

## **Working Together Story**

**It was a blustery Wednesday night; the sun was setting and darkness was descending on the public fields. A whistle blew and the boys playing football on the field all gathered round a small bald headed man called Kev Smith. Kev was the manager of a failing boys football team in the Greater Manchester U16'S 4th division. The team hadn't won a game for seven months and were last in the lowest league they could possibly be in.**

**'Well done lads' said Kev with his harsh shrill voice, ' I have seen some promising things in training tonight and I'm sure if we keep training like that, we'll improve our skills and maybe not lose a game in the foreseeable future... 12 'o' clock Sunday, next game...it's at home.... Be prompt' he clapped his hands and the boy's departed, joking and messing about. Kev collected in the balls and poles and got into his car.**

**On his way home, he put his team, (Oldham Fliers), into perspective- he realised his team was appalling. The goalkeeper only played there because he couldn't kick the ball. The defenders are rash and about as pacey as a slug, the midfield couldn't dribble or pass to save their life and the attackers had the flair and finishing of a bus. He laughed to himself, but in his heart he badly wanted his team to get a result one of these days, so they can experience triumph and taste victory.**

**Sunday arrived- a cup game between Oldham fliers and second division leaders Rochdale boys. In the parks changing room, morale was low for Oldham. They're faded red plain shirts looked pathetic and their shorts of all colours looked shabby. 'Now look lads, just because these lads have fancy kits and are in a higher league, doesn't mean we can't try as hard as them...all I want from you is 110 percent.' There was a uneasy pause and everyone looked at the floor 'Here's today's team... Twiggy, Goal, left Back, Dave Slowmann, right back, Joe Horsmann, centre backs, captain Si Horlock and Andy Fotheringham, midfield, Jason Frog, Jamie Stutterford, Lee Black and Andy Cheffsson an upfront we'll have Chris Gallagher and Paul Howmann.' The team were so unorganised they didn't even have any substitutes! 'Come on lads lets give this all we've got and put it to them.' The unenthusiastic boys trudged out of the changing room onto the battlefield on which they were about to be conquered.**

The game ended 11-0 to Rochdale. Oldham played with no commitment and were frail at the best of times, things couldn't get much worse than this for the club. At half-time Kev tried his best to lift the players confidence and get them fired up for the game, but alls Kev could manage to do was warm them up by bringing them back into the changing room for the half-time break. The players ran around laboriously and panicked every time the ball came to one of them. The Oldham players strolled of the pitch and didn't look in the least surprised at the hammering.

The clubs morale was also at an all time low and when a team are lacking confidence and morale it is visible by their performances. Kev said to his players while he was getting changed 'If we want to win, we have to believe we're not beaten before we have even played the game.' Kev left and drove off, leaving the boys to change and talk alone.

The silent boys than began to murmur amongst themselves until Andy Fotheringham made him self heard among the other boys, he said to them ' Lets put in an extra special effort in training next week for Kev and play with some direction for a change, because we all want to, its... it's... just we don't believe we can, but I'm sure if we all tried and felt more confidence on the ball we could pull together and get a result. The boys started to murmur to each other more loudly and they all decided Andy was right and that they should all have some faith in themselves and try and pull off a result for Kev... who gave up his time, week in, week out.

Wednesday night arrived, and the team was warming up and running around the field before Kev arrived. When Kev pulled up at the pitch in his car he was astonished to see his lads doing something constructive instead of what they usually do before training which is throw mud at each other and try to trip each other over. Without saying anything to the boys Kev set up a drill and removed the equipment from the back of his car. The boys were far more accurate than usual when they did shooting practice and in the game at the end of training every single player ran around more and attempted more longer, harder passes and even some players thought up some neat moves and scored some excellent goals! Kev was surprised to say the least at his teams 'confident' display. He thought to himself 'what's brought this on?' Kev said 'Home again on Sunday... 1'o' clock. Lets put all our effort in training to good use in our game on Sunday... all right lads?' Kev packed up the balls and cones and still

**couldn't believe his teams morale boost. Kev got in his car and drove off, leaving the pitch and hopefully the clubs slump behind him.**

**'Same team as last week' said the sub-less once again manager. The words Kev said seemed to echo over the blank changing room walls, Today's fixture was against fellow strugglers in the league Salford all stars C team. 'Lets show some confidence today lads and get this elusive result.' Without further ado the team left and were warming up on the pitch.**

**It was amazing... 0-0 at half time. Oldham hadn't conceded a goal and even looked dangerous! Every Salford attack was neatly broken down and despatched to a team-mate further up the pitch. Full-time came and Kev was numb from shock. It was the last minute, Lee black made a surging run and whipped in a hopeful looking cross which was rather awkwardly met by the head of Chris Gallagher, the ball skimmed of his head and looped over the advancing keeper and into an open net. The whistle blew and the boys stood still, they didn't know what to do, when it had sunk in they had scored they shouted and ran around pointlessly and even better the last touch the ball got from Chris' head was the final touch of the game and Oldham had ran out 1-0 victors!**

**The disgraced Salford team plodded back in silence to their changing room. In the Oldham changing room the lads were making a hell of a noise chanting some English Anthems like 'We're going to wembley' and 'we are the champions' When Kev came in the boys fell silent. 'For once, today we played as a team who believed in themselves and believe me lads, we played some very attractive football today, we should use this magnificent result as a building block for hopefully many more wins for the club... so lets get ourselves in gear now and take this club into division 3!' said an ecstatic Kev. The boys all agreed with Kev and agreed they should all from now on work more together as a team.**

**5 years on Oldham Fliers are in division 3 and have attained a respectable league position, and have some talented young players... and yes Kev is still there week in, week out.**

**By Andy Cookson**