

FANTASY CHALLENGE
NEW LIFE CUP
FINAL
2019



Martin
STUART

VERSUS

Joe
HIGGINS

6th Final

GAMEWEEK 38 (12th May)

OFFICIAL FC MATCH PREVIEW

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INTRODUCTION

This is the sixth final of the newest cup competition in the history of the FC World it does make you wonder where the time goes.

It has been mentioned several times over the years that this competition was the brainchild of Thomas Lusty (Former Premier League manager now in League One) joking one evening that the FC World needed a Europa League competition for the managers that got knocked out of the Champions League. The expansion of the game and an increase in the entrance fee to soften the blow there was the addition of this competition with more prize money being on offer for manager that have been knocked out of other competitions. Thus, the New Life cup was born for those managers that did not get out of the Group Stage of Champions League and Pyramid Cup.

Having managers from the two competition helps with the stature of the New Life Cup. The FC World always takes an interest to see how the managers from the two competitions fare as often the Pyramid Cup has the new stars in it but those rising stars normally are doing well in the Pyramid Cup. You wonder if there is the same depth of strength in the competition with the managers who finish 3rd in the two competitions group phase qualifying for this competition.

The second Round sees all the Champions League managers take on all the Pyramid Cup managers maybe a statistic to look at to see who has come out on top in these 5 seasons. Like all of our competitions the main focus is the final. On the last page of this preview you can see how managers form the two competitions have fared.

It is great to see that this seasons final will have a manager form each of the competitions that feed the New Life Cup, I am pleased to see that this is the 3rd season that this has happened showing the competitiveness of this competition.

Representing the Pyramid Cup in this final is Martin Stuart. Stuart is in his 3rd season with this final representing his first major final. He has a growing reputation and this final can really bring him to the attention of everyone in the FC World.

Representing the Champions League is a manager with a vast amount of experience Joe Higgins is in his 13th season. That is 10 more season than his opponent Martin Stuart. This will be Joe Higgins second major final he as yet has been unable to claim a major trophy in his 13 seasons.

The difference in the histories of these two managers makes this final very interesting and shows what a mix the New Life Cup gives us that was its very intention to see those new managers from the Pyramid Cup taking on the more established managers form the Champions League and this final is the very epitome of that.

One great thing about this final is that one of todays finalists is going to claim there first major trophy putting them alongside the very elite of the FC World.

As you may be aware that this competition was named after the Sunday Football team that Fantasy Challenge has been sponsoring New Life United. Last season we had to bring you the sad news that New Life United is no longer in existence that flamed burnt brightly for a short period but this competition is a reminder for me of those great days and some of the players that still take part in this competition. The name of New Life will live on in this competition.

I hope you enjoy this preview of the Fourth New Life Cup Final. All that is left for me to do is wish both Manages all the best in this final.

Paul Richardson

Fantasy Challenge Founder

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PLAYER PROFILES

Martin STUART

Joined Fantasy Challenge
Career Honours

2016-2017
Pyramid One Promoted 5th Place

STAT ATTACK

(After Gameweek 37)

THIS SEASON

AVERAGE GAMEWEEK SCORE	59.72
HIGHEST GAMEWEEK SCORE	120
LOWEST GAMEWEEK SCORE	27
GAMEWEEKS SCORE OVER 49	25
GAMEWEEKS SCORE UNDER 50	12
COMPETITION AVERAGE	64.92

CHAMPIONS LEAGUE HISTORY

No History

PYRAMID CUP HISTORY

2017 Group Stage

2018 Group Stage

NEW LIFE CUP

2018 1st Round

ROAD TO THE FINAL

PYRAMID CUP

1st Round Group Stage

Group P

Sammy Abbey	40	-	48
Matt Coe	51	-	65
Marcus Hogwood	66	-	65
Sammy Abbey	38	-	46
Matt Coe	100	-	37
Marcus Hogwood	72	-	49

