

Social Inclusion League Rd 3 - 18 Mar 2016

Men Dive In FC, supported by Community CVS and Care Network/Achieving Self Care, and their latest exploits in Social Inclusion Football. Remember - Trainers or Astros only. No Blades or Studs

"I regret telling the entire world and his dog how good a manager I was. I knew I was the best but I should have said nowt and kept the pressure off cos they'd have worked it out for themselves" - Brian Clough. First English Manger to win the European Cup

You might have heard that the league put in for some lottery funding. You may have seen us on the telly. You might even have seen some of us on the Ewood Park pitch at half time during the recent Birmingham City game. Well, we were working tirelessly behind the scenes to get people to vote for our project.

Thanks again to Steve Tinniswood of The Lancashire Telegraph. Really did the league proud with a fantastic piece in Grassroots. The Lancashire Telegraph were here today as well - this kind of support might go to our heads. I know a couple of our players now have agents. Yet another photographer down to show me up. Wish I could remember his name but I see him from time to time at Community Events. He uses Nikon so no point in asking if I could borrow a lens or two.

So, Match Day.

Before I start, please take note of the following. If anyone has a worry, talk to us. Either your team mates, your manager or others dotted around the BRIC. It's what we are about - we are all here to help. Sod embarrassment, tell us. If we don't know, we can't help. We have been doing this for years - we know what we're doing. Sharing problems halves them. I kid you not - let us help. No problem is too big or small - jump to it and take our helping hand.

The sub title to the report? No Blades or Studs. It has always been the league rule but we are enforcing it now. I always tell Men Dive In about it so imagine my surprise last month when one of our players - Captain - turns up in Bright Orange new boots with studs like stilettos. Bright Orange for heaven's sake - they stood out like a bulldog's whatever's.

I had already sorted the team for Hecky to select from. We have lost a couple of players recently and we were going to be a few down today. Giggzy and Moose were unavailable, Moose with a bit of an injury that makes me wince. Even so, we had a pretty good squad together to try and maintain our unbeaten league record. Moose by the way is fine, or so he says. He should be back on his feet soon.

So we had Richard "Lionheart" Mason, Capt Anthony Holt, Jamie "Chappers" Chapman, Key "Slipstream" Hanslip, John "Boomer" Stellenboom, Ste "Chopper" Mason, Richard "Loverman" Aboro and Lee "Hecky" Heckingbottom

First game up...Blackburn Brasilia.

They were missing Ken...worried that I might film him again. They were also missing their keeper from last time - Wicky - good job as it was his performance that got them a draw. No such worries for us today though, despite Paul Hardman's presence - maybe dropping Tim to the bench was a mistake. Right from the off, Slipstream and Boomer were ripping their defence in two. A brilliant passage of play opened the scoring. Chappers played the ball out of defence to Capt who played a grand ball to Slipstream. His quick feet played Boomer in to score what was probably the best team goal we've seen down there. The despondent look from Brasilia said as much as you needed to know - they knew they were onto a sticky wicket. Boomer got another 2 for himself and Slipstream then bagged a brilliant individual goal. Lionheart at the other end pulled off a couple of decent saves, one keeping Hardman at bay. We did concede a couple but the game was never really in doubt. Whatever Slipstream was on, I wanted some. Hecky turned up late - half way through the first game - not bad for a lad whose job it is to sort out individual team selection. He missed February - alright he had work commitments - but his excuse today was "lunch pal".

Next game up was against Darwen Outreach. You may remember that I have described them as hot and cold. Today they looked like they would be towards the colder end. They were missing their engine Jason so looked a bit depleted. I will take my hat off to them though - they all put a shift in. After being expansive on the bigger pitch, the smaller pitch stunted us. But I think it had a psychological effect as well. The quick passing went awry but at least our defence was uptight. Lionheart was immense in goal which was a good job. Hecky and Chappers at the back were letting more than the odd chance through so Lionheart's contribution really stood out. Slipstream was on fire again - smoking hot to be honest. It was his play with Boomer that set Captain up for two great team goals. We deserved the clean sheet but Outreach deserve praise for keeping it down to two. Nice set of lads as well - as are everyone down there so don't write in. Played two, won two, still top of the league.

Next up, Wigan AFG

These are a really tough team for us. They are really well organised defensively and are incredibly tough to break through. We quickly went one up though through Capt but then it all went a bit Pete Tong after that. It wasn't as if we were wasting good possession with wild shots, they were pretty solid as a back unit. They scored one then another and we found ourselves two one down with four minutes to go. Off came Chappers for Slipstream who was taking a rest after virtually running the previous two games. Inspired change - Slipstream scored himself then set Boomer up. Defence stood firm thereafter with Lionheart doing his stuff again. Cracking! 3-2 winners.

Next up...Sally Army.

They struggle bless them. They have a high turnover of players due to the nature of the work they do. One of their players hadn't even been given his room keys before he was drafted into the team. For the last two months they have been getting beaten fairly heavily. We wanted to help them out in between league dates but we just haven't had the time yet. Today however, by the time they came to play us, they had had enough. I hope they still try to come along - if only so we can help them improve. We were awarded the game 3-0 - goal difference won't mean a jot and any race to be top scorer is meaningless if teams feel they can't carry on. I have no idea how I can help them but I will at least try if they want it.

