



Saigon International Football League

Sun January 10th 2010
Thu Duc Sports Uni

Hiep Phu 3 Raiders 4

Squad: Vu, Ollie, Archie, Fraser, Hicham, Steve, Richard S, Ben W, Jens, Ben A, Sascha, Floyd, Dominik,



The words for Manager Craig as he stood upon his platform were quite simple. “Win and we are in touch with the top half, lose and we are stuck with the also rans in the bottom half of the league with nothing left to play for”. Armed with laminates and whiteboard pens the formation was set out to the players and once again another makeshift side was put together for a must win match.

Little more incentive was needed after the resounding words but a reminder that we had been embarrassed by this lot 3-0 in the first game of the season certainly got the team motivated.

An attacking lineup included Dominik and Sascha deployed in midfield in an effort to create numerous chance for the strikers, in the hope the defence would be able to deal with a very fast breaking Vietnamese side.

1st Half

Raiders were out of the traps like a whippet with a bum full of dynamite and for the first ten minutes the game was being played in the opposition 18 yard box. Floyd and Fraser were linking up very well and having found the ability to jump and head the ball were winning everything in the air. Each flicking on balls for the other and Dominik and Sascha picking up useful balls.

Indeed the first goal came from such a play. A long ball from Vu was knocked down by Floyd to Sascha who found Dominik. From 25 yards out he managed to get past two defenders before dispatching a shot which evaded the keeper. 1-0 to the Raiders. The second came soon after. And the formula was much the same.

A long ball from the newly returned Steve Tomlinson at the heat of defence was met by Fraser and flicked to Floyd who held it up before passing to Dominik. He beat a defender before passing to Sascha who fired off a shot which the keeper did well to stop but couldn't hold and Fraser got to the rebound first to place it under the keeper. 2-0 to the Raiders after 15 mins gone. What a start to the match.

And things continued like this for the next 10 mins or so. The defence held everything that the opposition could throw at them and they were restricted to pot shots from 25 yards which the ever improving Vu dealt with easily. Richard and Steve created a solid unit in the centre and having been knocked about by the big fellas in the first 20 minutes the opposing strikers didn't even want to think about going for the challenges. The full backs of Hicham, Ollie and Archie took everything that the wingers could throw at them and for 25 minutes it seemed it was going to be a walkover with the Locals having no answer to strength, size and determination of the fired up raiders.

However as the game started to move into the second third, the Raiders seemed to tire as the temperature rose in the mid afternoon. This allowed the fitter locals to start

stringing a few passes together as the Raiders chased the ball. And so it happened, as the Vietnamese took a grip of the midfield they started to create chances and it was only a matter of time before they took one. Some slick passing saw them through the defence and their striker made the most of the first chance he received to place the ball into the bottom corner. 2-1 to the Raiders.

So a minor setback in our quest for the 7 goals demanded by Manager Craig but Raiders seemed to take this goal as an incentive to push on for the win they desperately needed.

With 5 minutes to go Raiders found the cutting edge once again to take them into the break with the two goal cushion intact.

Again it was a long ball which found Floyd who knocked it back to Sascha. He found Ben on the left who sent a ball down to the left corner. Fraser got to the ball before the centre back and before it went out of play to back heel it back to Ben who finished superbly from a tight angle. 3-1 to the Raiders.

Halftime – Craig had little to say except more of the same. See if we can get it out wide when we get the chance but otherwise don't change much else. Sadly the referee decided he was going to help the opposition and changed his entire attitude to the game from this point on.

2nd Half

The second half started very differently to the first with the locals taking the initiative. And Raiders were stretched for the first ten minutes of the playing on the back foot and not challenging to the same extent as the first half. The triangle passing the opposition was using was punching some holes in the defence and it was not long before they struck again. A couple of missed tackles and some accurate passing saw the Local side pick up their second goal to make it 3-2 to the Raiders.

Chances seemed to dry up for both sides for the next twenty minutes as the Raiders Defence held the opposition to long range shots which were either wide or held well by Vu.

However with ten minutes to go all that changed. The referee, who for some reason decided to give every 50-50 challenge in favour of his countrymen gave a free kick just inside the Raiders half. The ball came into the box and was headed away by Richard, only as far as the opposing midfielder. He picked it up, went past one man then slotted a pass through to the striker who made no mistake from 12 yards. 3-3 and it seemed all raiders' hard work was coming undone.

Ten minutes to go and a visibly tired Raiders gave one last effort to try and take all three points. And they thought they had as Sascha won the ball on the break and played Fraser through for him to slot home from 12 yards only for the referee to call it for offside. Furious protests at each decision was not having any effect on a referee who at times seemed embarrassed by the decisions he was giving. However when it seemed like there was going to be another opportunity for three points missed the formula that had served the Raiders so well during the match won the game.

Another long ball from Defence was flicked back by Floyd to Sascha. He in turn played a through ball for Fraser to run on to, who then cut it across the defender to Dominik. To his amazement the keeper decided to stay on his line which allowed him to control the ball, hold off the challenge and slot into the bottom corner for the winning goal. 4-3 to the Raiders.

Game Set and Match. The final few minutes were wound down by some brilliant defending from the back four, some excellent defensive work from the midfield and some time wasting by the forwards. The final whistle went and the Raiders took the three points to move them into the top half and level with Saints on points.

A well fought game and every player could be rightly proud of the effort which went in. at this level this can be the difference. With many Raiders now returning from holiday it's a safe bet to say they will have their work cut out to break into the starting lineup at the expense of any of this week's team and it looks like Craig and Miguel will have some very tough decisions to make in the coming weeks.

Match Report by Fraser Hepburn