



Washington FC Match Report

Date: Saturday 8 August 2020

Opposition: FC Hartlepool

Venue: Grayfields, Hartlepool

Competition: Pre-season friendly

At long last, after a summer of turmoil due to the Covid 19 crisis Washington FC finally got back onto the pitch 154 days after our last match at Ryton and Crawcrook Albion back in March. The humble surroundings of FC Hartlepool's Grayfields Enclosure was the venue but such was the anticipation of everyone to get back underway it could well have been Wembley Stadium!

The new normal included getting changed on the pitch and no spectators, but that is a small price to pay if we are to safeguard the long-term future of the game at grassroots level.

We couldn't have chosen more tricky opponents for our return fixture as Hartlepool have previous against Northern League sides. Last season they knocked out Billingham Synthonia in the Durham County Challenge cup before bowing out to West Auckland Town and indeed the week previous held Ryhope CW to a 3-3 draw in a pre-season game the was marred by the awful injury to Pools' Mike Snowden, and indeed we at Washington wish him a very speedy recovery, so we knew we would get a very good workout against a side that lay 5th in the Wearside League before lockdown.

Washington's starting eleven today were

- 1 Harry Archer
- 2 Trialist 1
- 3 Morgan Pye
- 4 Ben Gibbon
- 5 Sam Lilley
- 6 Aiden Hutchinson
- 7 Lewis Leech
- 8 Aaron Duell
- 9 Lewis McGeoch
- 10 Brad Chisholm
- 11 Jak Hanson

A glorious summers day in Cleveland greeted the two sides as we got underway.

It was a good early start from both sides as chances came and went in the first 5 minutes. As early as the third minute Chisholm broke clear for Washington but fired wide, then a minute later Hartlepool's No15 turned Pye out on the right to create some space but fired well over. Pools were playing the ball around well without breaking down the Washington defence and were rocked in the 8th minute when Washington went ahead from a fantastic strike from **DUELL**. A freekick from 20 yards out was fired into the top left-hand corner that left their keeper stranded. A strike to savour.

With their tails up Washington went in search of a second. Two minutes after going ahead Sloan found himself in the clear but elected to play in Hanson who was eventually crowded out.

Pool were by no means out of it and Hutchinson had to be on his guard to clear a dangerous ball from the right.

The game took a nasty turn on 14 minutes when McGeoch went in from behind on Pools' No12 who reacted angrily to the challenge. Given what had happened to their player the previous week Hartlepool were naturally going to be very sensitive about anything physical. Thankfully the referee only spoke to the two players and calmed what could have been a volatile situation. It was from the resulting freekick that Pools missed a glorious chance to equalise when after a bit of a scramble they fired over from 6 yards out.

That chance gave Pools fresh impetuous and they began to apply a bit more pressure without really hurting Washington, although again Washington had to be thankful to Hutchinson who again cleared a dangerous ball into the box. The first Water break come at the right time for Washington.

From the restart Washington won a corner which almost proved costly on two accounts. Firstly Hutchinson was injured in a challenge with the keeper as the cross come in and secondly, as he lay injured, Pools countered and with Washington short on numbers at the back they found the space to create an opening but amazingly again they fired over from a good position.

Washington went two to the good on 30 minutes with goal that come from out of nothing but will be remembered by those lucky enough to see it. With absolutely nothing on the ball fell to **DUELL** who let fly from all of 30 yards. Once again, the keeper was left stranded as the ball flew in via the left-hand post. An excellent strike.

Duell had a chance to go for his hattrick on 35 minutes with a freekick in a similar position from where his first goal come from but on this occasion decided to look for a teammate which didn't pay off as Pool cleared

Duell was in the thick of things again just before half time although this time it was helping out his own defence as he was on hand the clear a Hartlepool corner

An entertaining first half was brought to a close with Washington going into the break with a two-goal advantage.

Manager Mark Gibbon took advantage of the break to reshuffle the team with some wholesale changes. Off went Leech, Pye, Hanson, Chisholm and Trialist 1 being replaced by Alex Dobinson, Zach Horsfall, Jordan Dixon, Trialist 2 and Trialist 3.

At first the changes seemed to have an adverse effect on Washington as they struggled to get going allowing Hartlepool plenty of possession in the opening stages and it took five minutes or so to get their bearings and come back into the game and that come courtesy of the Pool Keeper who's sloppy kick out found Trialist 2 on the edge of the box but fortunately for the keeper his shot went well wide.

The game was just about over as a contest in the 53rd minute with a great team goal as Washington went three up. Some terrific battling in Midfield from Trialist 3 won possession for Washington. He played a neat ball out to Duell who in turn played an inch perfect pass to **MCGEOCH**. Despite the challenge from the Hartlepool defender he went on to place it to the keepers left and in the bottom corner with some confidence.

McGeoch had done his days' work and was replaced by Trialist 4 on 64 minutes

Washington were in total command at this stage and Trialist 4 was in the action almost immediately as Trialist 3 played him in but his shot went narrowly wide as we went into the second water break.

Trialist 4 was involved again on 76 minutes only this is a one he'd want to forget. A run by Dixon saw his shot parried by the keeper straight to the trialist who was only a couple of yards out. Somehow, he lost his balance and missed his kick entirely but at least his blushes were saved by the Assistants flag who called him offside.

As is the Washington way we tend not to make things easy for ourselves. A minute after that miss Hartlepool pulled a goal back. A corner from the right found Wilson unmarked inside the six-yard box. His sharp volley could only be parried by Archer into the net.

At this point the whole dynamic of the game changed. Hartlepool got their belief back, Washington looked nervous and tired, the sun went in, the wind began to blow and those who had the foresight to bring a coat donned them!

Sure enough on 87 minutes Hartlepool grabbed a second and again Washington need to look at their own part in conceding it. Another corner, this time from the left saw Archer under pressure. The youngster will be disappointed that he failed to hold onto a simple catch which gave Campbell the simple chance to prod home.

Hartlepool sensed an equaliser as Washington began to wilt and dropped back into their bad habits of last season of conceding possession unnecessarily.

Thankfully, not only did they hold on but added a fourth for good measure. Trialist 3 who certainly impressed with his tenacity found his way to the bi line and pulled back for Jordan Dixon to tap home from virtually on the line.

All in all, it was a good workout against a decent side who try to play football the right way. Stand out performer was without doubt Aaron Duell who ran midfield and will be a tremendous asset to Washington this season. There were other good performances and with the new faces in the mix from midfield ti was looking stronger already than previous seasons. The players and coaching staff will be disappointed with the way the two goals were conceded which I'll put down to fatigue, we cannot let this affect our confidence and need to show a resilience this season to bounce back. In Harry Archer we have a young man of undoubted talent and is an absolute gem. Hopefully his mistake will be something he can learn from and move on from. We go again on Saturday at home to Willington Quay Saints where hopefully those errors will have been worked on.

Final Score...FC HARTLEPOOL 2 - WASHINGTON FC 4

Goals –

Duell x 2

McGeoch

Dixon