

"DON'T GIVE UP" - STOKE GABRIEL FOOTBALL CLUB, ENGLAND'S WORST TEAM

Lewes's first five games of this season saw us lose them all and hitting the bottom of the league. That certainly wasn't in the plan nor did our performances in some of those games warrant zero return. Results since have certainly been better although we are under no illusion this will be a tough season in a very competitive league.

However, spare a thought for the fans of Stoke Gabriel Football Club who ply their trade in the South West Peninsula League Premier Division East, step 6 of the English National League structure. The club hail from the beautiful village of the same name in Devon on the banks of the River Dart, playing their home games at the modest Speedwell KIA Stadium.

The club have played ten games as of the 19th October and lost the lot. I am sure there are other clubs that have yet to get a point (Ossett United in the Northern Premier League North West for instance or Mangotsfield United in the Southern League, South Division) but it is the nature of the defeats that have seen them hit the headlines for the wrong reasons.

Having been in 16th place when the 2019-20 season was curtailed by COVID-19, the club has seen personnel changes during the summer with players, coaches and committee members moving on, meaning that the squad is built around the club's Under18s side.

"You can't win anything with kids" - the famous line uttered by Alan Hansen on the opening day of the 1995/96 season after Manchester United's Class of 92 had been beaten by Aston Villa. Never has such a true sentence been uttered in the case of Stoke Gabriel.

They kicked off the season with an away game at Torridgeside. They lost 14-0. In their first home game of the season against Crediton United they did better, keeping the score down to 13-0. Since then they have lost all eight games. There was a glimmer of hope last week that new signings would have a positive impact as they restricted Ivybridge Town to just three second half goals but on Saturday they finished with ten men due to injuries against Plymouth Marjon who scored ten unanswered second half goals to make the final score 14-0.

Whilst they recorded their biggest defeat of the season so far against third from bottom Bovey Tracey, they did get off the mark themselves in the 18-1 defeat and followed it up with another goal in the 9-1 defeat at Elburton Villa. Their star players so far? Seventeen year old goalkeeper Josh Organ, naturally.

Whilst the young squad is finding life at the senior level tough, they are more than good enough playing at their own age level, winning three of their four league games so far.

The village has an approximately 1,000-year-old yew tree in the churchyard of The Church of St Mary and St Gabriel, a church which has stood since Norman times. Legend has it that if you walk backwards seven times round the yew's main stem you will be granted a wish - I think now may be the time for the fans to start walking around that tree!

Stop press....on Saturday they scored another goal! Unfortunately, opponents Ilfracombe Town scored 17 (seventeen). Match of the match was that teenage keeper Josh Organ again.

Written by @theballisround