

Sunday 4th December 2005

Mercury Waltham Sunday League Division One Match at Hazelwood Sports Ground

EDMONTON ROVERS	2	BROXBOURNE RANGERS OLD BOYS	4	HT 0-3
Mc,Govern (48 mins.), S.Dorward (58 mins.)		Roe (28 mins.), Green (38, 73 mins.), East (45 mins)		

EDMONTON ROVERS LINE-UP (with Marks out of 10): Simon JACKSON (GK) (6); John Mc,LOUGHLIN (7), Tony SPELLER (7), Andrew WARMERDAM (7), Terry MOORE (6½); Nick VERTIGANS (7½), Paul ELLERKER (8), Stuart DORWARD (7½), Peter MURPHY (7½); Conor Mc,GOVERN (7½), Steve COKELL (7) **Subs.:** Foysol AHMED (6), JUNEKA JUNIOR (Not Used), Colin BESTER (Not Used)

BROXBOURNE RANGERS OLD BOYS LINE-UP: G.WIGGS (GK); Dave MILSON, Adam SMITH, Paul HACK, Jamie DIXON; Darren MATTHEWS, Danny EAST, Mark WILLIAMSON, Danny ROE, Gareth THOMAS; Alan GREEN **Sub.:** Lee ANDERSON

Referee: Ian ANDREWS

Weather Conditions: Fair

Attendance: 15



Factual Report (by Laurence Hughes):

Mid-table Broxbourne Rangers Old Boys had lost 7-4 in a County Cup match the previous week, despite fielding more or less a full-strength side, so when they turned up a bit late and with six regulars missing, including goalkeeper Richard Hayward (who is arguably the best in the League in that position), they were presumably not looking forward to this match and in some sort of survival mode judging by the 4-5-1 formation they lined up with. As for ourselves, we were missing central defender Paul Woolston again (still on holiday), while goalkeeper Darryl Johnson had dropped out during the week with a groin strain and Derek Dorward had to pull out just before the

kick-off due to last-minute family and work commitments. However, such is the strength of our squad this season that we had a quality player available to come in and take 'Del's place in midfield, namely Nick Vertigans, while Simon Jackson, a proper goalkeeper rather than an outfield player, was able to come in for his first game of the season to replace Darryl between the sticks. In fact we were fielding a much stronger side than the one we put out on the opening day of the season when we drew 2-2 with Broxbourne Rangers Old Boys at Pound Close, as the likes of Conor Mc,Govern, Paul Ellerker, Andrew Warmerdam, Nick Vertigans and John Mc,Loughlin all missed that match but were in the starting line-up for this one. Having been really unlucky not to win in our *last* League match against Northmet (Riverside) the previous week then, we were really determined to 'make sure' this time, but incredibly, exactly the same pattern continued right from the start with our players conjuring up some quality moves and producing chance after chance without being able to find the net. It all started after just eight minutes when Stuart Dorward sliced a shot wide from about six yards, but that turned out to be our only really 'bad' miss of the match, as once again we were really unlucky with our finishing, especially in the First Half with numerous efforts either hitting the woodwork, being brilliantly saved or going agonisingly wide, while we had at least three other chances where players produced quality low crosses which we just failed to get on the end of at the far post with Rangers' keeper Wiggs and/or his fellow defenders 'nowhere'.

With almost half-an-hours' play gone we quite conceivably could have been 5-0 ahead on the balance of play...and then of course Broxbourne Rangers Old Boys suddenly scored from their first clear-cut chance of the game ! With keeper Simon Jackson not having played since the end



of last season he was bound to be a bit rusty, and he was caught out in the 28th minute when a free-kick by Darren Matthews from near the half-way line was cleverly drilled in to a gap in-between 'Jacko' and left-back Terry Moore for Danny Roe to run in and score with a really well-taken header. Although Terry accepted responsibility for that, it was more a case of really good play by our opponents, but we shrugged that off and continued to dominate the game and create further chances. In pushing forward though, it left us vulnerable to a quick break with Broxbourne Rangers Old Boys playing just one up front, and that was exactly what happened in the 41st minute when a quickly-taken

free-kick in their own half of the pitch (albeit with a 'rolling ball' !) saw several of our players get left behind upfield following one of our eleven corners in this match, which allowed Danny East to 'waltz' past the very exposed John Mc,Loughlin and Tony Speller before setting up Alan Green for an easy side-footed finish past Simon Jackson from close range.

