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# HARROW RECORD

NEWS AND VIEWS FROM HARROW SCHOOL

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## OHAFC 1ST XI NARROWLY MISS OUT ON LEAGUE TITLE WHILE 2ND XI "DO THE DOUBLE"

The season of 2005-2006 will go down as one of the most successful and memorable in the history of the OHAFC – but for reasons few could have anticipated at the turn of the year.

At the time of writing the previous report in January, the OHAFC 1st XI were tucked in behind Charterhouse at the top of the Arthurian League Premier Division with an excellent chance of regaining the title they had narrowly lost to Eton the previous season. The 2nd XI had plenty of work to do if they were to make their season a success with a mid-table placing in Division Five and a tricky Junior League Cup tie against Old Cholmelians II's to come.

After the potentially damaging loss to Eton early in the New Year, the 1st XI looked to get back to winning ways with a visit to Lancing's new ground in early February. Several high profile absentees made the game trickier than it should have been and the result was still in doubt until late on in the second half when Harry Hoffen (*Rendalls 1990*<sup>3</sup>) scored a magnificent volley to help the visitors to a 4-2 win. The following week the side turned in one of their best performances of the season when destroying Brentwood 6-1 at their own ground, leaving the hosts physically and mentally broken – they finished the game with nine fit players, most of whom had given up long before the final whistle.

Comfortable wins against Lancing at home (3-0) and Repton away (7-0) set up the

decisive match of the season with Harrow travelling to Charterhouse in mid-March knowing that a draw or win would leave them needing to beat Eton on the last day to win the League title.

Playing with the strong wind and the notorious Charterhouse slope in their favour in the first half, Harrow were the better side and took the lead thanks to a thunderbolt of a shot from Piers Bourke. But although in control, the team could not find the cushion of a second goal and a minute before half-time they were punished for it – a superb free-kick from a Charterhouse midfielder drew the scores level and with a large crowd and the conditions behind them in the second half, they overpowered a tired Harrow side. The 4-1 scoreline was slightly flattering, but the Carthusians undoubtedly deserved to win the game and with it the League title. They were to finish with a perfect home record of nine wins from nine games and suffered only two defeats all season. They also completed the double by winning the Arthur Dunn Cup.

A 2-2 draw at Eton on the final day saw Quentin Baker's (*Moretons 1989*<sup>3</sup>) side end

the season for the second campaign running in second place, with forty points from their eighteen League games – a record tally for the side and further proof that the team is growing stronger every year.

But if the senior side was to endure a disappointing end to their season, the 2nd XI, under the leadership of Arjun Chopra (*Newlands 1997*<sup>3</sup>), more than made up for it with staggering performances in the second half of their season.

A long break from Christmas and the New Year saw the team play their first competitive fixture of 2006 at the end of February. The long lay-off proved beneficial. Old Cholmelians II were defeated 4-0 in the Second Round of the Junior League Cup, an excellent result considering the opponents play in Division Two – three tiers above Harrow's second string.

Two weeks later Eton's 3rd XI, another Division Two side, were the opponents in the quarter-finals of the Cup. Whether it was the confidence gained from the previous round or some other form of inspiration that was the catalyst, the Harrow boys produced

**Doing the double – The Old Harrovian AFC 2nd XI were:** Andy Butler (*The Knoll 1981*<sup>3</sup>), Arjun Chopra (*Newlands 1997*<sup>3</sup>) (capt.), Carlton Nelson (*The Park 1995*<sup>3</sup>), Edward Thorn (*Druries 1982*<sup>1</sup>), Philip Berry (*Rendalls 1993*<sup>3</sup>), Harry Woolley (*Moretons 1998*<sup>3</sup>), Dominic Danos (*Bradlys 1990*<sup>3</sup>), Sam Pepys (*The Grove 1999*<sup>3</sup>), Gbeminiyi Soyinka (*Bradlys 1999*<sup>3</sup>), Freddie Brunt (*The Head Master's 1999*<sup>3</sup>), Mike Okoigun (*Druries 2000*<sup>3</sup>), Nick Defty (*Moretons 1998*<sup>3</sup>), John Frederick (*The Head Master's 1979*<sup>3</sup>). Subs: Edward Arghebant (*Newlands 1997*<sup>3</sup>), Edward Morgan (*The Head Master's 1998*<sup>3</sup>), David Stead (*Elmfield 1998*<sup>3</sup>)



possibly the result of the season, beating one of the strongest junior sides in the League 2-1 after extra-time, with the game looking set to go to penalties.

Suddenly, everything seemed possible. As the performances of the team and the results improved, so Arjun's motivational tactics became more and more bizarre, leading some to question whether the pressure had all become a bit too much for the skipper.

It soon became clear it hadn't. A week after the Eton game Old Cholmelians IVs were routed 6-1 at home in the League and then a hard-fought 3-2 victory in windy conditions away to Westminster III was eked out. The side was on a roll. April Fool's Day saw the visit of Forest's 2nd XI in the semi-finals of the Junior League Cup. The game was played on the main pitch at the School and in front of a sizeable crowd, including several members of the OH 1st team, the 2nd team put on a superb display. After an even first half Harrow took control in the second, with Newcastle University student Freddie Brunt scoring a match-winning hat-trick including two superb efforts from outside the box to make the final result 5-2.

