

Vine FC 29th August 6:15pm Vine FC 'v' Boys Club

The first home game of the season saw Vine FC playing Boys Club for the second time in a week. After a hard fought 4-3 victory in the previous meeting the Vine were quietly confident of repeating this but now they would be in for a battle.

The Vine team made use of the girls changing rooms for this game and maybe this had some impact on their first half performance as they started the game like a bunch of wet lettuces! There weren't really many moments to note from a very scrappy first half although towards the end a dubious penalty was awarded to Boys Club for the second week running which allowed them to grab a one goal advantage going in at half time.

The Vine team received a rollocking from the management at half time and this seemed to make an impact on the players who came out for the second half with a lot more appetite.

It wasn't until mid-way through the second half that super-sub Danny Fuller, making his first appearance of the season, capitalised on a goal keeping error to toe poke the ball home from 1 yard to make it 1-1. Vine now felt they could win the game and began to apply more pressure onto a tiring Boys Club team whose spirit had almost gone.

Just as Vine were beginning to dominate a freak injury occurred. The brave Richard Simmonds went in for one of his customary aerial challenges but came out of it with a gash on his head. With blood flowing from the wound, Steve Ball donned his 'first aid' hat and got to work on Richard bandaging his swede to stop the bleeding. As it became clear that Richard 'Terry Butcher' Simmonds couldn't play on the Vine had a problem. Having used all 3 of their substitutes they would have to play out the remaining 10 minutes of the game with 10 men!

This set back seemed to inspire the 10 men of the Vine and they went on the attack. There's was a flurry of chances but none would seem to go in to the back of the net until a cross from the left wing was completely missed by 2 Boys Club defenders to nicely fall to the feet of Simon Ball. With all the time in the world and just the keeper to beat he slotted the ball into the bottom left corner to give Vine a 2-1 lead and bag his third goal in as many games.

All they had to do now was hold out for the remaining 5 or so minutes.

Despite the best efforts of Boys club they were unable to penetrate Vine's resilient defensive line and they held out for another close hard fought victory. That's 3 wins out of 3 games to maintain the 100% record so far, all they have to do now is keep up the hard work and not become complacent.

By Nick Ebbitt

Saturday 25th August 2:00pm Westgate Wanderers 'v' Vine FC

The Vine couldn't really have received a much a more difficult start to the new season, having already battled extremely hard for victory against one former premier league side they now faced the other side recently relegated from the premiership, Westgate. And as well as that the team had just a day to recover from the boys club game, there were a number of absentees most notably Nick and Kevin from the centre of midfield & there were also several players still carrying slight knocks from midweek. Martin and Steve Lancaster were brought into to starting XI and Steve Hewitt was a lone substitute in an otherwise unchanged side.

The game kicked off and started at a fairly fast pace, Westgate kept the ball well but failed to create any real chances with the Vine back four and five man midfield doing everything they could to frustrate their opposition. At the other end the Vine looked increasingly dangerous on the counter attack and even more so from set pieces with Crumps winning the aerial battle with ease. And it was indeed a set piece from where the breakthrough was made, Gareth Hammond whipped in a superb corner and veteran striker Simon Ball headed the ball home to make it 1-0 to the Vine! After taking the lead the Vine started to apply some pressure but failed to double their lead and before half time Westgate were on level terms, a mix up in the Vine penalty area left them with a relatively easy chance which was smashed home to make it 1-1 at the break.

The second half started off in similar fashion but with Westgate now keeping the ball even more, and Thursdays fixture seemed to be taking its toll on the Vine players, but never the less they showed superb grit and determination, held tight and kept themselves in with a chance. Westgate were getting more and more frustrated

and it was the Vines battling and persistence that in the end paid off, a loose ball fell to Crumps on the edge of the Westgate box and he unleashed an unstoppable right footed half-volley into the bottom left hand corner giving the Westgate keeper no chance at all making the score 2-1 to the Vine with around 20 minutes to go. The closest Westgate came to an equaliser was a firmly struck free-kick but the Vines new No.1 Henry was more than equal to that. Steve Hewitt replaced Steve Lancaster after a solid first performance to see out the final 15 minutes of the game.

And so it ended 2-1 to the Vine, another hard fought and well deserved victory with everyone giving 110% for 90 minutes and keeping up their excellent start to the new season.