FINAL TABLE

POS	TEAM	PLD	WON	DRW	LST	FOR	AGST	+/-	PTS
1	Sammy Abbey	6	4	0	2	351	344	7	12
2	Matt Coe	6	4	0	2	334	337	-3	12
3	Martin Stuart	6	3	0	3	367	310	57	9
4	Marcus Hogwood	6	1	0	5	335	396	-61	3

NEW LIFE CUP

		1 st Leg			2 nd Leg			Aggregate		
1 st Round	Steve Shew	71	-	69	51	-	50	122	-	119
2 nd Round	Michael Lynn	39	-	23	56	-	37	60	-	95
Quarter-Final	Lee Ferridge	27	-	42	90	-	62	117	-	104
Semi-Final	Bernard Aspell	120	-	96	88	-	80	208	-	176

PROFILE

Martin Stuart is in his 3rd season within the game receiving a Lucky Survival from Pyramid One in his first season last season he claimed promotion from Pyramid One turning his fortunes around. This season he is sitting in a respectable 7th In Pyramid Premier although he can't make promotion now despite winning his last 5 league matches, he is 5 points off the promotion places. He is lying 26th place in the FC League a very respectable position by far his best position in his three seasons his best finish previously was last season when he finished 86th. The cups have been where Stuart has shown his promise this season as he got to the semi-final in the FC Cup losing to eventual winner Omid Afzalalghom. This final is Stuart's first major final until this season he had not really shown a great cup pedigree in his previous two seasons in fact getting knocked out in the First Round of this competition last season now he has the chance of lifting the trophy.

Joe HIGGINS

Joined Fantasy Challenge
Career Honours

2006-2007
2007 League One Champion
2008 Overall League Runner-Up
2009 Championship promoted 5th Place

STAT ATTACK

(After Gameweek 37)

THIS SEASON

AVERAGE GAMEWEEK SCORE	61.78
HIGHEST GAMEWEEK SCORE	117
LOWEST GAMEWEEK SCORE	25
GAMEWEEKS SCORE OVER 49	28
GAMEWEEKS SCORE UNDER 50	9
COMPETITION AVERAGE	65.22

CHAMPIONS LEAGUE HISTORY

2007	Quarter-Final
2008	2 nd Round
2009	2 nd Round
2010	Runner-Up
2011	Group Stage
2012	Group Stage
2013	Group Stage
2014	Group Stage
2015	Group Stage
2016	Group Stage
2017	Group Stage
2018	2 nd Round

NEW LIFE CUP HISTORY

2014	1 st Round
2016	Quarter-Final

ROAD TO THE FINAL

CHAMPIONS LEAGUE

1st Round Group Stage

Group C

Tracy Thompson	63	-	67
Graham Price	57	-	63
Richard Munroe	51	-	34
Ellie Turner	41	-	51
Alfie Harris	56	-	59
Tracy Thompson	55	-	47
Graham Price	71	-	23
Richard Munroe	48	-	41
Ellie Turner	94	-	65
Alfie Harris	63	-	57

FINAL TABLE

POS	TEAM	PLD	WON	DRW	LST	FOR	AGST	+/-	PTS
1	Alfie Harris	10	8	1	1	588	489	99	25
2	Tracy Thompson	10	6	1	3	580	570	10	19
3	Joe Higgins	10	6	0	4	599	507	92	18
4	Ellie Turner	10	4	0	6	532	556	-24	12
5	Richard Munroe	10	3	0	7	540	547	-7	9
6	Graham Price	10	2	0	8	428	598	-170	6

NEW LIFE CUP

		1 st Leg			2 nd Leg			Aggregate		
1 st Round	Wendy Parker	78	-	66	65	-	51	143	-	117
2 nd Round	Antony Law	36	-	34	59	-	55	95	-	89
Quarter-Final	Dave Sinclair	40	-	57	99	-	75	139	-	132
Semi-Final	Steev Haley	81	-	79	117	-	62	198	-	141

PROFILE

This is Joe Higgins 13th Season in the game, some might say he is more of a solid performer than one of the big stars of the FC World. Higgins though has a good pedigree in 13 seasons so far he was runner-up in the FC League in 2008 made the Champions League final in 2007. He has had two seasons in the Premier League and this season after 8 seasons in The Championship he has gained promotion back to the top flight. This is his second major final victory will give him a place at the top table in the FC World which many feel if you look at his history he is deserving of. He did win the League One title in his rookie season back in 2007 it would be a great achievement to claim a first major trophy 12 seasons later.



