

“Cup Final Day” - April 16th, 2022

A large crowd assembled on April 16th at Everglades field under a brilliant blue sky to witness the first Cup Final Day to be staged in The Villages. The event, presented by the Brits ‘n’ US club in collaboration with The Villages Senior Soccer group, included all the elements of a traditional British cup final, including community singing, rousing music and entertaining soccer. (Click here to view British Pathé archival footage of the 1961 Wembley final on YouTube.)

Danny McKay warmed up the crowd with a lusty rendition of several familiar soccer chants and songs, before it was the turn of The Villages Marching Band under the direction of Ed Stromski. Honorary drum major Jack Ciotti, in the uniform of a Royal Welch Fusilier of the revolutionary war period, led the band out to the center circle for their inaugural public appearance, performing for us two stirring John Philip Sousa numbers and the national anthems of the U.K. and the U.S.A. Next, the two teams, Blue United and White City were presented to the guest of honor, “Lady Muckety-Muck” and announced over the PA system, and then it was time for referee Albert Escovar to lead the teams onto the field and get the game underway.

A lively contest ensued with both teams looking dangerous on the break, but it was nearly half time before the deadlock was broken by Blue United who took a slender one goal lead into the break. As players and spectators alike took refreshment, Buck Buchanan stepped out to perform a medley of Scottish bagpipe tunes. As play resumed, White City pushed hard for the equalizer, but left themselves exposed at the back and instead conceded a second goal. However, the game was not over and Blue soon scored the goal that their efforts deserved and kept pushing to score another. By now, players on both teams could be heard asking how long was left on the clock. Blue United maintained their composure long enough for the final whistle to save us all from the agonies of a penalty shoot-out. Blue had carried the day by the slim margin of two goals to one.

Shiny medals were presented to the runners up and then to the winning team, whose captain, Mark Hatcher was at last able to hoist the glittering trophy aloft in triumph.

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