By Mike Wilson

Thursday 23rd August 6:15pm Boys Club 'v' Vine FC

Well here we are at last kicking off the new season away to Boys Club. The changing room was slightly subdued beforehand. Steve Ball and Steve Hewitt laid out what was required by each player and Steve Ball delved deep into his box of clichés using “big mirrors” and one of his personal favourites, the squash analogy. The mood was set and off to the pitch. It was a warm evening and the game kicked off. The Vine started brightly and certainly matched Boys Club for effort and were rewarded with a goal early in the game. A Gareth Hammond corner was met by the towering head of Crumpet who knocked down to Simon Ball who chested it down and lashed it, right footed past the keeper. 1-0 to the Vine. The two teams cancelled each other out then until Boys Club equalised with a dubious looking penalty given away by team captain Richard Simmonds. Penalty converted 1-1. Then Mike Wilson went on one of his trademark runs beating man after man until only the keeper to beat. He swung a right foot at it, beat the keeper, only to see it bounce off the foot of the post and safely into the keeper's arms. Almost immediately Boys Club broke through the Vine's defence and slid one past the despairing dive of Henry. In the second half a change came over the Vine. Suddenly there was a spring in the step. Team mates had found voices and communication was better. Vine were back on level terms when Nick Ebbitt popped up in the box and fizzed a right footer into the bottom left corner. 2-2 and the Vine were buzzing until 5 minutes later when Boys Club again broke through and scored to make it 3-2. The Vine were not beaten though and Gareth Hammond received the ball on the left he went past one man, then another, then another he broke into the box and looped a shot over the keeper and into the back of the net. The with 20 minutes to go another Gareth Hammond corner was too long and retrieved by Crumpet who crossed. Simon Ball took on the chest on the right hand corner of the box and turned and played a square ball into the path of Nick Ebbitt who lashed it into the net for 3-4. Unbelievable!!! Simon Ball and Mike Wilson were then substituted for Miles and Steven Hewitt and they performed admirably with Miles almost muscling his way past the last man. The Vine held on with some storming defending by Skiddie and Richard Simmonds, Brownie and Mark Heys. The final whistle went to the disgust of the local crowd and to the joy of the Vine players, management and crowd of Arthur and 2 kids. 3 points in the bag to go joint top of the league. Lets try and stay there!! Westgate next on Saturday. What a great start for the Vine.

By Simon Ball

Saturday 11th August 2:30pm Tebay 'v' Vine FC

After this fixture last year and the 6-0 drubbing we got, I had doubts from the beginning. I had even more when I found out we were struggling for players. Hey ho and off we set on our marathon journey. We started the game with a new keeper, Trev from Poland, and a new striker, Alberto from Italy, we also had Steven Hewitt's brother in law, John from the murky south standing in too. We started positively and Chris Domboyi was soon winding up Tebay's neanderthal midfielder by nicking the ball off him every time he got it. Henry proved to be an apt centre half with John keeping most Tebay attacks at bay. Steve Hewitt broke on the left and whipped a vicious left footed cross which Alberto volleyed superbly and the keeper could only parry it back into the path of Alberto who slotted it home. Next the Vine's very own Forest Gump, Mike, went on one of his legendary runs. He started well in his own half and zipped past several Tebay players before stabbing the ball to Simon Ball. Simon then played it back in a classic give and go and Mike burst into the Tebay box where he was savagely chopped down by 2 Tebay defenders. The ref had no option put to point at the spot, penalty. Nick Ebbitt wrestled the ball of Steve Ball and blasted the penalty into the net 2-0! Steve Ball's ineptitude in front of goal could have proved fatal as he squandered several chances to score.

Second half Tebay came into the game more and more and after several high pressure corners finally broke through the Vine defence and pulled one back. Less than 2 minutes later Alberto hit a fearsome drive into the top corner to make it 3-1 to the Vine. Tebay came back again with more pressure corners and finally brother in law

John had a moment of madness and the ball bounced off his knee and in for an own goal. The rest of the game passed and at the final whistle it remained 3-2 to the Vine. Always makes a long journey much more bearable with a victory.

If anyone wants to write a guest match report then let me know. I'll need it emailing through to me. Apparently this web site is being read in South America by Crooky after he's finished chasing lady-boys.

By Simon Ball

Wednesday 8th August 7:00pm Burton Thistle 'v' Vine FC

Well the number of new players tonight meant that we could probably have done a Manchester United and played two separate friendlies on the same evening. Lots of new faces and names to learn, Steve Ball showed off his particular knack for names by calling most players by the wrong name.

Seeing as we had never played together we settled quite well and were unlucky to go behind. Almost immediately afterwards though, Chris Domboyi popped up on the end of a cross to toe poke home an equalizer. The half played out without further incident. Second half was much improved and the Vine took the lead when Kevin got on to the end of a Gareth Hammond cross and headed past the Burton keeper. The Vine had a few half chances before the big Ivan Campo lookalike Crumpet, rose like a salmon and headed home a corner to finish Burton off. If the current players stick together and gel, I think this could be a great season for the Vine.

By Simon Ball

Wednesday 1st August 7:00pm Carnforth Rangers 'v' Vine FC

The first pre-season game was Wednesday 1st August against Carnforth Rangers 1st Team and kicked off at 7:00pm. Although we lost 6-0, the scratch team we put together played with spirit and considering it was the first time this group of players had played together everyone took a lot of positives out of the game. Carnforth Rangers proved themselves to be a class outfit and I'm sure will do well in the Premier Division this season. They passed the ball extremely well and ran the game.

The Vine's new keeper Henry proved himself to be a brave and dedicated number 1. Chris Domboyi (probably spelt wrong) made a welcome return to the team as did Gareth Hammond, Steve Lancaster, Ian McKeen and the Vine's very own sick-note Rob Brown, who managed to get injured again.

The Vine came closest when Simon Ball slid a silky ball across the six yard box into the path of Gareth Hammond, who was unlucky to see his effort saved.

All in all the result didn't matter and more importantly it was a chance for most of the squad to get match fitness.

Next up are Burton Thistle away next Wednesday 8th August kick off at 7:00pm.

By Simon Ball