

CROYDON WIN LONDON SENIOR TROPHY (by David Ballheimer)

Croydon (0) 1, Wimbledon Casuals (0) 0

Croydon defeated Wimbledon Casuals 1–0 to clinch the London Senior Trophy at a surprisingly chilly War Memorial Stadium, Carshalton Athletic FC.

The match was not one that will live long in the memory for the spectators, the two teams cancelling out each other and chances being at a premium.

That said, the Surrey County Premier League (Step 7) Casuals really should have taken the lead after barely 90 seconds. A diagonal downfield pass picked out Dan Wanyonyi in space, 35 yards from goal.

Wanyonyi brushed past the only defender close to him and ran unchallenged towards the Croydon goal. George Kamarasi came off his line to narrow the angle but Wanyonyi didn't strike the ball cleanly and it rolled some distance wide of the far post.

Croydon, who play in the Southern Counties League East, Step 6, gradually began to get the better of the midfield, kept Wanyonyi isolated up front, and looked for Aaron Reber, Ryan Hall and Ryan Palmer to put Uli Fischer and Fred Obasa in good attacking positions.

After 17 minutes, a well-placed cross from Hall was met by Obasa's head, but Adam Lee made a relatively comfortable save. Ten minutes later, Lee was at full stretch to tip away a header from Fischer.

The best chance of the half, however, fell to former Premier League star Hall. Fischer was the creator down the right and his low cross was deflected to Hall, with most of the goal at his mercy. He smashed the ball into the netting high above the terraces.

Just before half-time, Kamarasi was forced to make a save, denying Wanyonyi, but the big goalkeeper was not particularly troubled.

Two minutes after the resumption, Croydon scored what proved to be the only goal. Trying to clear danger from their left-back position the Wimbledon attempted clearance fell to Fischer, who looked up and slid a pass into space just inside the penalty area.

Casuals defenders immediately appealed for offside, but the assistant referee pointed at the player who had been slow to move upfield, so Obasa had a clear run at goal, albeit at an angle. OBASA steadied himself, fired past Lee and the ball nestled just inside the far post.

Wimbledon had little answer to the precision and comfort in possession of Croydon, who looked to Aaron Bogle, Jordan Anderson, Kamarasi, Palmer and Hall for veteran –more than 70 years of senior football between them –experience.

Anderson also had a header blocked by a defender after 61 minutes. The rebound fell to Fischer, but his attempt was well saved by Lee.

With only one goal separating the teams, Casuals knew one defensive slip from the Trams or a moment of inspiration from them would restore parity, and they got it in the 65th minute. The ball fell to Liam Marshall, who drilled the ball powerfully towards goal, but Kamarasi was equal to it, making an excellent save.

With ten minutes of normal time, an audacious overhead flick from Anderson, after a corner had not been cleared, looped over a stranded Lee but just missed the far post.

Croydon had two or three more half-chances, profiting from Wimbledon's chase for the elusive equaliser, but they came to nothing. None of the substitutes from either team were to make telling impacts either.

After a long period of additional time, Alistair Potter – who had an excellent game in the middle – blew the final whistle and, a few minutes later, an ecstatic Anderson lifted the London Senior Trophy surrounded by his happy Croydon team-mates and management staff.

Teams:

CROYDON: Kamarasi, Morgan, McGovern, Anderson, White, Palmer, Hall, Reber, Obasa, Fischer, Bogle. Subs used: Lamboh, Ayetine, Burrell-Grant. Subs unused: Green, Chin.

WIMBLEDON CASUALS: Lee, Thacker, Bowman, Maxwell, Murgatroyd, Wanyonyi, Hartington, Phillipson, Godfray, Coy, Marshall. Subs used: Mears, Zubaidi, Wren, Gerson. Sub unused: Christieson,