

April 2nd 2011 Pembury Utd 1- 0 Lions Pembury City 1-0 Lions

March 26th 2011 Jarvis Brook Cobras 1 -2 Lions (James 2) Jarvis Brook Vipers 1 -1 Lions (James)

Lions Do Everything Right but Find Rewards Hard to Come By

The Lions continued to recover from their dodgy spell a few weeks back with 4 matches where everything went well – except the results. Two wins and Two draws would have been just reward for their toil, skill passing and commitment, but a last minute equaliser (again... arrghh!!) away to Jarvis Brook and a frustrating pair of matches at Pembury left the boys with just 4 points.

The Pembury games were the most frustrating. Played on a comedy sloping pitch where Sir Edmund Hillary would have struggled, it was impossible to play any meaningful football. There have been times when the boys have scored for fun, but luck in front of goal evaporated as chance after well crafted chance went maddeningly wide. As austerity bites at the MOD the British Army aren't the only boys to find their firepower much diminished. Pembury were a different matter – stifled well in midfield across both games and with the rotating trio of Edd, Nathan and Jamie performing well at the back, their chances were limited. Crucially though, almost every chance they did create was on target and George, who was spectacular in both games, saved the Lions from an even more unfair result. 3 or 4 superb blocks and a number of forays out to meet opposition attacks kept the scorline in touching distance.

With form in front of the Pembury goals elusive, across all 4 games the Lions did continue to demonstrate their trademarks - combative effort in midfield, neat passing, and solid defending. There was no small number of excellent moves - a crowd pleasing favourite being from the KO in the 2nd game at Pembury where the ball whizzed from player to player, from one side to the other, Theo receiving the 5th or 6th straight pass playing it first time into the box where Will was waiting only for the shot to edge past the bottom right corner. Over the past two weeks all the boys played at their highest standard but the competitive drive was personified by young Will, especially at Jarvis Brook, whose unceasing effort and relentless efforts to win the ball added to the solidity and craft regularly provided by Jack and Ben.

At Jarvis Brook James was inspired up front. 3 goals – 1 an audacious shot from just inside their half – winning the ball and the resulting shot looping over the opposition goalie. Jack was dominating on the right and a return to the defence of Ollie added strength at the back and menace going forward. Depressingly at 2-0 up clearly it was time for the Lions to roll out one of their most destructive traits – sitting back thinking the job's done with 12 minutes of the half still to play. Needless to say the Brook pressed forward and punished the Lions who were shaken back to life and able to cling on till the final whistle.

The opposite happened in the 2nd JB game where 1-0 up the boys fought to the bitter end only to see their efforts dashed with a long range shot in the dying seconds.

This Saturday sees us at home to Pembury – games we can surely win if we compete well and keep the ball on the floor. If Mums and Dads can look in the attic to find some old scoring boots it will be much appreciated.

Jarvis Brook – Man of the Match – Will

Pembury – Man of the Match – George

Saturday Feb 5th Uckfield 0 – 0 LG Lions Uckfield 1 - 3 LG Lions – James (2) Theo

The Lions extended their unbeaten run to 13 matches with a win and (yet another) draw. Indeed, since the Rusthall fiesta the boys have only lost 2 in 23 games – quite an achievement – and they should be looking to build on this as we approach the fiestas in a few months time.

After the glories of the previous week this fixture had all the trappings of a dismal away match on a cold and wet winter morning. The biggest player on Saturday was the howling gale, of Katrina-esqe proportions, that hindered any attempt at the Total Football we've come to expect. Both matches clearly had the Lions in the ascendancy and any post match statistics would have bourne out this supremacy quite clearly (I

hear Andy Gray is available). For long periods of both games George was more lonely than Kevin Costner in *Dances with Wolves*, though this was due in no small part to the immensity of the performance put in by Ollie in defence.

Keen to come forward and support the attacks, it was the speed demon who constantly and repeatedly stormed back to intercept the opposition if and when they broke.

