

Sunday 4th February 2007

Mercury Waltham Sunday League Division One Match at Pound Close, Hoddesdon

BROXBOURNE RANGERS OLD BOYS	3	EDMONTON ROVERS	1	HT 0-0
Kargi (60 mins.), Roe (73 mins.), Green (89 mins.)		Vertigans (87 mins.)		

BROXBOURNE RANGERS OLD BOYS' LINE-UP: Graham WIGGS; Andrew PEDLEY, Adam SMITH, Steve DIXON, Jamie DIXON; Danny ROE, Adam GARRETT, Mark WATKINS; John HOCKLEY; Naz KARGI, Danny EAST **Subs. Used:** Gavin ROWLEY, Alan GREEN, James WAGGITT

EDMONTON ROVERS LINE-UP (with Marks out of 10): Tony SPELLER (GK) (6); Paul WOOLSTON (6½), Alan BARNARD (6½), Terry MOORE (6½); Stuart DORWARD (6½), Bobby RANDALL (6½), Peter MURPHY (6½); Derek DORWARD (6½), Nick VERTIGANS (6½); Foysoh AHMED (5½), Steve COKELL (6½)
Sub.: Daniel DALEY (6)

Referee: Gary BAILEY

Weather Conditions: Foggy

Attendance: 12

Factual Report (by Laurence

Hughes): Although this match was almost a relegation six-pointer with both clubs struggling in the lower half of the Division One table, we were not too worried beforehand when key players Conor McGovern, Clark Williams, Danny Hagan and Vernon 'Kizza' Nxumalo all decided to pull out of the squad to protect injuries received in the bruising encounter with Uphire the week before, as Broxbourne Rangers Old Boys had been relatively poor opponents in our previous three meetings with them this season and last, and we felt it was only a matter of time before their luck ran out whatever side we fielded against them.

Unfortunately though, the 16 players we were left with 24 hours before kick-off ended up being reduced to a bare eleven by 10.30.a.m. on the day of the match as Paul

Ellerker had to abandon his attempted comeback after a three-month lay-off because he couldn't find anybody else to volunteer to give a relative a lift to the airport, Gary Cokell made the 'mistake' of playing for Old Minchendenians the day before and subsequently 'couldn't move' afterwards because of cramp, and Tem Adil arranged some last-minute family commitments which may not have been the case had he known the others were dropping out.

On top of that, we then had Daniel Daley nearly end up missing his comeback for the club when having failed to turn up at our Southbury Leisure Centre pre-match meeting point, he answered my phone call saying 'I thought we were meeting there at 9.25.a.m. ?'. 'Er, Dan...it is 9.25.a.m. Actually it's 9.35.a.m. and we're leaving now' was my reply. Fortunately, as Daley lives right next to White Hart Lane Railway Station and we were playing at a venue within walking distance from Rye House Station (on the same line), he was able to get the train and turn up half-way through the First Half of his own accord, so that wasn't too much of a problem.

However, the withdrawal of goalkeeper Darryl Johnson with a 'stomach bug' just 90 minutes before the kick-off was most definitely a problem as we had no chance of calling up any of our other registered goalkeepers at that late stage...not that any of them were actually available...so for the third time since Christmas we had to put an outfield player in goal, with Tony Speller following John Beasley and Gary Cokell in volunteering for the job, mainly because he hadn't played as an outfield player for ages due to fitness problems so he would not have lasted the 90 minutes anyway.

As Speller had played competently enough in goal in a 4-3 win against The Wheatsheaf last season, we were not unduly worried when we kicked off, especially as we were fielding our first-choice back three with Paul Woolston returning after missing the Uphire match the previous week due to family commitments, while



Peter Murphy and Foyso Ahmed were also valued squad members in coming back into the side to replace the absent Mc, Govern, Williams and Hagan.

Indeed we started well and nearly scored in the first minute when Stuart Dorward had a low shot scrambled away from almost on the goal-line with keeper Graham Wiggs appearing to be beaten. However, it then became the usual story in the First Half with us playing the better football and having more possession but rarely looking like scoring. In fact our next best chance of the half was probably right on the Half-Time whistle when a low cross from skipper Dorward flashed across the 6-yard box with Foyso Ahmed and Steve Cokell both just failing to get a touch. Broxbourne Rangers Old Boys came the closest to scoring in the first 45 minutes though when midfielder Mark Watkins struck a fierce left-footed drive against the crossbar from the edge of the area after 10 minutes with Speller well beaten, while Speller also tipped a shot from Danny Roe onto the bar later in the half before doing well to block the rebound with his legs. However, our 'stand-in-goalie' wasn't troubled much apart from those two incidents and the First Half finished scoreless (as usual).

