

Victory Proves Hamlets Wanderers Ready for Maple Restructuring

In a recent decision, the Massachusetts Premier League in an attempt to control the explosion in the number of teams in the Under 11 age-bracket adopted a measure that offers Mass. Premier League play to Under 10s Girls and Boys in an 8-a-side format on fields smaller than the FIFA-mandated fields for players Under 11 and older. This means that the Hamlets Under 11 tryouts for Girls (June 14 & 16) and Boys (June 13 & 15) at the Bowden Fields, 605 Central Turnpike, Sutton will be open to talented Under 10s (born on or after 8-1 - 96) but mainly for Under 11's (born on or after 8-1 -95 and attaining 11 years old between August 1, 2006 and July 31, 2007).

The new Under 10s 8-a-side teams, to be called Fuller Hamlets, will be open to players attaining 10 years old after July 31, 2006 and before August 1, 2007, and will have their tryouts as part of the Hamlets Wanderers' tryouts scheduled at Bowden Fields on June 12 & 19 (Boys) and June 12 & 20, 2006 (Girls). This means that from July 2006 onwards the incoming Hamlets Wanderers will be predominantly Under 8s and Under 9s (born on or after August 1, 1998) with some late-developing Under 10s, and exceptional Under 7s also accepted. The Hamlets Wanderers 2006-2007 and the new Fuller Hamlets Under 10s teams (prospectively two Girls teams and two Boys teams but possibly three of each), will train at the Fuller and Bowden fields as the Wanderers have done for the last 6 years.

To gain some idea of the senior Hamlets Wanderers Boys' prospects in the next year's Massachusetts Premier League qualifiers some of those Wanderers who will play in the Hamlets teams entered in the Under 11s and Under 10s played against the talented Under 11A girls team coached by Gail Bagley, unbeaten in 2006 and ranked fifth in Massachusetts in the fall 2006 season. In a thrilling game reported in these columns in the November 17, 2005 issue the Wanderers held on to a 0-0 tie with some very tough defense. The second game played under the lights at Bowden Fields on Tuesday, April 18, 2006 was expected to be another nail-biter, and did not disappoint.

The Wanderers Boys welcomed goalkeeper Daniel Woodbury in the first half. His handling and anticipation were impeccable and his kicking downfield out of his hands followed the coach's instructions and was a major factor in keeping the Wanderers' shutout in the first half. The Wanderers' game plan was to contain the Hamlets' danger on the right and to press forward with counterattacks on their left, and Woodbury's kicking frequently jump-started the Wanderers' probing attacks led by Nick Flowers and well supported by Sam Luuko and Sean Gatsogiannis. Throughout the game Kevin Rothermich at left fullback covered these attacks down the Wanderers' left and, with occasional exceptions, closed down the dangerous, strong, and speedy Liz Carlson on the Hamlets Girls' right wing. On the Hamlets right side the gifted Lauren Barton worried the Wanderers' defense led by her brother Mark and later by Liam King, and the Wanderers were forced to collapse the right midfielder back to contain the tricky left winger. Aidan Lucey and later William Bowden worked hard in this role in the first half. Barton proved a thorn in the Wanderers' flank throughout the game and the three key members of the Wanderers' defense-Wally Esker, Tim Gaetani and Curtis Bagley frequently had to come over to clear in an hour-tang battle that tested the Wanderers' back four and the two goalkeepers. But with each quarter the Wanderers' confidence increased and the center of gravity of the game shifted from the perimeter of the Wanderers' goal area to the perimeter of the center

circle.

Playing the 4-4-2 formation from the first the Wanderers initially had difficulty in finding two forwards willing and able (1) to play together, (2) to move to the passing lanes and positions designated by the coach, and (3) to receive and hold onto balls that they received from the midfielders with their backs to the goal. Consequently the counterattacks tended to break down outside the Hamlets Girls' penalty area. The more dangerous attacks in the first half came rather from the long high defensive clearances by Esker, Woodbury, Gaetani, and Bagley that dropped over the forwards' heads and allowed them to run onto the ball. The coach continued to experiment, and late in the first half had more success with the strong, bustling Nick Flowers, with his tight ball control, well supported by the nippy and tenacious William Bowden. But the defense of the Hamlets Girls led by "the two Sarah's"--Hall and Kane--ably supported by Elaina Falcone and Danielle Deschene, showed why the Maple Premier Division One team are unbeaten and unscored upon in league play in 2006. They cleared long and fed both wingers with accurate line drives and made the Wanderers' back four clear their lines with headers and volleys on several occasions.

