

29th April 2000 Match Report: Under 13s. Venansault, France 6 – 5 Wychwood.

"WYCHWOODS COMEBACK FOILED AT THE DEATH"

The previous 20 hours travelling had been very tiring. We left the Wychwoods on the afternoon of the Thursday, slept overnight on the Ferry to St. Malo (well some did!), arrived at Venansault on the Friday lunch time and after a reception the boys in each age group (11s & 13s) played in a friendly 6-a-side competition in the evening.

Saturday morning we were all feeling much the better after a proper sleep. First we visited the local beach for a practice session and by the afternoon we were all ready for the climax of our short stay in France, our game against Venansault Under 13s

We were under early pressure and it was no surprise when Venansault took the lead after ten minutes with an unchallenged shot from inside the area. With almost our first chance of the match we equalised within a few minutes when Edward Adams was put clean through and shot past their keeper from close range.

The next minutes were end to end with Ashley Bull creating havoc throughout their defence, on one occasion taking the ball from one end of the field to the other beating several players on the way, only to shoot narrowly wide.

Shortly afterwards we conceded two quick goals with unchallenged shots from inside the area. On the stroke of half-time Ashley Bull once again beat several of their defenders

hit a terrific shot on the edge of the area which looked a goal all the way, until it rebounded off the post and cleared up field.

From this clearance Venansault took a 4-1 lead when another excellent shot was brilliantly turned round the post – only problem was that it wasn't our keeper Richard Sanders who saved it – it was Tom Perry. From the resultant penalty Venansault scored.

Instead of us going in at half-time 3-2 down we were behind 4-1. Thankfully, in the true spirit of this 'twinning' game the French referee Guillaume Barotin did not send Tom off.

Half-time came and went and we felt if we could get the breaks we were still in this game because on several occasions their defence had at times looked suspect under pressure. When Venansault added a fifth goal quickly the game looked to be all over – but it wasn't – the never say die attitude of Wychwood saw Ashley Bull get the goal he had threatened all afternoon to make it 5-2.

To give us more forward power Jamie Evans was moved up field and it paid off almost immediately when he blocked an attempted clearance in front of goal and the ball rebounded over the keeper and into the top of the net to make it 5-3. Our luck was changing – the team was buzzing and it was all one way traffic now. They say you make your own luck and we certainly did when Lea Leech's miss-hit shot in front of goal confused their keeper and the ball landed in

the back of the net to make it 5-4. Many Venansault players held their head in their hands when this one went in. Three goals in ten minutes and we were well and truly back in this match. We were now in the final period of the game and Wychwood were firing on all cylinders.

When Sam King gathered the ball on the edge of the area he was full of confidence that comes from recovering from being 5-1 down with 25 minutes left to now being within one goal from equalising, and he knew it was him who was going to get it. Collecting the ball just outside the area, first round one defender, then another and another then shooting past the advancing keeper into the corner of the net for the best goal of the match and a spectacular 5-5 equaliser.

What a wonderful fight back this was but with a few minutes left Venansault scored the winning goal with a shot from inside a crowded penalty area which ended up in the net. The referee added as much time as he could to see if Wychwood could get the equaliser they would have thoroughly deserved, but it wasn't to be.

When the final whistle went the Wychwood players couldn't believe they had lost after their fight-back and were down on their knees, exhausted and some holding their head in their hands!

Both teams left the field to massive applause from the spectators who had been kept on their toes throughout. This was truly a magnificent game of football played, refereed and watched in a very sportsman-like way.

A remarkable near coincidence was on the next day when Wychwood Under 15s playing in the Supplementary Cup Final were 5-1 up at half-time only for the opposition to pull back to 5-5 and this time Wychwood to get the winning 6-5 goal in the final minute to take the Cup. Some you win and some you lose!

Team: Richard Sanders, Paul Wiggins, Chris Catling, Tom Perry, Lea Leach, Edward Adams, David Halls, Tim Barnes, Daniel Fletcher Jon Barnes, Ashley Bull, Sam King and Jamie Evans

Attended but injured; Andrew Ilgunas

Man of the Match. It was very difficult to pick a 'man of the match' but Ashley Bull caused Venansault no end of trouble throughout and if one person deserved it, it was Ashley. Special mention to keeper Richard Sanders who made some excellent saves and Sam King for that extra special goal. Also well done to the two younger players Daniel Fletcher and Jon Barnes who came on for the second half and tightened up our defence. In fact well done to everyone who played.

Comments after the match: "I would have paid to have watched that game". "Wonderful game". "Excellent refereeing"

At the evening reception the Wychwood players had got over their disappointment of losing and somehow it didn't seem to matter so much that they had lost and were now feeling proud of their fight back – and so they should be!