

OHAFC Report for Harrow Record – Season 2006/7

Clearly this most popular of OH clubs is in the midst of a golden era after yet a further season of outstanding success both on and off the pitch.

Last season saw the 1st XI finish second in the Premier Division of the Arthurian League with a record points tally, the 2nd XI finish second in Division Five and win the Junior League Cup (for the first time in the club's long history) and the creation of a 3rd XI. Season 2006/7 matched and possibly even bettered this long list of achievements.

For the 1st XI, once more captained by Quentin Baker, the League campaign proved to be a mixed bag of results with injuries and the regular absence of some key players hampering the club's challenge for the League title.

An opening day 5-0 mauling of Repton hinted at great things to come but the side was soon brought back down to Earth when losing 5-3 to Forest in the first home game of the season – individual errors causing significant problems at the back.

Westminster were comfortably defeated away from home with Ed Martins impressing in his first outing for the side, a last-gasp 3-3 draw was secured at home to a strong Lancing side thanks to Baker's fine header and a weakened side under Paul Molloy's leadership then secured an excellent 4-0 win away to Shrewsbury on a difficult pitch, Luke de Rougemont scoring his first ever hat-trick for the club.

The inconsistent start to the season was not helped by a series of injuries to first-choice centre-halves Tim Dalton and Ed Poulter and the return fixture against Westminster and the trip to Eton a week later confirmed that the League title, for the first time in four seasons, would remain firmly out of reach: a weakened Harrow side struggled in the wind and rain up on the Hill and were held 1-1 by West's, who were not a strong side, whilst the usual titanic struggle against arch enemy Eton ended in a controversial 3-2 defeat thanks to a dubious penalty awarded to the home side.

With the League title now an unlikely target, the side turned their attentions to a competition they had never won in the club's history – indeed, a competition in which they had never reached the final: the 103 year-old Arthur Dunn Cup.

A walkover against Eastbourne in the First Round then saw Harrow pull out the 'bomba', as the Spanish say, in the draw for the Quarter-Finals: an away trip to last season's double winners Charterhouse. Harrow produced a stunning performance to win 2-1 thanks to a brace from Harry Hoffen, the winner coming just five minutes from time. Alex Fraysse made his debut in goal and immediately established himself as a promising talent.

Once more the side were presented with the toughest draw left in the semi-finals: an away trip to perennial Dunn Cup challengers Shrewsbury. Despite poor League form, the Salopians ability to call up talented players especially for Cup games meant no-one in the Harrow camp was taking the fixture lightly.

A poor pitch and strong breeze greeted the squad on arrival at the school after a four-hour coach journey north, but if the conditions were against them it didn't show in a fine first-half display in which they deservedly led through a superb Lederman free-kick. The instruction to 'keep things tight' after half-time was apparently not heard however as Harrow conceded two sloppy goals in five minutes and for much of the second half the dream of a first ever Dunn Cup final looked a distant one, the team's performance verging on the horrific. Two late substitutions by skipper Baker gave the team new impetus however and after a couple of half-chances were spurned, salvation was found in the last minute when Lederman turned provider, crossing from the right for substitute Rupert Hoffen to head home from close range.

The goal demoralised the Salopians and in extra-time a Harrow side fighting with renewed vigour proved too strong – Molloy somehow hit the bar from six yards out in the first period but left-winger Piers Bourke made no mistake ten minutes from time with a tremendous finish from a narrow angle. The celebrations at the final whistle were appropriate for a side making history and made all the more special by the presence of club 'Godfather' Fred Woolley and wife Jackie.

The Arthur Dunn Cup Final was played at Imperial College Sports Fields in Teddington in late April in front of a crowd of around 250 people. Harrow faced Division One side Bradfield, who had won 13 of their previous 14 League and Cup games and had failed to concede a goal in their cup run, knocking out Premier League powerhouses Brentwood and Lancing in the process.

In the event, the Old Harrovians had little to worry about as they imposed themselves on a young, nervous Bradfield side right from the off. Paul Molloy scored what turned out to be the only goal of the game midway through the first half with a magnificent 25 yard half-volley which sailed into the top corner.

Further chances to make the game safe were created in the second half but in truth it was one of the season's few games in which the Harrow defence looked impregnable and the victory was assured with a minimum of fuss. Quentin Baker proudly lifted the Arthur Dunn Cup aloft to the delight of the Harrow supporters in attendance and the traditional cup-winning scenes were then played out. A full report on the semi-final and final, including plenty of pictures, can be found on the OHAFC website.

Incidentally, the side finished fifth in the Premier Division with 23 points from their 16 games. It was a disappointing set of performances that the side will need to rectify next season, but securing the Arthur Dunn Cup was ample compensation and gives the team fresh impetus to earn more silverware for the (metaphorical) trophy cabinet.

Arjun Chopra's outstanding management of the 2nd XI once more ensured a successful season for the side, capped by a second consecutive promotion. Now with a settled squad, Arjun coaxed the side to second place in Division Four, five points behind winners Forest 3's and good enough to ensure Division Three football next season. The side's hold on the Junior League Cup was ended by a strong Charterhouse 3's side at an early stage, so a strong Cup run, along with a third consecutive promotion, will be the targets for next season.

And Oli Malin-Hyams made a hugely encouraging start with the newly-formed 3rd XI in Division Five. Despite having to juggle his resources and learn from fresh the vagaries of running a side in the Arthurian League, Oli led the team to a highly creditable six wins and two draws from fourteen games and a mid-table placing. With plans in place to encourage further commitment from school and university leavers, it is hoped a challenge for promotion in 2007/8 is not an unrealistic target.

Sadly there was no Easter Tour organised this year with Piers Bourke's stag weekend in Budapest taking preference. However the relocation of February's annual club dinner to Stamford Bridge and the attendance of wives and girlfriends (OHWAGS) for the first time proved an outstanding success, skilfully managed by Andy Butler and Ed Thorn. David Elleray and Fred Woolley gave very different but equally enjoyable speeches whilst Ed Morgan, Harry Woolley and Nick Defty's comedy video montage will live long in the memory.

The game against the School First XI was played on the main pitch on the Hill and once more proved that Sunday morning football and Old Harrovians do not mix – a sub-standard side succumbed in slightly embarrassing fashion to a highly competent school team by a variety of goals, some clinical, some comical, some, quite frankly, completely crass.

After two seasons of unqualified success it is with some regret that the club announces the departure of FA coach Ricky Gill from his role. Ricky's enthusiasm, knowledge and will to win

have proved inspirational to players of all abilities over the previous few years and the club wishes to place on record its sincere thanks for all his efforts which have culminated in the League Championship, two promotions and both major Cup competitions being won during his time with the OHAFC. It is hoped Ricky will still be around to offer his expertise when called upon.

Finally, spare a brief thought for long-time 1st XI goalkeeper Robert Worthy who continues to battle back from serious illness. Everyone at the club sincerely hopes to see Bertie back in action in the not-too-distant future and wishes him well for a complete recovery.

Any OH wanting to play football for the club on a serious or casual basis is more than welcome to attend training every Tuesday evening at the main astro turf pitch under the Westway in Notting Hill from 6.30 - 8pm, directions and all other club info can be seen on the website:

www.oha.fc.com

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