



Friday 30th October 2009
Southend United 1-0 Gillingham

Blues XI: **Steve Mildenhall, Simon Francis, Anthony Grant, Adam Barrett, Johnny Herd, Franck Moussa, Alan McCormack, Jean-Francois Christophe, Francis Laurent, James Walker and Lee Barnard.**

Southend United ended 'the week from hell' with a fine battling victory over Gillingham at Roots Hall. The fans packed inside the ground to cheer on the boys from start to finish and the players certainly did not disappoint. Lee Barnard was Blues' hero when he struck home his 13th strike of the campaign in injury time.

With near on 8,000 people inside the ground, the atmosphere was superb, and in the opening 20 minutes it was all Southend as they had Gillingham pegged back in their own half.

James Walker, just returned from his loan spell at Hereford, linked well with Francis Laurent and it was the latter who nearly opened the scoring. The Frenchman skinned John Nutter but saw his shot saved by Simon Royce at his near post. Captain Fantastic Adam Barrett then had a shot on goal but his effort was deflected over.

Francis Laurent had another shot on goal. This time it was a mazy run down the right flank before cutting inside, however, his shot drifted wide of Simon Royce's goal. Southend were the only team really pressuring but Gillingham nearly scored on their first counter attack. Andy Barcham beat Francis on the right but saw his shot saved by Mildenhall. The head of Adam Barrett on the floor blocked the rebound from Barcham on the line.

Simon Francis then saw a fierce left footed strike dip quickly but Royce was on hand to produce a fine save and tip it over the bar. The visitors had the ball in the net on the 22nd minute, John Nutter's curling free-kick was disallowed after a Gills player had pushed somebody out of the wall to make room for the ball to nestle in the bottom corner.

The exciting first 45 minutes ended with more Southend pressure and more fine keeping from Simon Royce. He first took the sting out of a Franck Moussa shot and then got down well to save a James Walker 25 yarder. He was again on hand to push a close range Barnard shot around the post, as it seemed one of those nights for Southend United.

The second half was a bit slower paced to start with until Gillingham were awarded an in-direct free-kick 6 yards out after Anthony Grant had been involved in a big melee in the area. All Blues players were on the goal line and former Blues hero Mark Bentley blazed over the bar, much to the relief, of all inside Roots Hall.

Southend were still the better team and definitely deserved a goal but it seemed like it wasn't going to come. Barnard saw his shot parried by Royce when maybe Laurent was the best option free to his right. Then McCormack headed over from a corner but the Blues were upping the anti as Gillingham looked to hang on.

3 minutes of injury time was added and deep into the last minute of time Simon Francis' deep cross to the far post found McCormack who nodded it back across goal for Barnard to swivel and smash the ball past Royce to send Roots Hall wild.