FC EXPERT MATCH ANALYSIS

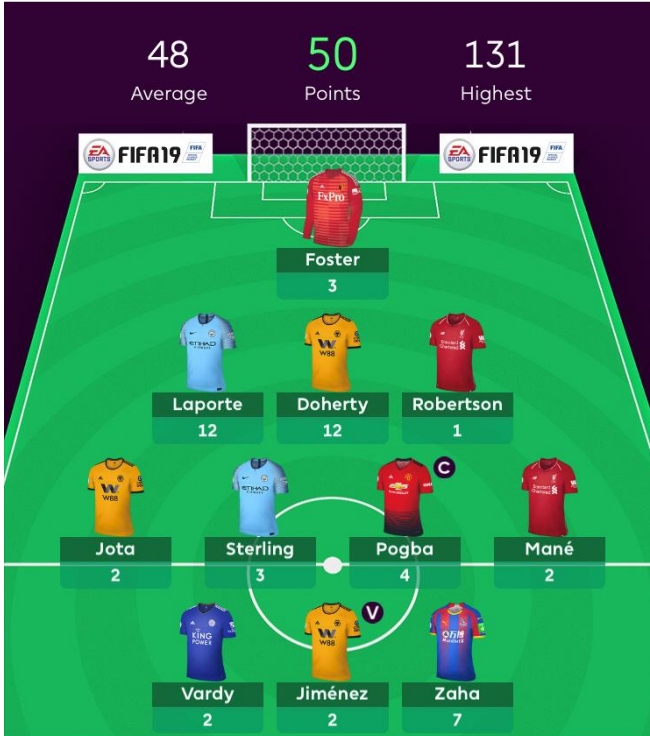
We asked the Fantasy Challenge Expert to give us his thoughts on the New Life Cup Final. We have managed to give the FC Expert the two team line-ups from Gameweek 37.