Interestingly this side of his game seems to have masked the improvement in his technical ability, hindered in the past by the sheer length of time it takes messages to get from his brain all the way to his feet, with a number of surging runs, dribbling and good link play with the front four.

The first game saw the Lions frustrated with a number of chances going wide with the odd save from their 'keeper. The front 4 supplied their usual fare of passing and movement, but it seem to lack the zest of previous weeks.

The second match saw the Lions impose themselves from early on and it quickly became a question of 'how many?' 3 was the final answer, but a full firing Lions team could have achieved many more. All the goals were well taken and James put in one of the best performances to date. Especially pleasing were an increasing number of early 'through balls' that allowed James and Theo to break and bear down on the opposition goal – Will, fighting his urge to dribble round the whole of Uckfield, proving to be the most reliable supply route.

Overall a somewhat frustrating day as it felt like 2 points dropped – but it will be remembered for the towering (in every sense) performance of Ollie Phillips – Man of the Match.

Saturday Jan 29th

TW Foresters Lions 0 – 1 Langton Green Lions (James) TW Foresters Jaguars 3 – 3 Langton Green Lions (Ben, Theo, Jack)

The Lions made their way onto the pitch knowing they were up against the best sides from one of the best clubs in the region. All the omens were good – last week's challenge had been sent packing, the boys had won their last 4 games having scored 17 goals whilst conceding just 4, and for the first time in 6 months competition for places was strong with the presence of a full squad. With the eyes of Langton upon them, the Lions set about delivering what they do best: a fully committed, sometimes nervy, hopelessly engaging pair of matches. It's not always killer, stylish football but when Langton's finest hit the business end they deliver a spectacle guaranteed to keep you enthralled.

There was decent vocal support for both teams among the watching crowd - bellows of encouragement, squeals of excitement and a not infrequent howl of delight. The effort in both matches was outstanding, but Ben, Ollie and especially Jack were exemplary in their tireless efforts to win the ball, track back, tackle and set up the attack. In a tough fought first match the Lions quickly made clear their intent with 3 to 4 shots on goal – a Theo header just wide to the right, Will striking over and the 'keeper saving from Ben. It was great football from both sides but with Ollie covering every forage forward by the opposition and Jamie mopping up, George was largely a spectator. The deadlock was broken well by James, picking up on a through-ball, running on goal, and shooting low to the right. The Lions held on, with Nathan making an accomplished return to the defence in the second half.

The second match was a spectacle of historic proportions. As news spread of the encounter taking place, habitual daytime TV watchers were forsaking Lorraine and Jeremy Kyle in their

droves to tune in. Office desk jockeys downloaded minute-by-minute updates, or watched iPlayer on the lowdown.

The result, at 3-3 seemed fair, and with the Lions having to come from behind 3 times to get a result, not without a small amount of relief. Indeed, fighting back those 3 times demonstrated real character typified by the Captain.

The two sides were equally matched in skill and commitment, but the manner of the goals was the real separation between them. Forresters struck first. Ollie, having won two tackles found himself bereft of support. As he waited in vain for his team to help out, Forresters snatched the ball and bore down 2 on 1 against George. The 'keeper, with no real alternative, charged out but to no avail as the ball was slotted home.

The second half restarted with Nathan in goal and Theo back up front in place of James. The intensity continued but Ben latched onto a ball from Will after some good work on the left and a shot from outside the box proved unstoppable. As Langton celebrated the opposition forced a corner. The defence was distracted and lacking attention the game continued and Forresters were able to force home. Again the Lions came back, this time through Theo, who received the ball in the middle of the park. Flicking the ball over their last man he bore down on goal before expertly lobbing the keeper from 12 yards to the delight of the home fans. Contender for goal of the season?

At 2-2 and with only 4 minutes on the clock, hearts sank as a 3rd weak goal was given away. Forresters found themselves stuck by one of our corners, and with legs on both sides beginning to weaken, when the cross came there was no one to meet it and with 3 Lions present there seemed no danger. So how we groaned as the ball bobbed past 2 defenders and the goalie before tamely crawling over the line.

