

## RAF Football Association - E-Bulletin

### RAF FA Veterans Match Reports

#### Veterans “Wales Weekend” at the home of England!! 14/15<sup>th</sup> July 2018

And so, it begins...Season 18/19



The new season is upon us and today sees the first game of our “double header” weekend against Welsh opposition at St George’s Park. The Wales FA are up first and they are always a tough outfit to play against and with this being the first game of our season and with a number of new faces in the squad today’s game may well be tougher still. That said, there is a good turnout given that there is lots on with it being the start of RIAT and the little matter of it’s World Cup Final weekend.

Wales FA kick off but both sides are looking rusty and it comes as no surprise that balls are going astray during the opening salvo’s but after eight minutes the RAF get a chance with a free kick. New boy Spike Fixter takes it upon himself to hit it and the boy did good as the ball nestles in the bottom left corner of the goal with the wall and the keeper well beaten. He must have watched Trippier’s goal against Croatia!! RAF 1-0 Wales.

The game has slowed a little as the players get into their stride and the heat begins to take a toll but there is some good football being played by both sides. Chances are being created and only a good save from Algar in the RAF goal keeps the scores level. Algar is called into action again shortly after that when he saves another shot but the ball falls to a Wales player though his attempt is half blocked.



Ping pong in the box ensued but the Welsh couldn’t get it past the RAF defence and when the ball is drilled goalward from about 8 yards, it is flying in till a diving RAF head deflects it onto the post and back into play before the follow up shot goes harmlessly wide. Goal kick to the RAF and superb defending from the boys in blue. The rest of the half was nip and tuck with both sides creating and missing half decent chances but luckily, the expected heatwave didn’t materialise as was expected, though it remained mighty hot. Half Time RAF 1-0 Wales.



Five minutes into the second half it was 1-1. A cross come shot looped over the RAF keeper and into the net for the equaliser. The next 15 minutes were as the first half but the Wales team were beginning to look a little stronger now. Three times in quick succession they got into the RAF box and caused problems. The RAF boys were looking a little jaded when the referee halted the game for another water break.

A bonus. After the restart it was 50/50 though the RAF did create a couple of good chances but the shots were not forthcoming and the extra touches/passes saw the opportunities fizzle out. Although there were rolling subs, the RAF had used all the squad throughout the game and all of them had given everything. As the final phase of the game loomed, there were no fresh legs left and it was to tell. Another save from Algar kept the scores level and after a break down the left by Wales, the cross was headed clear. As the follow up shot was again headed clear, it was volleyed back from about 20 yards and into the back of the net. It was the 90th minute and it was now 2-1 Wales.

A corner to Wales and the ball is hit into the box. It wasn't a particularly good corner in that it was mishit and bobbled right across the box with everyone missing it...except one Wales player who ran onto it only to be tackled late...penalty Wales. Algar went the right way but the ball is in the net 3-1 Wales 95th minute. There was time for Wales to win back the ball from the restart and as the ball sails over the bar from the shot, the final whistle goes.

### RAF 1-3 Wales FA.

**RAF Squad:** S.Algar, J.Irvine, D.Arscott, J.Schofield, M.Rooney, M.Bryan, J.Shanks, S.Pugh, S.Fixter, D.Stewart, D.Coull, M.Clarke, J.Letch, J.Donnely, M.Wilkinson, D.Salkeld, R.Pierre.



And it was on to day 2 of our double header. With the result of the previous day well and truly forgotten about, Rhyl FC Over 35s were to be the next opposition at an even hotter St George's Park. Some of the players had had to leave due to work commitments and it came as a welcome relief that some of the old heads turned up following their own commitments elsewhere the previous day.



A much-changed team were to take to the park for this second game but with the system and style of play intact. The game was being played on the AstroTurf as we had been moved due to an England Women's International game being played on the grass pitch we had played on the previous day. There were quite a few things going on at StGP this weekend with Ajax, Benfica and Porto all there for pre-season training along with England Women U19s and U20s and the England Deaf Women's squad in attendance for training camps.

So, it was onto the kick off. The RAF are to start. Wanless was straight into the action forcing the keeper to save with his legs before his follow up went wide. A good start for the RAF. The boys in blue are bossing the early minutes but the best they get in the first 10 minutes is a corner due to some good defending and luck for the Rhyl outfit. Another break by Wanless down the right sees Stockport connect to his cross on the volley but it's just over. Just after this, in the 17th minute, Robison had to come off when his boot split, Geordie Salkeld was sent on and with his first touch, he turned his marker inside out and laid the ball back to Yorkie Bryan. Yorkie's pass forward to Wanless was sublime and Wanless ran on to round the keeper and slot the ball into the unguarded net. 1-0 RAF.

