

SE DONS V BAITEZE SQUAD (by David Ballheimer)

SE Dons (1) 1, Baiteze Squad (2) 3
Tom Beer 41 Josh Osude 21 (pen), 60
Obi Onyeagwara 40

Baiteze Squad deservedly won the London Football Association Sunday Challenge Cup Final, 3–1 against SW Dons, in front of a 3,006 crowd at AFC Wimbledon’s Cherry Red Records Stadium. Having taken a 2–0 lead, Baiteze were grateful to goalkeeper Muhammed Otuyo for preserving their advantage.

In the third minute, Baiteze had a loud penalty claim when a shot from Ruben Junior struck the arm of Briggs Ojemen. It was clearly ball to arm, very close the defender’s body, in a natural position, so “play on” was the correct decision.

After 15 minutes, Ryan Palmer, a co-founder of the SE Dons, crossed into the penalty area where Tom Beer had lost his marker. Beer’s header was powerful, but over the crossbar.

A minute later, Baiteze were awarded a penalty. Ojemen came across to make a challenge on Sam Mvemba. He appeared to beat Mvemba to the ball but suffered a serious injury. To the shock of every Dons player, the referee pointed to the spot.

The stoppage lasted several minutes, and it was clear Ojemen’s match was over. As he was lying on the stretcher, he was shown a yellow card – insult added to injury. Josh Osude sent George Kamarasi the wrong way with the spot-kick.

The game was testy and most decisions were contested by the penalised team. Beer had a chance to level after 37 minutes, but Otuyo turned his shot around the post.

Three minutes later, Baiteze doubled their advantage. A right-wing corner wasn’t cleared and when Obi Onyeagwara reached the ball unchallenged, he controlled it before passing it into the net.

SE Dons’ response was immediate and, within 60 seconds, when Baiteze didn’t deal with a ball into their penalty area, Beer found the bottom corner.

A couple of minutes later, after Osude had been denied by Kamarasi, there was a skirmish on the touchline and the referee showed a member of the SE Dons coaching team, known as

Flips, a red card. However, Imedd Kartita, who had been barged off the field by TC, kicked Jack Simoutis, an incident missed by all three officials. He was lucky not to see red.

The scores probably should have been level before the interval, but Otuyo made a magnificent double save, Kieron Campbell and Mo Kamara the men whose shots were saved.

Four minutes after the resumption, the Dons felt they should have been awarded a penalty for a challenge on Nathan Palmer. The referee, however, didn't share their opinion.

In the 53rd minute, after another serious incident on the touchline, the referee, after consulting with his well-placed assistant and the fourth official, was extremely lenient in showing only two yellow cards.

As the SE Dons pressed for an equaliser, they left holes at the back, and they were made to pay after an hour. A ball from Junior released Osude, who had stayed onside, took the ball around Kamarasi and scored.

Otuyo took centre stage in the final half-hour. After 67 minutes, Simoutis shot from just outside the penalty area, the ball dipped and swerved, but the giant goalkeeper was able to push the ball away.

Campbell then twice went close, narrowly missing with a curled shot, then hitting the post with a free-kick. But Otuyo's best moments came in the 76th minute when he made a brilliant double save, blocking first former Baiteze star Tobi Kokar, then Simoutis.

With seven minutes to go, after Muhammad had pushed away a 25-yard Kokar strike, the last clean chance for the SE Dons fell to Rory Hill, but he, too, was thwarted by Otuyo, an easy choice for man of the match. After that, Baiteze Squad saw out time for a deserved win.

SE Dons: 1 Kamarasi, 47 Kamara, 41 Ojemen (25 Carrington, 20), 3 TC, 7 Ryan Palmer (44 Junior, 60), 6 Simoutis, 77 Johnston, 20 Campbell, 40 Beer (57 Splatt, 60), 10 Nathan Palmer (Hill, 68), 42 Rooney (38 Kokar, 68).

Baiteze Squad: 1 Otuyo, 17 Bihmoutine, (9 Izekor, 64), 14 Ayoola 19 Giovanni Palmer, 4 Egbejale, 7 (23 Jeremiah, 65), Onyeagwara, 8 Carvell (15 Greenwood, 74), 45 Junior, 10 Kartita, 24 Mvemba (12 Kahie, 90+5), 21 Osude.