Martin Stuart

Gameweek 37

Squad

List



GKP



Ryan

4

1. MID



Ward-Prowse

1

2. DEF



Duffy

2

3. DEF



Valery

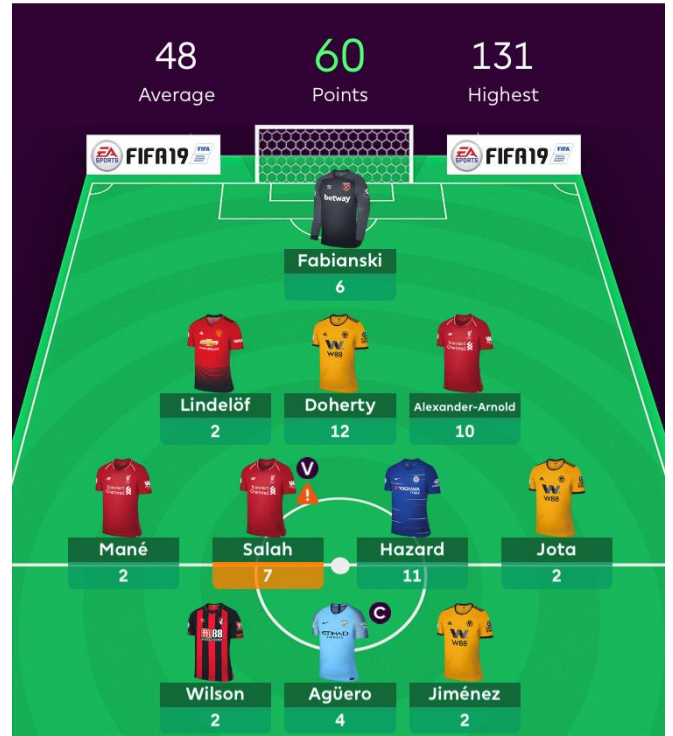
1

Joe Higgins

Gameweek 37

Squad

List



GKP



Foster

3

1. MID



Deulofeu

2

2. DEF



Kiko Femenía

1

3. DEF



Duffy

2

STAT ATTACK

50
4
28
11
11
1
3-4-3
NONE
NONE

SCORE
CAPTAIN
DEFENCE
MIDFIELD
ATTACK
TRANSFERS
FORMATION
CHIP PLAYED
CHIPS LEFT

60
4
30
22
8
0
3-4-3
NONE
NONE

THE ANALYSIS

I have already made mention of the two comebacks in the Champions League by Liverpool and Tottenham in the other final previews one last time I will just say to the finalists this match will not be over until that final whistle sounds after the last round of Premier League games.

If the two managers had met in gameweek 37 would have seen Joe Higgins would have come out on top 60-50 over Martin Stuart.

DEFENCE

Martin Stuart



Joe Higgins



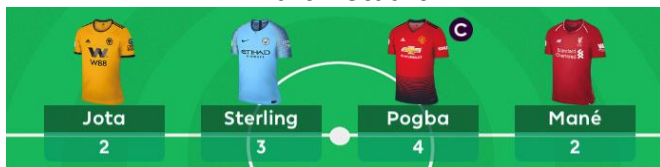
Doherty (Wolves) & Laporte (Manchester City) gaining clean sheets and providing an assist with 3 bonus points saw them both bag 12 points. Robertson (Liverpool) only scoring a single point and more worryingly for Stuart is that he got injured in mid-week in the Champions League final. On the bench Ryan (Brighton) in goal would have scored more points as would Duffy (Brighton). A 28-point return from a 3-man defence is more than credible.

Doherty (Wolves) gaining clean sheets and providing an assist with 3 bonus points saw him bag 12 points Alexander-Arnold (Liverpool) scored 2 less points due to the fact that Liverpool conceded 2 goals. Lindelöf (Manchester United) scored 2 points. Keeper Fabianski (West Ham) contributed 6 with a clean sheet. Higgins did not have any points left on the bench though as his subs did outperform those selected.

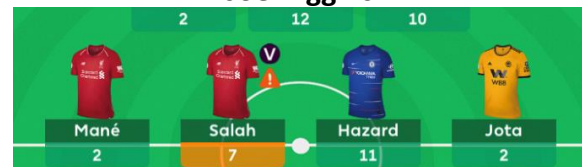
Both managers deploying a 3-man defence. Both having Doherty (Wolves) with a great score of 12. Stuart's defence scoring 28 points very respectable but was actually outscored by Higgins. Higgins making up that gap with his keeper Fabianski and Trent-Alexander-Arnold's contribution. Both had Duffy (Brighton) on the bench Higgins also had Foster but chose Fabianski over him which in gameweek37 was a great selection. Doherty has been one of the stars of the season but Wolves take on Liverpool on the final day of the season it is unlikely he will score as highly as in gameweek 37. Stuart will have to leave it late but keep an eye on Robertson. Higgins has to give thought about Laporte or does he think that once again that Lindelöf and Fabianski will cover and great point total from the City defender.

MIDFIELD

Martin Stuart



Joe Higgins



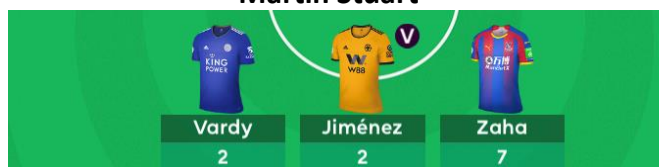
Stuart will reflect on this selection on the fine margins that can happen on a football field. He had Pogba (Manchester United) in his midfield and as captain he only scored 4 points but that does not tell the whole story he hit the woodwork twice if those chances had gone in that would be an extra 10 points doubling to 20. Amazing when you know that his entire midfield scored 11. Set those chances aside none of Stuart's midfielders starred.

