

**By Daniel Coles**

**Huntingdonshire Under 18's repelled a late Middlesex onslaught to reclaim the Harold Whiddon Memorial Trophy in a hard fought affair at Jubilee Park, Huntingdon.**

Goals from Simon Isaacs and Barrett Steward either side of a lobbed finish from Middlesex's Edward Clements secured the silverware for Adi Corney's team as they held on for a deserved 2-1 win.

Adi Corney made four changes to the team which began Hunts' 3-1 win over Rushden & Diamonds on Tuesday night, handing starts to 'keeper Max Flintoft, Oliver Medwynter, Jordi Gent and Kurtis Adams.

Hunts started brightly, forcing Middlesex onto the back foot, and they were fortunate not to go a goal behind, as referee Paul Barnes ruled out a Nathan Woodward effort from the edge of the box after a foul on Middlesex 'keeper Robert Partington.

Goal-bound attempts were at a premium in the opening quarter of the game, with the only other real effort coming from Hunts forward Kurtis Adams, who capitalised on an error from Middlesex full-back Tom Stanley, and bore down on goal only to send a tame effort straight into the 'keeper's arms.

Hunts were not to be denied a third time though, and after the ball was won well in defence by Mark Cox, he fed Woodward who sent a ball over the top for Simon Isaacs, and after both he and Middlesex defender Reece Yorke misjudged the bounce, Isaacs reacted quickest to turn and lob the ball over the onrushing Partington to give the home side the lead after 22 minutes.

Middlesex found themselves guilty of a lot of unforced errors in the first half, and the London-based outfit nearly found themselves two goals down when a throw from the right flank caught their defence unawares. Nathan Woodward stole in behind, but had his side-foot shot saved well by Partington.

However, thoroughly against the run of play Middlesex managed to get into the half time interval on level terms after a rare defensive lapse in the Hunts ranks allowed Edward Clements to burst through, and the forward had the awareness to dink the ball high over the advancing Flintoft to equalise.

Both teams started the second half full of urgency, and it was substitute Barrett Steward who restored Hunts' advantage two minutes after the restart, after Middlesex 'keeper Partington gave the ball straight back to the opposition from a goal kick, and Steward ran at the defence, turned his man inside out and bent the ball into the corner.

Middlesex's agenda was clearly to play a more expansive game in the second half, and they came close to an instant reply after good work from Jamie O'Connell on the left,

playing the ball inside to half-time substitute Nathan McCloud, but he drove the effort he had worked for himself straight at Flintoft.

As the second half wore on, Corney reintroduced Simon Isaacs, whose pace caused the tiring Middlesex defence a whole host of problems, especially as Middlesex began to commit more men forward in search of a second equaliser.

Middlesex boss John Fletcher introduced a third forward in an attempt to grab a goal, but left his side exposed at the back, and only the crossbar denied Isaacs a third goal that would have clinched the silverware for Hunts, after his shot at the end of an incisive breakaway was parried onto the woodwork by Partington, and straight back into the hands of the grateful goalkeeper.

Hunts were pinned back for much of the last 10 minutes, but centre-backs Mark Cox and Jordi Gent stood firm to ensure they took revenge for last year's 5-1 defeat, and get their hands on the Trophy.

**Hunts:** Flintoft; Medwynter; Mark Cox; Balkwill; Gent; Glover; Cox; Furness (capt.); Woodward; Isaacs; Adams

Subs: Steward; Bowen; Pinner

**Middlesex:** Partington; Hillman; Stanley; Charles; Yorke; Paterson; Adjei-Dawkins; Watson; Taylor; Clements; Pearce

Subs: O'Connell; Haynes; Zakkour; Lima; McCloud

**Referee:** Paul Barnes