

International College 4 Chilton Cantello 4

It was the first time this term that we had arrived at the sports field bathed in sunshine, without a rain cloud in sight. Our opponents arrived early and made an impressive spectacle with their accurate warm up practices.

As the first whistle blew, our forwards charged towards the Chilton goal with a flurry of accurate short passes between Nikita, Lyuben, Marko and Andrei. Marko let fly with a fearsome volley from at least 25 metres out. To everyone's surprise, including his own, the ball flew straight into the back of the net. An awesome start! The College dominated the next few minutes, with our opponents shocked by the intensity of our attacks; Andrei chased an excellent long ball by Marko and was only just thwarted by the Chilton goalkeeper. Then another long shot was just turned into the side netting.

Chilton weathered this phase of play without conceding further goals and began to build their own attacks. This left Lyuben, Ken, Etienne and Ben defending our midfield against ever more dangerous sorties by our opponents. We were bombarded by a series of long aerial balls that exposed a lack of height in our defence. After ten minutes we conceded a goal.

Chilton dominated the next few minutes and we yielded a series of corners. Fortunately, they were unable to master the blustery wind and no damage was caused. However, our inability to clear the ball from our own half, allowed Chilton to snatch a second goal. Nonetheless, the boys were not downcast and engineered a series of neat manoeuvres in midfield. As well as these team efforts, there were a series of fine solo efforts, especially by Andrei, Lyuben and Marko. Our defenders were equally busy: Jack showed considerable determination and tenacity in defending the centre. Whilst, Etienne's speed around the field, found him in both defence and attack. Johannes continued with his trademark sliding tackles and Yes managed to cut out a series of aerial balls.

After twenty minutes, Andrei managed to evade the Chilton goalkeeper and pushed home the equalizer. In the closing minutes of this half, Lyuben evaded at least four tackles, only to stumble as he lined up a shot. Marko delivered two excellent corner kicks: one narrowly headed wide by Andrei and, frustratingly, Nikita was unable to bring the second under control in front of the goal. Seconds before the half time whistle, Mikhail brought off the save of the half and we entered the interval at 2-2. The first half was probably some of the best football that the boys had played this season.

It was Chilton who moved into top gear immediately the second half started and scored a goal whilst our players were still savouring the halftime oranges. Our opponents maintained their momentum and there was a serious danger of the College being overwhelmed. It became an 11-man defence. However, we weathered the storm with some useful tackles by our new player, Jonny. We all breathed a sigh of relief when Shaun, emulating Marko, shot from long range and levelled the scores. Chilton rose to the challenge and delivered a series of long range passes. Despite good individual efforts by Ahmed, Yes and Etienne, our defence lost its cohesion, and were regularly penetrated by Chilton. Inevitably, they scored.

Chilton was spurred on by this success and launched ever more threatening attacks. Fortunately, our massed defence thwarted them. We did manage a few isolated breakouts and were rescued by another incredible long-range shot by Marko. The final few minutes were played out by two very tired teams.

A 4-4 draw was a fair result for both teams and this was undoubtedly the most exciting match so far this term.