Hazard (Chelsea) banging in 11 points with two assists a score which equalled Stuart's entire midfield. With Mo Salah (Liverpool) scoring to bag 7 points, he could have scored more but had to go off injured. Jota (Wolves) and Mane (Liverpool) both contributed 2 each., Deulofeu (Watford) on the bench also hit 2 points. Higgins getting rewarded from his big hitters in Midfield.

Gameweek 37 shows a different story for the two managers Stuart thinking about those two chances for Pogba where he hit the woodwork a potential 10 points going by the wayside in the finest of margins. Whilst Higgins saw his two bug midfield stars score 18 points. Interestingly both managers have Jota and Mane. Will Stuart be worried about Sterling recent form or will he be thinking the time is right for the final for Sterling to get back amongst the points. Higgins will be checking the internet for news on Salah, what I have seen is very encouraging and with him not playing in the Champions League in mid-week Salah has received a small rest which could be good news for Higgins. Gameweek 37 was so interesting to observe these two midfields Higgins coming out on top but of those Pogba chances had gone in not doubling them Stuart would have scored 21 points against Higgins 22.

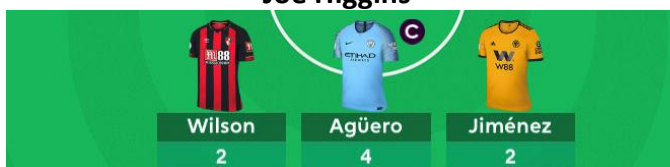
ATTACK

Martin Stuart



Zaha (Crystal Palace) scored 7 points with a goal helping on his way to star in this 3-man forward line. Vardy (Leicester) only bagged 2 he has been on good form of late but a tough match against Manchester City. Jimenez (Wolves) also only bagged 2 points.

Joe Higgins



Aguero (Manchester City) as captain only scored 4 points. Callum Wilson (Bournemouth) only got 2 points against 10 men Tottenham. Jimenez (Wolves) also only got 2 points. 8 points from a 3-man forward line is very disappointing Higgins will need more in the final.

At first glance you would say that the only big hitter in these forward lines is Aguero in Higgins line up supplemented by Wilson and Jimenez. Stuart who has gone with what I would say are the forwards just below the top hitters in Vardy and Zaha and in gameweek 37 they came through, well, Zaha did. Both managers have Jimenez.

CAPTAIN – (Points for the Could have selected have been doubled)

Martin Stuart

Pogba (Manchester United) 4 Points

COULD HAVE SELECTED

Doherty (Wolves) 24 Points

Laporte (Manchester City) 24 Points

Zaha (Crystal Palace) 14 Points

Foster (Watford) 6 Points

Sterling (Manchester City) 6 Points

Joe Higgins

Aguero (Manchester City) 4 Points

COULD HAVE SELECTED

Doherty (Wolves) 24 Points

Hazard (Chelsea) 22 Points

Alexander-Arnold (Liverpool) 20 Points

Salah (Liverpool) 14 Points

Fabianski (West Ham) 12 Points

So, Stuart got his captain selection wrong but sorry to keep stressing the point had those two chances which hit the woodwork gone in Pogba would have equalled the totals of Doherty and Laporte and you would expect would have picked up some bonus points to in fact surpass those totals. Not sure if this gives Stuart comfort or not. Higgins didn't get close with 5 other players all would have eclipsed Aguero's total with all of the guaranteeing at least 8 more points. With almost 50% of his team scoring more suggests that Higgins has some good options for captain in this final. As stated we do wonder if Doherty will do so good against Liverpool.

CHIPS

Martin Stuart

NONE

Joe Higgins

NONE

Well this is easy as no chips were played and none are available for the final relief for me.