That goal *did* knock the stuffing out of us a bit though and we then went and conceded another in First Half Injury Time as East made it 3-0 with an excellent diving header from Alan Green's pinpoint cross while our defence (and Club Linesman Trevor Hughes !) got themselves in a tangle trying to play (and flag for !) offside.

We came off at Half-Time totally shell-shocked as it was the best we had played all season, yet we found ourselves 3-0 down from just three clear-cut chances and three quality finishes. However, we had created so many good chances ourselves during the first 45 minutes that we were able to have a positive team talk during the

interval with the need to score an early goal being at the forefront of that, and thankfully Conor Mc,Govern managed to deliver just three minutes after the break when he made it 3-1 with a superbly-controlled 'scissors-kick' volley at the far post from Steve Cokell's cross after a 50-yard ball from Paul Ellerker had started off the move. Not surprisingly, we created yet more chances shortly after that with one of the better ones falling to Stuart Dorward, who apparently had 'Goal Of The Season' already on his mind just before he 'ruined' a brilliant move by scuffing his shot wide.

However, Stuart made up for that by making it 3-2 in the 58th minute with a cleverly directed looping header into the far top corner after defender Adam Smith had headed John Mc,Loughlin's cross/though ball backwards and straight to him, and we were then clearly in with a good chance of getting something out of the match after that. Although we continued to dominate possession thereafter though, the number of chances we managed to create started to diminish as the Second Half went on, and when Broxbourne Rangers Old Boys scored a fourth goal (against the run of play of course) in the 73rd minute...drilled in from the rebound by Alan Green after Simon Jackson failed to hold an awkwardly bouncing low through ball...that rather killed the game off and we never really looked like fighting back after that, even though we brought on substitute Foysoh Ahmed late on in place of defender John Mc,Loughlin and switched to a 3-4-3 formation. As with Northmet (Riverside) the week before, the Broxbourne Rangers Old Boys' Manager seemed to think afterwards that we hadn't really caused their defence enough problems to win the game, even though he admitted we played some good possession football. In reality though, we were desperately unlucky again for the second week in a row and are probably playing as well as we did when we finished third in the Premier Division three years ago. In fact, when we did the Marks Out Of 10 for this game down the pub afterwards (as a general consensus opinion...a new idea !), they were all very high for the outfield players when normally for a 4-2 defeat to an under-strength mid-table side there would be a lot more 6's and 6½'s flying about, while goalkeeper Simon Jackson's mark of 6 was more for the fact that he had very little to do except pick the ball out of his net.



Although this defeat probably means our season is now over in terms of winning a trophy, at least our games will be very enjoyable to watch if we continue to pass the ball about as well as we did in *this* match, and with the quality squad we have at the moment it is quite likely that we will give somebody a real pasting sooner or later !?

In fact our squad could even be strengthened further in the New Year as Chris 'Nugget' Beeden is currently sorting out his transfer from Division Two side Data in order to play (if needed) when he is not away visiting his girlfriend, while it is rumoured that John Beasley is also apparently looking at a possible return. (He is already registered to play for us this season anyway if he wants to come back). As we suspected when we folded the Reserve Team up at the start of the season, it has definitely made the First Team stronger and a more appealing side to play for. All we need now is a bit more luck to go our way.

