

Sunday 26th August 2007

Pre-Season Friendly Match at the Ninefields Estate, Waltham Abbey

ABBAY YOUTH OLD BOYS	3	EDMONTON ROVERS	0	HT 2-0
Wrate (10 mins.), Speller (Own Goal) (34 mins.), Harper (77 mins.)				

ABBAY YOUTH OLD BOYS' LINE-UP: Ian BROWNJOHN (1st Half GK); Dean HARPER, Matty ATTARD, Joe HAGGER, Rod ANDREWS (2nd Half GK); Dominico DELGRAZIE, Billy BROWNJOHN, Tom SCRIVEN, David THEOBALD; Nicky WRATE, Chris HARPER **Subs.:** Jason PINNUCK, Gary BROWNJOHN, Jason BARRETT, 'Dennis' (Trialist)

EDMONTON ROVERS LINE-UP (with Marks out of 10): Simon JACKSON (GK) (6½); Robin PRYKE (6), Tony SPELLER (6), Paul WOOLSTON (6½), Terry MOORE (6½); Foyso! AHMED (6), Tem ADIL (6½), Steve COKELL (6), Tony KING (6½); Conor McGOVERN (6), Daniel DALEY (6) **Subs.:** Nick VERTIGANS (6½), Chris 'Nugget' BEEDEN (6), Ozel OZERMAN (6½)

Referee: Les KYPRIANOU	Weather Conditions: Warm & Mainly Sunny	Attendance: 28
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Factual Report (by Laurence Hughes):

Although Abbey Youth Old Boys are in the Division below us in the League this season, it was anticipated beforehand that they would give us a close game as they had finished Runners-Up in Division Three last season and had therefore been promoted three seasons running, so they were certainly used to winning (unlike us of course!). We had played them in a Pre-Season Friendly back in 2003 when we won 1-0, and then later that season our Reserve Team beat their Reserve Team 4-1 in a League Reserve Cup Quarter-Final,



but where we have gone backwards since then, Abbey have most definitely gone forwards. They did that by disbanding their First Team and filling their Reserve Team with players from their highly successful Youth setup, then working their way up from the bottom Division with a settled side of players who turn up every week (and to fitness training sessions if the evidence of this particular match is anything to go by!). Of course we do nothing of the sort, and although the Summer 7-a-side League helps some of our players to keep fit, we had far too many playing in this match who were badly out of practice at playing 11-a-side. That included defenders Robin Pryke & Paul Woolston, forward Conor McGovern and midfielder Chris 'Nugget' Beeden, who would all be candidates for a

place in the club's best-ever side during our 31-year history but looked extremely rusty in this match.

In addition to that, we had even more key players missing than in either of our previous two Pre-Season Friendlies, with the likes of Stuart Dorward, Alan Barnard, Danny Hagan, Clark Williams, Derek Dorward, Leon McKenzie-McKay, Peter Murphy and numerous good new signings all unavailable, while Vernon 'Kizza' Nxumalo simply failed to turn up after telling us he would use his Sat-Nav to find the venue from his home in Erith (Kent).

At least we still ended up with a squad of 14 despite those absences, and with the pitch in good condition this time with



plenty of grass on it instead of the bare wasteland we encountered the last time we visited this venue, everybody was quite positive as the game kicked off.

However, it soon became clear that Abbey were a lot fitter and sharper than our two previous Pre-Season opponents when they took the lead after just 10 minutes when Nicky Wrate converted a low right-wing cross from close range after a lightening quick move that made our defenders look like carthorses.