With just minutes left it was left to Jack to secure the best point of the season. Coming from the right he unleashed a shot from some distance that curled over the keeper into the net. No one deserved it more and all that was left was to keep the legs going whilst the clock ticked down.

Man of the match

In what was widely accepted to be the best performance of the season, in the best game of the season, it is difficult to single out anyone in particular. But for his unceasing efforts on the right, his battling qualities in midfield, and for a wonder goal that sealed the draw, Jack Sambrook was man-of-the-match.

Saturday 22nd January 2011

Langton Green Lions 3 – 0 Tunbridge Wells Forester's Ben (2), JAMES, DEFINITELY JAMES

Langton Green Lions 8 – 0 Tunbridge Wells Forrester's Ben (2), Will (3), Theo (1), OG, AND JAMES!

The New Year saw a crowd pleasing performance of epic proportions. Having not played for 2 months, and again being down to just 7 players, there was some trepidation to be facing one of the strongest clubs in the area. The nerves didn't last long.

Forester's kicked off and immediately the scene was set as Theo steamed in and won the ball. The ball played well between the front four with Theo (playing on the right in place of the absent Jack) and James linking well, Ben bossing the midfield, taking possession time and again and Will rampaging down the left. Within 2 minutes the Lions scored as Ben slotted in from close range from a Theo corner.

A second followed as Ben shot from the outside of the area after good work from Will. Suddenly Forrester's were back in it and for much of the rest of the half they began to pressure the Lions goal. The defence, wary to the counter attack, held up well with Jamie aggressive in the tackle and Ollie muscling out the opposition. The final goal came courtesy of James, again with help from Will, picking up the ball in the middle of the Forrester's half, dribbling into the area and slotting past the 'keeper from 6 yards.

The second match became a goal fest and you'll have to excuse me if I don't talk through every goal – suffice it to say:

- The boys wanted to win – were constantly battling, and winning the ball – led by Ben, but matched by all the others
- The passing, especially from the front four, warms the heart (if not the toes)
- Theo corners are deadly – I think 3 goals from corners over two matches
- Support play – great to see defence supporting the midfield and making themselves available.
- On a cold, wet Saturday morning, Will dribbling down the left and slotting home always makes me smile.

The boys should enjoy the two wins, but I doubt Forrester's will be lying down next Saturday. They need start with the same desire and the rest will come.

Man of the Match – Will

Saturday October 9th

Borough Green Junior 2 -2 Lions (Ben, Will) Borough Green Colts 3 – 3 Lions (Will2, James)

We travelled for days to get to deepest darkest Kent for our latest away match. It was so far from civilisation that you kept expecting to meet Sir Ranulph Fiennes along the way. If only Scott had had Sambrook senior and his sat-nav maybe he wouldn't have been beaten to the South Pole by those dastardly Scandinavians.

Still, I digress.

Two draws were a disappointing result for the boys as their play and workrate deserved so much more. Pretty much all the football was played by the Lions and most of it in the opposition half. The front four of Will, Ben, Jack and James are generating a real understanding of playing with each other and it showed with numerous neat passing moves across both games. The first match saw the Lions attack time and again with skill and movement. Not too many clear chances were created and momentum was lost when Ben was scythed down from behind and the subless Lions were reduced to 6 men. Sporting a half decent war wound, Ben returned and the Lions continued to press with Jack and Will working

the channels well being well fed from the centre by Ben.

Then the opposition broke, the Lions defence committed and their striker went clear down the left. Theo and Jamie rushed to the corner to block but that left the centre uncovered. The cross was fired in, Ben and Will have tracked back to help, but in the ensuing melee the ball goes in for 1-0. To make matters worse Will has taken a knock and again we're down to 6.

Before the end of the first half another Lion goes down in the BG half – about 10 yards outside of the penalty box. Ben steps up and the linesman from the far side (Neil) screams for the “top left”. Ben lets fly and in it goes – top right! Thank you very much! 1-1.

