

# ROYSTON CROW YOUTH FOOTBALL LEAGUE UNDER-14 CUP FINAL

## ROYSTON EAGLES 3-1 LGC EAGLES YELLOWS

### NO GUTS, NO GLORY.

Royston showed that the old saying still rings true as they claimed a thoroughly deserved victory on a memorable day.

A year on from a deflating defeat on the same showpiece occasion, it seemed that the footballing gods were again conspiring to deny this impressive team.

A freak tennis accident, a close encounter with a window and the small matter of losing the use of half the fingers of one hand appeared to send the message: sorry, not your year again, sunshines.

But that assessment reckoned without not only the individual commitment of the three players concerned but also, and more importantly, the collective will to win of a really special squad.

All 14 boys played a vital role and gave everything. And this time they had their reward.

The day had all the trimmings – the personalised polo shirts, the coach ride, the buzz – but it all falls a bit flat if the result doesn't go your way.

The Bury is in many ways a great venue. It's just a shame about the pitch. Despite the overnight rain, it was still pretty hard and bouncy, which didn't always make for a great spectacle.

Thankfully, Royston have the players who are prepared to do the dirty work, and Sam Fage and Kyle Smith got through plenty in the nervy opening period.

Eagles started the better and created some decent early half-chances, but seemed to let the lack of a breakthrough goal undermine their confidence and affect their decision-making.

Letchworth came more into the game and posed some threat themselves, without ever really doing enough to deserve to take the lead.

Nevertheless the teams were probably equally grateful for the chance to regroup at half time without having fallen behind.

After what was, by all accounts, a pretty frank team-talk from Messrs McGlynn and Smith, Eagles stepped things up after the break.

But it still took until the 47<sup>th</sup> minute for them to break the deadlock and like the overall victory, it took a combination of heart-bursting effort and pure quality.

Jack Piggott chased a lost cause into the far right-hand corner and won back the ball, which then found its way to Kian Harness.

Eagles' goal scorer-in-chief had a good chance to put a shot on goal himself but made the brilliant and unselfish decision to roll the ball back across goal to where Luca Winterton was running in to bury the ball in the net.

The feel-good factor did not last for long.

One of Royston's more annoying habits is conceding silly little goals when they fail to do the basics which usually come so easily.

They failed to clear a pretty poor Letchworth corner and sure enough, the unmarked No 8 pinged in the equaliser.

But Eagles weren't going to let this one go, not this time.

The introduction of Owen Maslen, who did not put a single foot wrong, allowed the wise men in the dugout (Kev freely admitted it was Roy) to push Cameron King into midfield.

His main job was supposed to be to hold the middle and link up a defence and attack which had sometimes left too much space in between them.

When he found himself with space in the box, though, King took a short backlift and swept home a right-foot shot which beat the impressive Letchworth goalkeeper before he had time to dive.

Cue some enthusiastic celebrations on the touchline.

But they were nothing compared to what followed King's second goal, which finally knocked the stuffing out of Letchworth and guaranteed the cup was coming home to Royston.

By now Royston were really starting to play their best football and to swarm over their opponents, safe in the knowledge that the outstanding Will Hamblin, the ever reliable Jacob Schroeder, brave broken finger victim George Palmer and Maslen were holding the fort at the back.

Sean Blois and Logan Downie had produced some great surges of their own but it was King who came up with the magic blend of a run into space and a cracking low shot from outside the box right into the bottom corner.

There may be photographic evidence of the reaction of certain Eagles' parents.

Royston did not allow Letchworth a sniff of a comeback and closed the game out very professionally. Max Coutts linked the play well and would have had a goal to show for his performance but for a good late save by the Letchworth keeper.

It didn't matter. Nothing mattered after that final whistle.

The trophy presentation and the post-match scenes will live long in the memory (although some were probably best confined to Snapchat – you know who you are, dressing room dancers).

It's a day which should and will live long in the memory, an achievement these boys will be able to look back on for the rest of their lives.

A day on which, when it really mattered, they put into practice the lesson that Kev and Roy have tried to drum into them all season: match the opposition for desire and effort, and your quality will tell in the end, more often than not.

A day of guts and glory.

Team: Jacob McGlynn, Jacob Schroeder, Cameron King, Will Hamblin, Sam Fage, Sean Blois, Kyle Smith, Logan Downie, Luca Winterton, Jack Piggott, Kian Harness, Owen Maslen, George Palmer, Max Coutts.

ends