They then nearly made it 2-0 in the 18th minute when Billy Brownjohn smashed a fiercely struck free-kick against the underside of the bar from 25 yards, and although Daniel Daley tested Abbey's stand-in goalkeeper Ian Brownjohn with our only shot of the First Half shortly afterwards, we got worse as the half went on and found ourselves 2-0 down at Half-Time when Tony Speller scored an own goal in the 34th minute when he headed another right-wing cross inside his near post as he tried to stop the ball reaching a forward running in behind him. Apart from the two goals and the other two chances mentioned, there was actually very little goalmouth action in the First Half, and although Abbey Youth had undoubtedly been the better side, none of our players had really been guilty of making blatant individual mistakes, even Tony Speller, who was just unlucky with the own goal as he had to make some sort of contact with the ball. Indeed it was more a case of Abbey Youth Old Boys being fitter and sharper than us all round and fielding a full-strength and settled side whereas we had four players missing

from the previous week and another five players absent who had played in our first Pre-Season Friendly the week before that.

It was undoubtedly in the centre of midfield that we were really struggling to cope though, so Nick Vertigans and Chris 'Nugget' Beeden were brought on for the start of the Second Half to give Tem Adil and Steve Cokell a 20-minute breather, while one of our goalkeepers Ozel Ozerman was given a run-out as an outfield player in the left-back position, replacing Terry Moore. That actually improved things and made it a more even game, although Abbey Youth making substitutions to give players a run-out may have played a part in that. Vertigans actually managed to get in a shot on target early on which was well saved by Abbey's Second Half 'keeper Rod Andrews (another outfield player), but apart from that we still really struggled to create chances as Abbey's young defenders were excellent and even had the speedy Daniel Daley in their pocket most of the time.

One positive for us was the improved form of Simon Jackson in goal for us though as he didn't make any silly mistakes this time (unlike the previous week), and although he had no chance with the first two goals and the shot against the crossbar and didn't have any difficult saves to make, his calling, catching and concentration was much better...probably because his parents and his son P.J. were watching him from the touchline ?

'Jacko' was given a rest after 69 minutes though as we needed to give Ozel Ozerman some practice in goal with Jacko due to be missing several League matches this season, but Oz was really unlucky in the 77th minute when he made an excellent save in a one-on-one with Abbey forward Chris Harper, only for the ball to rebound back to Harper who was then left with an easy finish into an empty net to make it 3-0.

The game then really opened up in the last 13 minutes with chances at both ends, although Oz was by far the busier keeper of the two, but it stayed at 3-0 and we ended up suffering a crushing defeat which was probably deserved on the balance of play....this being extremely worrying when Abbey's only previous Pre-Season Friendly this Summer ended in a 2-2 draw with Northmet (Riverside)'s **Reserve Team** (not their **First Team** who are in Division One with us this season).

Although we have a really strong squad of players for the coming season, this was yet more evidence that we are not going to win anything when we have so many first-choice players unavailable. Hopefully it will all be different when we play our first League match.

'Murf's Alternative Report !!: [Unfortunately, Murf did not play in this match.](#)

[Click Here for Abbey Youth's website.](#)

TREVOR HUGHES'S MANAGER'S REPORT

Despite having a total of 34 potential players on our books we had fielded squads of 10 and 12 for our first two pre-season friendlies. This Sunday's game against Abbey Youth Old Boys saw the squad rise to 14 but this was still disappointing as these friendlies are the only opportunity for me to assess my starting line up for the first league game. Fortunately, we do not have a game on the first Sunday of the season next week so we plan to have a full training session before I pick my squad for the following week.

Abbey played this game as if it was a league match whereas most of our players appeared to have a much less competitive attitude. In my opinion that was the main difference between the sides. Abbey had some good quality players and their two first half goals were both the result of good quality passing even if it needed a diving header from Tony Speller to score the second. Both sides made substitutions at half time and we definitely played better in the second half until we were caught out defensively to leave an Abbey forward clean through on 77 minutes and substitute goalkeeper, Ozel Ozerman was unlucky that the rebound was converted after a good save. The game was over at 3-0 and Oz had to make a couple more saves before the end. Unfortunately, this week was a poor performance as well as a poor result but it is the competitive matches that are important and I am still confident that we have enough quality in the squad to have a good season