

Vauxhall League 0 v F.A.XI 4

Reported by Nick Syrett

THE strength of the GM Vauxhall Conference was well illustrated when an F.A.XI, selected mainly from its member clubs, comfortably overcame a useful looking Vauxhall League XI.

The match was played in a competitive spirit as this was the participants last chance to catch the selectorial eye before the team was picked for England's semi-professional International against Wales at Stafford on 12th February.

The League's side was depleted due in part to Woking's F.A.Cup exploits - none of their players being considered for selection - and to Kingstonians' prolific goal-scorer, Francis Vines, withdrawing through injury.

Seventeen un-numbered players were listed for each side in the programme and identification was not simplified by the Kingstonian public address announcer who rattled off the numbers and the starting line-up for the respective teams with machine gun like velocity, once! Having struggled, and failed, to keep up with this barrage of vital information, matters deteriorated still further when the Editor turned to your correspondent with the chilling words, "You can do a report on this one".

The playing surface at Kingsmeadow was its usual immaculate self, the greenness being matched only by the bilious shade of the League's notably unattractive green and

gold kit. A colour scheme not normally associated with the British subsidiary of General Motors.

Despite the array of talented players on view, I considered the attendance to be poor (in fact it was the best gate for F.A.XI matches this season). Perhaps Kingstonian supporters have become blasé following two successive 5-1 home victories. The Directors Box was, however, full of famous faces. League Club chairmen, managers and scouts were there in force and it was difficult not to expect to see Sir Stanley Rous or Bernard Joy in the crowded boardroom.

The first twenty minutes were evenly contested, but the F.A.'s attack, led by Mark West (Wycombe Wanderers), always looked dangerous and it was no surprise when they took the lead in the 22nd minute. Andrew Clarke (Barnet), who had been giving Eddie Martin (Dagenham) a torrid time, threaded the ball through a crowded penalty area to West who, with his back to goal, turned on a new 5p piece and hammered his shot past Paul Hyde (Hayes).

The League's defenders were always struggling to contain their more skilful opponents and eleven minutes later Nicky Evans (Barnet) brought a fine save from Hyde following an inch perfect corner by his recent team-mate, David Carroll (Wycombe Wanderers). Then, in the 40th minute, a mistake by

Andy Dear (Kingstonian) let Clarke in, but Hyde again saved well.

Half-time arrived with no addition to the score. The League had rarely threatened the F.A. goal where Gary Phillips (Barnet) was mainly occupied exhorting his team-mates and fielding back passes.

In the second half, following innumerable substitutions, the F.A. XI really got into their stride. In the 51st minute a precision cross by Carroll was headed home by Terry Robbins (Welling United) leaving Gary Westwood (Wokingham Town), who had replaced Hyde in the League's goal, firm-footed. Seven minutes later, Clarke left three defenders wallowing in his wake and beat Westwood with a low shot just inside the far post.

In the 62nd minute the League came within inches of reducing the deficit when Steve Lambert (Aylesbury United) saw his fierce shot hit the post with

Andy Pape (Enfield) well beaten.

The scoring was completed with 15 minutes to go when Westwood appeared to have a shot from Robbins well covered, only for the ball to strike the right leg of the unfortunate Paul Watts (Redbridge Forest) who, unwittingly, diverted it out of the goalkeeper's reach.

Amongst the highlights of an excellent all-round performance by the F.A.XI was the combination of Terry Robbins and Steve Thompson (Slough Town) who continually tormented the League's defence with slick interpassing, the dominance of Andy Kerr and the skill of David Carroll (Wycombe Wanderers) and one magical moment; Andy Pape gathered the ball, called "Westie" and a second later the ball was at the Wycombe player's feet, seventy yards away. As the Editor remarked, "There's confidence for you!"