Territorially the Girls won the first half handily and won the possession battle 55%: 45%. Another good measure of their superiority was the fact that the Wanderers had no serious shots on goal and that the Hamlets' keeper touched the ball twice only. By contrast at the Wanderers' end Woodbury made five saves and collected cleanly eight balls dropped into the 6-yard box as crosses from the wings or passes from the center circle that a lesser goalkeeper would certainly have mis-handled. There were two scrambled defensive clearances from the foot of the Wanderers' left upright, and the Wanderers on one occasion gave too much space to Anissa Raja on the edge of the "D", and her right foot drive (which won the Hamlets' last league game against Puma) cleared the crossbar by centimeters, luckily for the Wanderers.

Resisting the temptation to pull back to the more defensive 4-5-1 formation and to protect the 0 - 0 tie, the Wanderers coaches opted to stay with the 4-4-2 formation and to go with the left-footed Nick Flowers as right striker pushing forward alongside William Bowden as left striker, lying back. The idea was to penetrate left of the center line and to exploit the Hamlets' Girls left seam, perceived by the coaches as the weak link, with the ball on Flowers' left foot. Central midfielders Curtis Bagley and Gatsogiannis, ably supported by Matt Soule and Tim Gaetani, were to force through-balls into the paths of the two front-runners on this line/seam.

Several early successes in getting the ball into the Hamlets' penalty area suggested that this strategy might just work, and it did 10 minutes into the second half. Gaetani, via Bagley got the ball through to Bowden who pushed it up to Flowers who broke past two defenders before being tackled hard. Bowden in support won the loose ball gave it to Flowers who beat two players in the penalty area and pulled the ball across the advancing keeper into the far right corner of the goal, exactly as the coaches planned. Wanderers 1 -0 in their first serious counterattack. A common weakness in the best Hamlets Girls teams is that the best goalkeepers are invariably among the five or six best field players, which is clearly the case in coach Bagley's present team. It means that the coach is always looking for an experienced goalkeeper who would allow her to keep her best six field players in the field. Any goalkeeper interested in playing for the Hamlets Under 11A Girls should contact coach Bagley (1-508-949-0866) or attend the tryouts for the Hamlets Under 12 Girls on June 14 and/or June 16 at

the Bowden Fields.

Stung by this setback, and against the run of play, the Hamlets Girls pressed forward with fervor, putting heavy pressure on goalie Gordon Smythe who had joined the Wanderers at half time and made several good saves in this spell, and was also glad to watch two well-struck balls shave the uprights and another loop over the bar. But with Nick Anderson beginning to control the left side of the Wanderers' midfield, covering Rothermich, and with Kevin McDermott containing most of the attacks on the right, the Wanderers began to force the Girls to shoot from 25-30 yards out. As it happened, one of these shots, a fantastic 35-yard power-drive by Danielle Deschene looked certain to dip under the crossbar and equalize. But the ball sailed just over the crossbar to the applause of the crowd and a huge sigh of relief from the Wanderers.

Ten minutes later, after a breakdown on the right side of the Wanderers' defense a well-struck cross from Lauren Barton was met by Emily Bagley whose shot was bound for the right corner of the net until Smythe flung himself sideways in a full-length dive and pushed it round the upright in what was clearly the best save of the game. Some hard defensive tackling, a succession of corners, and a few desperate goal-area clearances characterized the last six minutes as the Wanderers protected their victory which, in all truth, was stolen from a fine Hamlets Girls team by a tough Wanderers team who took their one chance of the game and made it stand. Full-time: Wanderers 1-0.

Fuller Hamlets tryouts for 2006-2007 for teams not mentioned above are: Under 12 Boys (born on or after August 1, 1994) June 13 & 15; Under 13 Boys (born on or after August 1, 1993) and Under 14 Boys (born on or after August 1, 1992) June 21; Under 13 Girls (born on or after August 1, 1993) and Under 14 Girls (born on or after August 1, 1992) June 22; Under 15 Girls (born on or after August 1, 1991) and Under 16 Girls (born on or after August 1, 1990) June 23.

All tryouts are at Bowden Fields, 605 Central Turnpike, Sutton, Ma 01590 5.30 - 7.30pm. For other teams, directions, and other information please consult the Hamlets website: www.fullerhamlets.com or call 508-798-5214.