Will and James are linking on the left, Jamie tackles in the middle of our half and clears the ball. Theo takes a corner (and can that boy take a corner!) and Will gets on the end of it. Wallop! 2-1 Lions.

The boys tire in the second half, but the passing is still strong. George steps up and pushes a low shot round the right post. The next shot goes between his legs.... Adrian's heart goes into over-drive.... but George recovers, turns and dives on the ball – panic averted. Then he catches a shot to the chest, but the Lions are under siege. Jamie is no-nonsense and clears but the next shot is drilled in, but George gets to it and tips it to the crossbar, the ball comes out, but the defence don't follow up and the next shot leaves the game a draw.

The second game had a few players that looked like Ollie's big brothers. Unconfirmed reports abound of one of them about to retake his A-Levels! Again the Lions go behind, but it is one of the qualities of these boys that they always give themselves a chance of coming back. It's more of the same as the front four link and move well and the defence block and clear. Will picks up the ball from outside the area and scores with a great shot from the left. Jack picks up the ball from midfield, down the wing he goes and is unlucky not to score from a long range effort from the right.

Will scores again from inside the penalty area, levelling the game at 2-2 after Goliath had bundled the ball in at our end. James, who worked tirelessly up front, was full of movement – pulling the defence apart and giving options to his midfield, finally got his just desserts with a well worked goal.

For the third time this season the Lions failed to hold onto a narrow lead through a late equaliser. You could see the tiredness setting and the midfield got disjointed from the defence allowing space behind them. The boys passing finally undid them as a ball was laid back to defence. Hesitation allowed Goliath to nick the ball and the equaliser followed.

Overall a great day, with the skill and workrate bordering on superb. We need to work on the defence and the ways the boys react to adversity and if we can keep a few clean sheets the boys will get the results their labour deserves.

Man of the match – Will

Saturday 25th September

Lions 2 – 0 Uckfield Stingrays (Harry, Theo) Lions 4 – 1 Uckfield Sharks (Harry, James, Will 2)

Team: George, Nathan, Ed S, James, Jack, William, Theo, Harry B

A beautiful crisp autumn morning, smelling of goals. Three Lions and inspirational coach Martin (29) absent, conquering the frozen lakes and trails of Hever Castle. An opportunity for Langton to show strength in depth, with Ed and Harry joining us on loan from the Chris Allen Academy Elite . And the Lions delivered with style.

We won the toss and chose to kick upfield. Moral victory already in the bag, the Lions went on the attack straight from the whistle. Hungry lions. James, Ben and Harry in midfield providing box to box coverage and incisive support for Will upfront. Theo and Nathan strong and solid and unbreakable in defence. And right at the back, inspired and alert goalkeeping from George The Cat. In the first half the Lions took control. We passed the ball, talked to each other, moved, shot, tackled, headed. But we didn't score. Would the second half bring the goals our game deserved?

At the start of the second half Ed came on for Nathan and the team marched on. Theo showed that he can throw the ball further than Rory Delap and can fire a corner like a rocket. Again and again. And sure enough our set piece dominance finally was rewarded. A Theo throw created havoc in the Uckfield box and this led, eventually, to the ball breaking to Harry who fired in the goal that he and the team richly deserved. And then the fiercest corner struck something. A hand. The goalie? No. Adrian the eagle eyed referee had it covered – the Uckfield defender had stuck his hand out. And now was rubbing his stinging hand. Guilty as charged. Theo stepped up. Back of the net. Nathan came on for James and Uckfield couldn't get back in the game because we didn't let them win the ball. Job done.

Second game. Kicking upfield again, pressuring from the start. Passing, moving, winning corner after corner. Rewarded. Harry, who all day won the ball – and tried to use the ball to pass to a teammate – got his second goal. Result. We're going to walk this. Oops. We stop battling. 1:1. We have a wobble. Uckfield were getting to the ball first. Time for the defence to show how good they are. Masterful intervention from George. Discipline from the two defenders, exposed for the first time all day but keeping their shape and not diving in. Half time level. Time to regroup.