FINANCE / TRANSFERS / OPTIONS

Martin Stuart

FINANCE

£104.2

TRANSFERS

1

Joe Higgins

FINANCE

£107.1

TRANSFERS

2

The first thing that strikes you about these two managers is the value of their squads. Both have increased the value of their squads. Which to me is a good indicator of not just great transfer dealings but shrewd

management throughout the season. Of more interest is to see that Martin Stuart only has 1 transfer but that does not tell the whole story as he has a massive £3.4 Million in the bank so 1 transfer but with that kind of money, he can make a very significant transfer. I wonder if he will sacrifice Jota to bring in either Hazard for Salah to cancel them out in Higgins line up. Or will he look elsewhere bring in a third City player in either midfield or attack hoping that City go on a goal fest and claim some of those points. Higgins does not have such a war chest although he has £0.9 Million in the bank. He does though have two transfers so can he manipulate the money to get in a big signing. He might not be bale to shoe horn in Sterling (Manchester City) I can see him getting in a Bernado Silva or David Silva which certainly bolster his midfield. With the two transfers he can move out two of the three Wolves players who I am expecting to lose to Liverpool. He can study Stuart's team see where je sees a threat he could bring in Zaha to cancel that out or look at the fixtures for what he thinks are the hidden gem in this the most difficult of gameweeks to guess / judge.

This final neither manager has a Chip to play so have taken out the Chip effect for this final as it is not relevant.

Both managers will need to take a look at the fixtures below of the final day of the season to try and figure out who will be really trying and whose season is over. The selection of captain could be vital to gaining success in this final.

THE FIXTURES FOR GAMEWEEK 38

Sunday 12th May

Brighton & Hove Albion	V	Manchester City
Burnley	V	Arsenal
Crystal Palace	V	AFC Bournemouth
Fulham	V	Newcastle United
Leicester City	V	Chelsea
Liverpool	V	Wolverhampton Wanderers
Manchester United	V	Cardiff City
Southampton	V	Huddersfield Town
Tottenham Hotspur	V	Everton
Watford	V	West Ham United

THE VERDICT

As I look at these two squads, I see strength for Stuart with Laporte in defence but then a concern in the injury for Robertson, Southampton at home to Huddersfield looks like a good back up. For Higgins I fancy another clean sheet for his keeper Fabianski and Alexander-Arnold to play a significant part in Liverpool's title push. The question will be on Lindelof of Manchester United at home to Cardiff. Could he be swayed into bringing in a City defence of whom I am convinced will get a clean sheet away to Brighton.

Will Stuart persevere with Pogba in midfield he has a big war chest and could really splash the cash in midfield but surely moving out Pogba is a risk as he is a player that can make the difference my calculations is he can't get in a Hazard or Salah to counter act Higgins threat in the is area unless he does cash in on Pogba. If he was to move out Jota he could bring in any of three City midfielders Sane, Bernado Silva or David Silva. Sane would be a big gamble he has not been starting whilst both Silva's have been playing 90 minutes and could represent the best value although neither of them have hit big scores in the last two gameweeks Bernado did hit 11 in Gameweek 35 that points total taken from his second fixture only in that gameweek.

Stuart doesn't have big names up front Vardy at home to Chelsea could be a difficult final day fixture Zaha's Crystal Palace at home to Bournemouth looks like a good bet leaving him looking at Jimenez then looking for value in the market he would not have enough money to buy Aguero to cancel that out but does Stuart need to find the value in making his team different and hope to gain points in this way.

You may have noticed I have stopped mentioning Joe Higgins, as I write about the options for Stuart it is becoming apparent that he can't nullify those big hitters in the Higgins side whilst Higgins has those two transfers I can see him supplementing his midfield and looking a nullifying the value in Stuarts team.