Fifth game...Calderstones Elite

They have recently started to rest players in the game immediately before ours. It has had some success as they have only lost once to us this season. It had an amazing effect this time. The game was delayed whilst the Telegraph photographer finished what Steve Tinniswood started. Herding cats I described it as. Perhaps it would affect their concentration. It didn't. Within seconds of the delayed kick off, Holt scored. As Heyes from Calderstones said - too easy. Their keeper took a knock in the build-up but it didn't affect the outcome. After that...nip and tuck. Calderstones equalised then went ahead. Stellenboom drew us level before Calderstones went 3-2 up. It looked like our unbeaten record was about to drop before Chappers came on and equalised just before the final whistle. A great game, played in great spirit. Calderstones had won every game until then so we were still 2 points ahead at the top of the table.

Our last game was against VIC - veterans in the community.

I had been trying to get them some former servicemen players in time but I couldn't quite manage it. I asked a current soldier based in Preston if he could help. He couldn't take the day off - shooting bullets or something - but he will ask around. Glad he couldn't make it actually. He played for my Sunday League side last year and now plays for Heyes's Brownhill side. Pretty smart player who would make a massive difference to them. It was an easy game again against them. Stellenboom got himself another quality hat trick thanks to very unselfish play from his team mates. Loverman finally bagged one with a piece of play that looked effortless. Slipstream continued his fine form - even Hecky bagged one.

Our games were over. One game after another with no rest in between - except for the Sally Army forfeit. I would then have loved to go and watch Calderstones play Brasilia but I had to keep on

herding those cats. Getting the kit together, clearing up their rubbish, which by the way will stop now, if you don't clear up after yourselves, I'll read you the Riot Act. Knock yourselves out if you want to throw orange peel and empty bottles around your own living room – don't do it down The BRIC - I get the telling off. I know exactly who is responsible but I won't shame you on here - just stop doing it.

Anyway, back to Calderstones v Brasilia. Topsy turvy to say the least. As I said, I didn't see the game but Auntie Paul Hardman did the business for us. They beat them 4 - 1 or 2 which meant we had put another 3 points of daylight between us and Calderstones at the top of the table. Pointless waiting for The BRIC to update their tables before I publish - take it from me.

Man of the Day? Boomer was last season's 1st Div top scorer but he doesn't score that many for us - the team score hatful's though. Saying that, he does score lots for us, it's just that he won't be top league scorer this year. He looked at the goal scoring charts and noticed he wasn't on it. He might be now. Two hat tricks contributed to his 8 goals today. The first hat trick against Brasilia was a joy to watch. Capt chipped in with a couple and Lionheart was outstanding. However, Key "Slipstream" Hanslip gets the accolade. He was a man possessed today and impressed no end.

Today's goal scorers were Boomer 8, Capt 4, Slipstream 3, Chappers, Hecky and Loverman 1 each.

For the season. Boomer 14, Capt 12, Chappers 9 Slipstream 8, Loverman 7, Giggzy 4, Moose 3 and Hecky with 1.

One more than me mind but still only one.

Some observations after the matches.

Hecky made an interesting one. Despite Tommo Harris sometimes being a pain – doesn't pass the ball - we miss his work rate. There were loads of times when we weren't giving quick ball. Chappers admittedly had a sore thigh and Slipstream tired himself out but the rest of them had no excuse.

Another observation - mine - was that the attitude of the players from all teams - bar one - was amazing. Everyone was on a high and it showed in their play. There was no rough stuff at all. I don't mean that there were no challenges, I meant that after a strong tackle, there were no afters. Maybe it was the euphoria of us winning a shed load of cash for the league. However, for the players in the heat of the moment, that wouldn't mean anything. I personally put it down to the fact that no first division player was wearing studs. I don't doubt it for a minute. Challenges were tasty at times but at least opponents didn't have stud rakes down their legs.

We have had complaints in the past that teams draft in players on a game by game basis, thus skewing results. Teams who travel to Blackburn with full teams were getting beaten by teams with very obvious ringers. For the last two months, Men Dive In's policy is that you play for us and us only. OK, if teams don't have enough players, concessions can be made but to keep it fair, One Team Only rule has to be in place. It was disappointing that a team or two dropped out of that rule when it suited them. I spoke to Aunty Paul and he was pulling his hair out about it. We had enough to cope with without teams flouting the understanding we are supposed to have. Men Dive In policy will remain the same though - one team only. Lead by example.

Jeez, it sounds like I'm a real fusspot.

To end on a high - Lionheart came back into town with me in the taxi. I couldn't get a word in edgeways. He was re-living every game and every save he made. He even takes his mates to the gym so he can practice diving. Hecky has had such a positive impact on him. Mind you, he was no slouch last season when he only conceded 29 goals in 30 games whilst we scored 156 at the other end. He got his nickname because he took 9 balls to his nethers last year. How on earth he didn't win Player of the Season I don't know. There you are – I've thrown his name into the ring for you.

The quote at the top of the report? Old Big Ed himself. I'm not comparing myself with him – I'm better obviously ha ha. We are still undefeated in the league though after 48 games - drawing 7 of those. Not a bad record really.

Right then, time to publish and get home to Mrs Men Dive In. She hasn't seen a right lot of me recently, which may or may not be a good thing – you'll have to ask her. I'm leaving the kit in work though. I'm sick of our kitchen looking like Widow Twanky's launderette.

As ever, my football family, [#AllezMenDiveIn](#)