

12th July 2008

## **FINN MacCUHAL'S TAUPO – HARD FOUGHT DRAW AT WHAKATANE**

Despite being held to a goal-less draw, the third drawn game in a row, it was a hard-earned point following a dominant second spell for the Finn MacCuhals Taupo football team in their game at Whakatane in the Waikato Bay of Plenty Federation League last Saturday.

The home team had won their previous eight games and would have overtaken Taupo into second spot if they had managed a ninth and early on it looked as though that was a distinct possibility as Whakatane took the initiative in a scrappy first half.

The pitch was very soft and began to cut-up from the start as the game kicked off in heavy rain. There was an early chance for Ben Westerman but his shot cleared the crossbar and then at the other end Ryan Paumier made a tremendous save tipping over a long range speculator.

Ray How went close with a strong header from a corner before Paumier made two more outstanding saves one from a free-kick and another from distance, both at full-stretch, to keep Taupo in the game. Taupo did have a handful of opportunities of their own but the final ball was wanting and the home keeper was called on to make only one save of note in the first half.

Disappointed by their first half showing, the visitors came out with a lot more purpose and had their hosts on the back-foot for the majority of the second half. However they were unable to turn their domination into goals even though they had Alan Lamb back from injury leading the attack.

Taupo went agonizingly close on a few occasions with a Jesse Smith effort cleared off the line by a defender and the home keeper pulling off two saves the second from Westerman just screwed wide of the post. There were also chances from a host of corners and free-kicks but that ounce of luck is missing at the moment and Taupo had to be content with a draw.

Once again the defence was a solid unit giving little away and the draw continues an amazing run of 48 league games without defeat. It is also the first time since July 2005 (55 games) that the team has failed to score a goal.

Unfortunately the single point earned leaves Taupo four points behind first round leaders Matamata as the competition splits into the top eight and bottom six from next weekend. Taupo start the second round with a visit to Matamata so have a great chance to catch-up three points and get back into contention with a win there.

The Finn MacCuhals man of the match was big keeper Ryan Paumier who kept the team in the game with his first half display and despite having less to do in the second spell still handled the slippery ball and conditions well and was rock-solid.

Team: Ryan Paumier, Sam Brown, Ray How, Robbie Williams, Jeremy Robertson (Mark Jones 56mins), Jesse Smith (Steve Painter 80mins), Paul Drake, Ben Westerman, Cam McGrath, Chris Roberts (Gaetano Dedual 65mins), Alan Lamb.

Other Federation League result: Otorohanga 0 Ngongataha 0.

**First Round Final Table:**

<b>WAIKATO/BOP FEDERATION</b>	<b>P</b>	<b>W</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>L</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>A</b>	<b>Pts</b>
Matamata	13	11	0	2	35	12	33
<b>Finn MacCuhals TAUPO</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>29</b>
Whakatane Town	13	9	1	3	36	21	28
Rotorua United	13	9	0	4	43	21	27
Tauranga City United	13	7	1	5	36	25	22
Hamilton Wanderers	13	6	3	4	26	18	21
Claudeland Rovers	13	5	4	4	21	20	19
Otumoetai	13	5	3	5	21	21	18
Melville United	13	5	0	8	23	35	15
Ngaruawahia	13	4	2	7	22	21	14
Te Awamutu	13	4	1	8	25	37	13
Otorohanga	13	2	5	6	21	22	11
Ngongataha	13	2	1	10	14	61	7
Huntly Thistle	13	0	2	11	11	44	2

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