

BRADFORD: *Soccer squad unites estate AND comes top of league*

Bootiful result for a first-time team



HEROES: *Canterbury Utd, who won top league place despite setbacks with the goalie and his reserve*

by **SARAH WALSH**

T&A Reporter

A football team which has united the communities on a deprived inner city estate is also celebrating winning its league at the first attempt.

Canterbury United FC was formed last year by local residents and members of Impact Community Developments, a local Christian charity.

The idea to form a football team came about after a survey carried out on the estate indicated football was the most popular pastime.

Throughout 1998 training and coaching sessions were arranged on the local playing fields, attracting

dozens of young men from all backgrounds and cultures, and a squad of 25 was selected. The team decided to enter the Yorkshire Christian Football League and clinched the league title in its first year.

Canterbury needed three points in the last game, against St Peter's of Shipley, to win the league.

The pressure was on as goalkeeper David Gill broke his foot the week before, and reserve goalie Gary Smith fell out of the loft of his home and damaged his back, leaving him out of action too.

It was left to Mark Dalby, the 16-year-old junior goalkeeper, to step into the breach and the team duly won the game 6-4 with goals from Craig Delaney, leading scorer Paul Wardley, Nageem Ashraf, Leon Charlton and Everton Hendy.

"It was the best game of the season and what a result for the people of Canterbury," said manager Warren Smith, who delayed his honeymoon to be there for the crucial last fixtures.

Nigel Delaney, chairman of Impact Community Developments and Canterbury United FC, said: "This last year has been very challenging in more ways than one.

"All credit goes to the management team and the footballers themselves, who have proved beyond doubt there is an awful lot of talent and ability within our community.

"We are looking forward to taking the squad of 25 to a football tournament in Holland and hope Canterbury will achieve much in Europe."