Rhyl were trying to play a high line but the pace of Stockport and Wanless was causing them problems. Good hold up play by Stockport saw him waiting for support. When Wanless arrived onto his pass his first time shot struck the outside of the post and it was a goal kick to Rhyl. It was even hotter today than it had been the day before and as another Stockport effort went wide in the 25th minute, the referee blew for a goal kick but more importantly, a drinks break before the restart.

Following the restart, good work from Clarke in the midfield sees the RAF awarded a free kick when he is unceremoniously dumped on his backside. The resultant kick is straight into the keeper's hands. Then a 40-yard diagonal ball by Bryan over the top of the Rhyl defence saw Clarke in on goal. Alas, Raheem Sterling comes to mind as, Clarke stood on the ball and fell over. The RAF were playing well and were creating lots of chances and given the hot conditions, they were coping admirably and giving their all yet again.



The Rhyl offside trap was not working as time after time the RAF lads got in behind but the final ball was poor and was cleared easily but that just meant the RAF could come again, and they did, but the finish was the downfall. (It transpires that some of the players blamed the bank of moveable goal posts that were behind and to the right and left of the pitch goalposts for the shots going wide, they were aiming at the wrong goals...or so they said!!).

An RAF break came to a swift end when the ball hit the referee and bounced to a Rhyl player. It was 3v1 in Rhyl's favour but by the time it reached the last player, it was 3 RAF v 1 Rhyl and the ball was cleared. That is testament itself to the work and effort the RAF boys were putting in. Brilliant!! In the 40th minute, Taylor in goal for the RAF was called into action, really for the first time with a save low down to his right and a minute later he was at it again when a shot rebounded off the post and he had to be quick to pounce on the ball before anyone could get to it.

### **Half Time RAF 1-0 Rhyl.**

Rhyl kick off but the RAF soon win the ball back and after some good hold up play by Wanless he lays it off to Rooney whose first time cross sails over the keeper and reaches Stockport coming in at the far post. His effort sails over the bar. A cheap shot by a Rhyl player in the tackle sees Laing go down injured but to be fair, the game has been played in great manner and this was a one off but still with 63 minutes on the clock the RAF extend their lead when a good passing move and a switch of play from the left to the right finds Wanless and his shot finds the back of the net. RAF 2-0. A few minutes later (68th), the referee stops play for another drinks break...it really is that hot...and both sets of players deserve praise for their efforts in these temperatures.

In the 70th minute, Laing and Wanless attack the same ball from a corner and I don't know which one got there first but the ball went harmlessly over. The RAF are stoic in defence and are still creating chances for themselves. Following a foul on the half way line, the ball finds its way to Stockport who sets up Wanless. His left foot shot cannons back off the bar and the follow up shot from Rooney takes a deflection for an RAF corner. Rhyl then got back into the game in the 76th minute when a move down the left was switched to the right. The player beat one tackle before running along the by-line then pulling the ball back. It was lashed home. RAF 2-1

Just a minute later, another RAF attack sees Stockport brought down in the box. Penalty to the RAF and Stockport himself is to take. No doubt about it and it's a good penalty. 3-1 RAF  
In the 82nd minute, Rhyl managed to lessen the deficit again when a long ball down the centre of the field catches the RAF a bit flat and the forward runs onto it leaving Scotty no chance and it's RAF 3-2. There are some tired bodies out there now but the Rhyl lads look to have been given a little bit of a boost following that second goal. a good save from Taylor and then a wasted chance by Rhyl when the forward finds himself free in the centre of goal. He tries to volley but totally miskicks and the ball falls harmlessly into the hands of Taylor. And that's it...Referee blows for full time and it's a well-deserved but hard-earned victory for the RAF.

**RAF Squad:** S.Taylor, D.Robison, J.Shanks, A.Laing, M.Rooney, M.Bryan, C.Foster, M.Clarke, D.Coull, D.Wanless, G.Stockport, J.Letch, D.Salkeld, M.Wilkinson, C.Gill

In all, 23 players turned out over the two days, together with a lot of backroom staff and their partners. FRB and Tilly were there representing the children and all in all a very enjoyable, if hot, weekend was had by all.

Management and backroom Staff (if not already down as a player on one or both days):  
M. Beattie (RTM), G.Hancocks (Mr A), G.Payne (Medic), T.Reeves (Fundraising), D.Kerr (Fundraising), S.Findler (Fundraising), J.Bones (Photos), J.Sheehan (Comms).

Special thanks to the partners and children for their support and once again to the staff at StGP. It is a pleasure dealing with them.

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