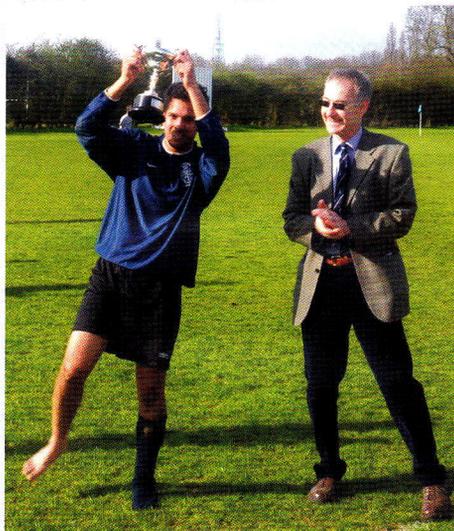
A 2-1 League victory over Old Chigwellians IV saw the side enter their final three games of the season knowing that three wins would give them an unprecedented double of promotion from Division Five and the Junior League Cup.

The Junior League Cup Final against Old Chigwellians II, for want of any other available venue, was played at Old Brentwood's Ground in Essex – a mere stone's throw away for Chig's but an arduous trek round the M25 for the Harrovians.

An even first half showed that the side had not been unduly affected by their late arrival, but calamity struck when 'keeper Andy Butler allowed a soft shot to go under his body to gift Chig's the lead. An equaliser by Mike Okoigun just before the interval was no more than Harrow deserved. Chig's regained the lead midway through the second half, but the Harrow IIs' recently-acquired self-belief was all too evident and they threw everything at their opponents in search of the equaliser. Freddie Brunt was the man to do it once more, scrambling home from close range to send the tie into extra-time.

In an even first extra period, Andy Butler more than made up for his early error with a superb one-handed diving save to tip a shot onto his post and keep the scores level – the Harrovians never looked back. An astounding final fifteen minutes saw the dark blue shirts of Harrow tear through their visitors' defence at will and Gbeminiyi Soyinka claim an extra-time second-half hat-trick – surely one of the few times a player has achieved this feat at any level of the game?

A hobbling Arjun Chopra lifted the trophy,



*A hobbling Arjun Chopra with the Cup.*

the first time it has been won by the OHAFC, in front of the delighted Harrow fans and suddenly the journey seemed well worth it.

A late arrival of Forest IVs for the OHs' penultimate League game saw the match awarded to Harrow, pending confirmation from the League, with the result being that the Harrow II then faced Winchester II in a winner-takes-all promotion clash in the final league game of the season. If it was a draw, neither side would be promoted.

It being the first week of May, the match was played on the astroturf pitch at Harrow and although the surface had nothing to do with it, the side suffered a serious blow before the referee had blown his whistle – goalkeeper John Frederick dislocated his finger in the warm-up and spent his afternoon in Northwick Park Hospital.

Ed Thorn, a rock at the heart of the defence all season, was the unlucky man who was forced to don the gloves and the lurid luminous orange goalkeeper's jersey.

What followed was one of the most remarkable games of football ever played by any Old Harrovian team. The hosts trailed early but levelled thanks to a bullet of a free-kick from 30 yards from Sam Pepys. Again Winchester took the lead, again Harrow equalised thanks to a stunning free-kick, this time from Nick Defty.

When the Winchester right-winger crossed from the touchline and sent the ball in a perfect arc into the far corner of the Harrow goal, it appeared as though the footballing gods had decided this was not to be the OHs' day.

Two further Winchester goals midway through the second half merely confirmed this and when, with twenty minutes remaining, the visitors' goalkeeper pulled off a magnificent save to deny Defty from the penalty spot, it was hard to see what

else could go wrong. 2-5 became 3-5 with just under twenty minutes remaining. 3-5 became 4-5 with less than ten minutes on the clock. A brief respite for both custodians once again saw hope for Harrow begin to fade. A Winchester corner threatened with four minutes remaining. A header clear was helped on by Harry Woolley and Defty, chasing what appeared a lost cause, smashed the ball home on the volley into the top corner. It was 5-5.

At this point, despite wild touchline celebrations from the home supporters, neither side was in line for promotion. But with the 90th minute approaching, the conditions were to finally have their say. The greasy astroturf saw an over-hit through-ball skid into the midriff of the Winchester goalkeeper for what should have been a routine collection. Instead, the ball squirmed out of his hands, he fell over when trying to reclaim possession, and Nick Defty rounded off the afternoon's entertainment by tapping the ball into the empty net. 6-5 Harrow, promotion and the Junior League Cup safely in the bag... was there ever any doubt?

After all that, it was only fitting that the Firsts and Seconds enjoyed some end of season relaxation and celebration and this was achieved in the sunny Algarve thanks to a week-long tour organised by David Lederman, with help from local expert Johnny Williams (*West Acre 1976*<sup>3</sup>). Two games were played, much fun was had, but it is unlikely that the Vale do Lobo park rangers will have enjoyed the week quite as much as the tourists did...

The annual club dinner was held at the Imperial Hotel in Russell Square on February 10th and once again attracted an excellent turnout.

The game against the School 1st XI was played on the main pitch on the Hill and turned into something of a scrap, with the School running out 3-2 winners after going 2-0 down. Mr Chris Barry's side looked to have some excellent footballers capable of playing at a high level in the future.

Further good news for the club came in May when the League accepted the proposal put forward by Oli Malin-Hyams (*Newlands 2000*<sup>4</sup>), with help from Andy Butler, for the formation of an OHAFC 3rd XI for the coming season. This is going to be of huge benefit for all OH footballers, but especially those recent leavers wanting to join the Club. Good luck in your first season in Division Five, Oli. DAVID LEDERMAN (*NEWLANDS 1988*<sup>5</sup>)

Any OH wanting to play for the OHAFC can find out more on the website: [www.ohafc.com](http://www.ohafc.com).