One change in the second half with Ed coming off after a couple of minutes nursing an injured leg and one positional change with Will swapping to left midfield and James going up front. And soon enough the ball broke, Will found James and James ran on, smacked the ball, keeper made a save and James smashed in the rebound. Massive celebration on (and off) the pitch. No time for slacking. The Lions pressed on with Ben all over the pitch tackling and driving forward and the hard work paid off. Will leaping higher than all of their defence like a salmon on a pogo stick and headed in what would surely prove to be the winner. With one minute to go, Harry takes a breather. Ed comes back on, wins the ball, beats two defenders, shoots, keeper saves but Will rams in the rebound. Big hearted players making and scoring the big goals. Final whistle. Every player rightly proud of their own contribution in a tremendous team effort. The Lions are on the prowl....

Saturday 11th September

Tenterden 1 – 0 Lions Forest Row 1 – 1 Lions (Theo)

Team: George, Jamie, Ollie, Ben, Jack, Will, Nathan, James, Theo.

The boys are back and Saturday saw a great morning of football on a wet and windy pitch at Forest Row. Having elected to play in the higher league the opposition were expected to be as good as the best we had come up against last season. This proved to be the case with a good

Forest Row side whom, honourably, make great efforts to pass the ball both around and out of defence, and a very accomplished Tenterden side full of speed, size and skill.

The Lions will have to work hard this season to keep up with these teams, but the signs are encouraging as they acquitted themselves well across both games. Tenterden were a sizeable bunch. They were fast and physical with good movement and passing, but they were matched by a committed performance from the Lions in no way bereft of ability and skill. The defence had to be on constant alert as the opposition swarmed forward with pace. Ollie is excelling having dropped to left back and numerous threats were thwarted as they sprinted forward only to be beaten to the ball on every occasion by the new defender. George caught a shot from outside the box and pushed another shot round the post. Jamie mopped up and cleared the ball with aplomb.

They were hugely assisted with the new 3 man midfield providing cover up front. But it wasn't all defence. From the first minute the Lions made numerous forays into the Tenterden box – Theo unlucky not to connect with a cross in the first 15 seconds. Ben was energy personified in the middle of the park, assisted by long serving midfield maestro Jack with both tackling and tracking back, as well as creating new moves down both flanks. New signing Will put on an impressive show down the left wing with pace and not a little verve and was twice unlucky not to score – one shot saved by the 'keeper, the other narrowly outside the left post. Our own keeper saw more of the ball and showed great courage saving at the feet of one attacker. Jack went through on goal cutting in from the right before narrowly missing at the near post. The game was decided by a penalty that was drilled high to the left of centre towards the end of the first half.

The following game against Forest Row saw more of the good efforts from the first. The boys really had the bit between their teeth for this one and they dominated the game – no mean feat against a side who were the only team to score against us at the Rusthall fiesta. James linked up well with Ben and threaded a number of balls through to a recently fit Nathan who made his first start in 6 months. Will continued to provide pace and width on the left. Forest Row had a number of chances and again George excelled.

With the Lions winning good ball in midfield and some neat passing moves between, Jack, James, Ben and Will a goal looked likely. It came 5 minutes into the 2nd half with Theo stroking the ball into the bottom left hand corner. The boys continued to win good possession, but as they tired we increasingly found ourselves marooned in the FR half as they sought an equalizer. Jamie and Ollie sent them packing time and again, and George continued to make saves. With the final kick of the game, FR bundled the ball across the line – a just reward for their commitment till the final whistle but the Lions were left to rue missed chances to convert their dominance into goals.

1 point from 6 on the first day doesn't really do justice to the boys. They were committed, matched a good side in the first game and dominated in the second. There were some really good passages of play and numerous chances were created. Adding Ben to midfield gives added drive in the middle of the park and with George growing in confidence and ability and the new defensive partnership looking strong I think the boys are well positioned to meet the challenges ahead.

Man of the match – George Sainsbury