**SOUTHPORT**

*Colours: Old Gold & Black Shorts,*

*Ground: Haig Avenue, Southport*

Harris (1)

Bentham (2) Griffiths (3)

Hannaway (4) Darvell (5) Rutherford (6)

Jones, E (7) Blain (8) Blore (9) Bradbury (10) Harrison (11)

Luke (11) Spence (10) Windross (9) Carr (8) Rayment (7)

Robson (6) Greener (5) Phillips (4)

**Mulholland (3) Henderson (2)

Huunter (1)

**DARLINGTON**

*Colours: White Shirts, Black Shorts*

***Referee: Kick Off Linesmen:***

*Mr. L J Tirebuck 3.0 PM Mr. F Carter, Red (Burnley)*

*Halifax Mr. CP Hutchinson, Orange (Manchester)*

***Attendance:*** *4,464*

***Result:***  *1 - 4 (1 - 1 Half Time)*

**Match Report**

As the 1961/62 season kicked off, hopes were high among Darlington supporters that their team was about to have a successful season. They’d finished the previous campaign in 7th place in Division 4, their best season for a number of years, and manager Eddie Carr had spent the summer wheeling and dealing to try and make the small improvements necessary to enable a push for promotion. He had however lost his top scorer Bobby Baxter who left the club to join Brighton. Other regulars including Keith Morton, Colin Tinsley and Ray Spencer had also moved on. Among the new signings to join the club were Jack Maltby (from Sunderland), Geoff Martin (Leeds Utd), Dennis Windross (Brighton), Ralph Phillips (Northampton) and former Derby and Exeter goalkeeper George Hunter who signed from non-league Yiewsley.

The new season would kick off with an away game at Southport on August 19th, 1961. Three of Carr’s new signings would be making their debuts for the Quakers. Hunter in goal, Phillips at right half and Windross at centre forward. Ken Furphy had spent the summer coaching in Nyasaland and had just returned to the club. He was considered not ready to play so Lance Robson would start the season at left half. Dave Carr lined up at inside right, with Alan Spence at inside left, so Darlington would effectively be kicking off the new season with three centre forwards in the team. Southport had also made several summer signings but only one new man made it into the team. Inside left Bill Bradbury had been signed from Workington and would make his debut against the Quakers. One familiar face in the Southport team would be ex-Quaker favourite Bill Rutherford at right half.

A crowd of 4,464 were at Haig Avenue to see the new season kick off in bright sunshine. Southport forced the first opening but wasted it when Blain blazed his shot at least 10 yards wide. That was the only early scare for the Quakers, who very quickly took control of the game. They piled the pressure on and forced six corners in the first twenty minutes, but the home defence held out despite several close calls, with Albert Harris, in the home goal surviving some jittery early moments. Southport gradually forced their way into the game and Blain had another chance, but this time skied his effort way over the bar from a good position. The home side sprang a surprise in the 31st minute by taking the lead. A high cross by right half and captain Jack Hannaway hit Bradbury, bounced on to Reg Blore, and the centre forward headed neatly into the net just under the bar. It was a well taken goal, but a shock to the Quakers, who had dominated so much of the early play. Darlington were momentarily shaken but stormed back to equalise on 40 minutes. Dave Carr intercepted a back pass from Roger Darvill, the Southport centre half, knocked the ball wide past keeper Harris and cracked the ball into the net from an acute angle to send the teams in level at half time, 1-1.

The second half was all one-way traffic as the Quakers took complete control. They grabbed the lead in the 53rd minute when clever work by Rayment down the right created enough room for a perfect cross into the box to Dennis Windross, who headed home superbly for a debut goal. They increased their lead nine minutes later when Alan Spence chased a long pass through the middle, cleverly manoeuvred the ball around the advancing keeper and slotted home. Darlington’s brave move of starting the game with three centre forwards had paid off, with all three of them scoring.

The Quakers took their foot off the pedal and the home side tried to force their way back into the game, but their attacks were ineffective, often ending with someone caught offside, and a strong defensive performance by the visitors kept chances to a minimum. In the 74th minute Darlington completed the scoring, Spence heading in a beauty, direct from a right-wing corner by Rayment. The 4-1 margin matched the previous season’s winning score, and it could be the perfect start to the new campaign, but in truth, Southport offered very little resistance and finished the game a well beaten side.

Darlington followed up their opening day win with another trip to Lancashire 48 hours later but were beaten 3-1 at Accrington Stanley. Spence scoring the Quakers goal. He was on target again the following Saturday, when Tranmere were beaten 2-1 at Feethams in the first home game of the season, even though Spence was injured at the time and a virtual passenger out on the wing. (No substitutes in those days.) The goal meant that Alan Spence had equalled a club record of scoring in seven consecutive games (four at the end of last term and the first three of this) to equal the club record held by Davy Brown in the 3rd Division championship year of 1924/25.

Unfortunately for Spence, Accrington were suffering financial problems and resigned from the league before the season could be completed. Their record was expunged. Darlington were less affected by the resignation than most clubs. They found themselves only one point worse off, but it did mean that Spence lost his goal scoring record, as his goal at Accrington was struck from the records because the game at Peel Park was deemed never to have taken place. (Brown’s record was broken in the 1962/63 season when Jimmy Lawton scored in nine consecutive games – still a club record.)

Southport produced an 8-page programme, priced at 6d, and printed on yellow paper. As was common at the time, it was mainly adverts and included very little reference to their visitors. Just a short introduction to the team, along with brief pen pictures of the players. The team line ups were on the centre pages.