numbers had swelled to 18. As we gathered at the field it was heartening to see the gold n black jerseys tromping in with kit and boots and cards. Seig showed as well and we did the honorable thing and asked Royals whether they needed any players. Hearing that they did not, I gave Seig my Mojos 36 jersey for the match.

And then we got down to business. We had Miracle Mike Calder in goal extending his magic fingers in last week's game to stop at least 14 shots. And the arrivals at the field gave us a strong squad, despite some gimped guys—McCormick with an ankle, Pagen a knee, and Steve Pinger's frustrating foot. Roy and Rich's ribs. The "1-2-3 Run Kick Score!" echoed through the arena and the game was on.

**Nicks** were pressing from the early start. A sense of purpose, perhaps driven by the frustration of having to play against Nunn the week before, gave our players some grit and we were on the hunt from the start. Royals are not a team to take lightly. They have in games past shredded us despite our best resolve. On this day, however, we were not going to let that happen. This sense of purpose was not diminished despite the fact that their Russkiya Grey Ghost player was on the field, a man of a thousand feints and dagger like shots. We took the play forward and were using the familiar field to help our efforts to settle into a rhythm. Our early efforts were frustrated a little by some anxiety—touching the ball too hard or too soon when we had more time and people in support. The play moved in both directions, but John Mayfield, Bruce Soderberg and Mark Vogel helped outside by Jack, Al, and Lyle provided a solid defense.

The tenor of the game changed when Robert, rambling through the Royals' defense, picked up a ball, drove toward the twenty drawing defenders, side-stepped to freeze them and then put a ball through. The pass ultimately came to Russ on the left side of goal who took a solid shot at

an acute angle and put us up 1-0.

**Nicks** second goal came early in the second half through the persistence of Patrick Marcinko who hounded Royals' defenders across the face of goal as they tried to clear, won the ball on the far left side of the goal and miraculously chopped a back heel to Russ who was twenty or so feet away on the back post but who obligingly rolled the ball in. **Nicks** were not complacent. We urged each other to make simple passes, to keep the play to the wings, to not rush the attack forward....things we say to each other regularly. And we were not unaware of the danger—the Grey Ghost is hard to defend and he was able to get free for a dramatic strike from distance, giving the Royals some resolve and challenging our resolute defense. At which point it is important to acknowledge Anatole who was the disruptor of many attacking runs by Royals—I saw him tangle up the Grey Ghost at least three times and stop the

Seig came into the game as a forward sub, making his presence known, in the second half. Roaming through the Royals' back field and pairing with Jim Hilliker and Russell, he added a level of calm to the attack. While he was often motionless in the far end, he had clear vision of when to exert himself and strike. He had a finely tuned sense of when to shoot. One of his shots caromed off the top right corner of the goal. Another splashed into the net from high in the penalty area giving us a third goal. And he closed the scoring with a well-placed shot to the right side of the net from distance, his moves taking defenders off balance and making the strike dangerous.

The game ended with a **4-1 win** for **Nicks**. Seig notched a pair of those as did Russ. The swarming defense and occasional forays from the back by our defenders was solid. Glenn and Bruce Barclay and Brink were at the center of the **Nicks'** machine—finding the ball, winning the ball, and feeding the ball. As the game went on, our play improved with small side work getting us precisely up and down the field. Marcinko, Leslie the Tenacious, Rock the Wily, and your manager panted their way up and down the sidelines and contributed as much as possible.

I think it was an excellent match for us. We played well across the side—everyone made their presence known. And the turnout from the halt and lame was heartening too.

At the end, we all headed off to the bier wagon. However, yours truly didn't give very clear directions to players heading that direction and so some were never seen again. I apologize. This is why I have high levels of anxiety about being a manager.— —if I haven't thought about it 20 times before I tell you all, I'm likely to have made a mistake.

David Porter