'Murf's Alternative Report !!: Daylight robbery, smash and grab, the biggest travesty of justice since OJ walked. These are just some of the headlines that spring to mind after Sunday's home defeat to Broxbourne Rangers Old Boys.

It all started so encouragingly as a Rovers side displaying just two changes from last week's near equivalent travesty – Simon Jackson donning the gloves in place of the injured Darryl Johnson and Nick Vertigans hugging the right touchline in place of the eiderdown entangled Derek Dorward – were quickly in their stride. It may have been a dank, grey December morning but Rovers' football was bright, incisive and full of purpose. And, before long, an impressive catalogue of chances had come and gone, some ballooned, some dragged wide and some adeptly kept out by Broxbourne's impressive 'keeper.

Typically in such a one-sided encounter, Broxbourne took the lead not so much against the run of play, more against the tide of inevitability. Or so it seemed. The opening goal came in the 28th minute from a long, low driven free kick from Broxbourne's right back area. In World War Two they used to warn fighter pilots to watch out for the "Hun from the sun" and it would have been an appropriate piece of advice for Messrs Jackson & Moore as the ball emerged from the low December sun which had briefly poked out from behind a cloud. The pair were caught in no man's land allowing a Broxbourne forward to nip in between them to apply the merest of touches. But it was enough.

Despite the setback, the flow was so one directional that Rovers were not unduly concerned and play returned to its previous pattern. But the equaliser just wouldn't come. Then, in the 38th minute, lightning struck twice. Broxbourne broke forward and, when a couple of challenges missed their target, the away side suddenly found themselves in the box with a man over. They were not about to spurn the opportunity and Jacko had no chance. If that was not bad enough, in first half injury time, Broxbourne stole a third from a diving header despite a hint of offside in the build-up.

During the interval there wasn't really much to be said. Rovers had dominated possession and played all the football yet somehow were 3-0 down. Manager Hughes delivered the only sensible instruction he could – keep it up – while the men themselves were equally determined to right the wrong.

If the first half had been a one way street, the second kicked off adding a no u-turns sign. Rovers kept playing their football, kept creating chances and then, within 3 minutes of the restart, reaped their reward when Conor McGovern pulled one back with a spectacular scissor kick from Steve Cokell's excellently delivered centre. The goal was the tangible evidence Rovers required to spur them on, that their football would bring its reward. Then, ten minutes later, Stuart Dorward's well placed header confirmed the comeback was on.

There then followed a period of sustained pressure where only the odd over-hit final ball or intervening Broxbourne toe prevented Rovers from getting in on the 'keeper. It was a truly frustrating sight to behold and, on 73 minutes, salt was rubbed into Rovers' wound of injustice when Broxbourne grabbed a fourth. The goal resulted from an unfortunate spill by goalkeeper Jackson who, until that point, had spent the entire second half endangering the unemployment statistics. As the ball evaded his despairing grasp it was returned with devastating accuracy by a Broxbourne forward.

This could have sucked the wind from Rovers' sails but still they carried the game to the visitors. However, it must be said that the return to a two goal deficit did make the notion of a draw, let alone victory, that bit more fanciful. All in all it had "one of those days" written all over it though the late introduction of Foyso Ahmed and a gung-ho 3-4-3 almost paid immediate dividends as Ahmed's close range shot was deflected wide for yet another corner.

In the final analysis it really was a game of two halves, both of them Rovers'. Every man fought and won his personal battle as evidenced by Manager Hughes' reluctance to deploy the bench men aside from Ahmed. This left the unfortunate Juneka Junior, who this week turned up in footwear more attuned to the conditions than a pair of espadrilles, to kick his heels but not much else. Still, at least the samba man didn't fall over in the process. Meanwhile, on a team level, Rovers had dominated possession to an almost embarrassing degree. But still the boys in jade had lost. And yet they say seeing is believing? Well, I was there, I saw it and I still don't believe it. Rovers 2, Broxbourne Rangers Old Boys 4.