I now see Higgins transferring out Jimenez and bringing in Zaha of Palace to cancel those points. He will do this knowing that Stuart has that potential Robertson injury in defence to worry about. I think he is confident that he can compete in defence that if Salah is fit that his midfield can overcome Stuart's midfield. I see him bringing in Zaha and having £6.3 Million in the bank then looking at the fixtures Fraser of Bournemouth or Redmond Southampton. Bournemouth away to Palace and Southampton at home to Huddersfield I see points potential for both these teams and players.

One transfer that does occur for me for Stuart is to not wait for the news on Robertson and take him out and double up on his City defenders the money from the sale of Robertson would give him the pick of their defence a Kyle Walker or a Vincent Kompany which could make things interesting.

Well suddenly I have doubted myself with that potential swop for a second Manchester City defender I felt that Higgins had the better transfer options but what of the Captain picks.

Here I think it will be very brave of Stuart to not go for Sterling. That said I think he could go with an all or nothing selection, he could go for Pogba again a home match against Cardiff City he is as likely to score no points or even get sent off as he is to score a final day hat-trick a big gamble. What of one of those Manchester City defender if they could add an assist or a goal to a clean sheet, they could hit over 20 points again which would be a significant contribution in this final. The safe bet is Sterling it is a cup final will Stuart think of the saying fortune favours the brave.

For Higgins Hazard, Salah and Aguero look to be the obvious choices. The thing about all these choices is that Stuart doesn't have them surely if he can get this selection right, they can win him this trophy. Can Hazard put in back to back big point totals, is it time for Aguero to get back amongst the goals or will the rested Salah be giving it everything to try and get Liverpool that Premier League title. I could be wrong but I think if Salah is pronounced fit Higgins will go with the Egyptian in the last 6 gameweeks he has not scored less than 6 points double those points and add contributions from Aguero and Hazard Higgins will be hoping that Fabianski and Lindelof and Alexander-Arnold are all going to have decent gameweeks to get him over the line.

Stuart has the other big gamble of making two transfers and costing 4 points but this can see him potentially get another big hitter in up front or in midfield.

As with every final Transfers and captain picks are vital both actually have some good options available but for me Stuart does not have combatting options he has to come up with his own good solutions where as I feel Higgins already has those options and can in fact try and nullify some of the threat from Stuart which will be the big factor in my final decision.

FINAL VERDICT: - Joe Higgins to claim that first major trophy. This is going to be a very interesting final and if Stuart can get those transfers right, he can take this final to the wire.

IN THE EVENT OF A DRAW

In the event of a draw the match will go into a penalty Shoot-Out. A penalty shoot-out will take place, each team's top five-point scorers will go head to head to produce a result. If the best five scorers' in the two teams cannot produce a result sudden death will take place with the next highest point scorers being next.

HISTORY

PREVIOUS FINALS

2014	Steve Haley (CL)	62	-	50	Dan Smith (PC)
2015	Hakan Bedir (CL)	53	-	44	Andrew Burchell (CL)
2016	Jonathan Strack (CL)	42	-	33	Steve Shew (CL)
2017	Kin Chau (PC)	110	-	74	Jonathan Strack (CL)
2018	Dan Jopp (CL)	83	-	72	Peter Ward (PC)

The CL by a manager's name means he was in that seasons Champions League competition. The PC by a manager's name means he was in that seasons Pyramid Cup competition

WINNERS

Dan Jopp	1
Hakan Bedir	1
Jonathan Strack	1
Kin Chau	1
Steve Haley	1

Jonathan Strack
Andrew Burchell
Dan Jopp
Dan Smith
Hakan Bedir
Joe Higgins

FINALISTS

Kin Chau	1
Martin Stuart	1
Peter Ward	1
Steve Haley	1
Steve Shew	2
	1

WHAT COMPETITION DID THEY COME FROM?

WINNERS

Champions League	4
Pyramid Cup	1

RUNNER-UP

Champions League	3
Pyramid Cup	2

The Champions League is still showing its dominance in this competition having won 4 out of the 5 finals. In fact, the Champions League has had 8 out of the 12 finalists, including this year.

For the third season in succession we have manager's from The Champions League and Pyramid Cup.