In fact the first few minutes of the Second Half followed much the same pattern as Stuart again went close 5 minutes after the break with a header against the bar from Steve Cokell's corner, but it soon became clear that Broxbourne Rangers Old Boys had changed their formation at Half-Time in order to get the better of the 3-3-2-2 system we were playing in this match, and that left our lone central midfield holding player Bobby Randall rather outnumbered in a role he wasn't used to. That resulted in 'B.R.O.B.s' having a number of clear-cut chances early on in the half from which we somehow managed to escape before they eventually took the lead in the 60th minute when livewire forward Naz Kargi outpaced our defence to easily lob Tony Speller with sweeper Alan Barnard apparently marking somebody in midfield because Bobby was getting over-run in there.

The reason for that...and the subsequent shambolic 30 minutes that followed...was undoubtedly due to Manager Trevor Hughes having to run the line yet again. Unlike other club Manager/Linesmen who shout out tactical instructions to their players and (according to the majority of our players) stick the flag up every time a forward goes clear whether he is offside or not (because they are concentrating on their team's

performance instead), Trevor point-blank refuses to 'cheat' like that (for want of a better word).

That resulted in the numerous players who don't agree with his tactics (when we are losing!) just doing their own thing for the rest of the match, while others just waited (in vain) for Trevor to give them instructions. At least he managed to find a convenient break in play to bring on Daniel Daley up front after 63 minutes for the disappointing Foyso Ahmed, Daley being the 28th player we have used this season when most other teams in our Division have a regular squad of only 15 players....this undoubtedly being another major factor in our slide towards the bottom of the table.

Daley didn't have much of a chance to impress though, as Broxbourne Rangers Old Boys, who were apparently fielding 'by far the strongest side they have put out so far this season', made it 2-0 in the 73rd

minute through Danny Roe after a comical piece of defending by Paul Woolston, Tony Speller (and others?), and that saw them sit back, defend deep and hit us on the break after that...these being the sort of tactics we maybe should have been employing to get the most out of Daley's pace.

They then made a triple substitution straight after that goal by bringing on three more good players while of course we had nobody. That smacked of them saying 'game over' and they were right. In fact they rather started 'taking the piss' a bit after that as they sensed we had a weak side out and that our teamwork was all over the place. However, Nick Vertigans made them pay for squandering a number of chances from over-elaborating in front of goal when he pulled a goal back in the 87th minute with a fierce drive through keeper Wiggs' hands and into the roof of the net from the edge of the area, but as we threw players forward to try and grab an undeserved equaliser, we were predictably caught on the break two minutes later and substitute Alan Green was able to score his usual goal against us with a simple tap-in to make it 3-1 with Tony Speller left floundering in the mud and Alan Barnard the only player back in our half defending as the rest of our players watched from the half-way line.

When the final whistle went shortly afterwards, the fog that had been present all game suddenly lifted, but the gloom was still there for us, especially down the Pub where only five of us were present to have a moan about Trevor's Management, while Trevor himself refused to come down there partly because of that.





As I predicted at the start of the Season, this Club Linesman problem just will not go away, and Trevor insists that he **would** be prepared to change his tactics to those the players want (at least to some extent) if he didn't have to run the line for the majority of our matches.

The options are therefore:

- a) If we have no substitutes for a particular match who are capable of running the line, I will have to do it and the match is not filmed.
- b) Paul Woolston retires from playing and becomes Manager. (Although he says he is not interested in that).
- c) Does Danny Hagan's Dad want to run the line for a fiver? (He comes and watches every match Danny plays in).

d) Trevor 'cheats' while running the line (like 'everybody else').

e) Any other ideas? (I doubt it).

After this debacle, it will be a minor miracle if we manage to beat Upshire in next week's League Senior Cup Quarter-Final...unless we find a Club Linesman and our players get behind the Manager and do as he says for a change!

'Murf's Alternative Report !!: Rovers travelled to Broxbourne to take on Rangers Old Boys with a squad depleted by illness, injury and more players resting than an actor's guild XI. Overnight Darryl Johnson had gone down with a touch of the lasagnes while Danny Hagan was ruled out through injury. Collecting their equity cards ahead of next week's cup match with Upshires were Messrs McGovern, Williams and Nxumalo. Not for the first time this season, Rovers were thus left without a recognised 'keeper though when Tony Speller walked through the door, Manager Hughes immediately thought, "I recognise a 'keeper" and Spells duly obliged.

With the gloves taken care off, Manager Hughes then went about the dressing room issuing confidence boosters such as reminding Steve Cokell that, in the corresponding fixture last season he'd missed a last minute penalty thereby denying Rovers three points and himself a hat trick. It was around this time that Foysool Ahmed suddenly scarpered. Was he hoping to avoid his personal pep talk from the manager? No, the driving instructor had suddenly remembered he'd left his handbrake off.

On a tacky pitch, referee Gary Bailey got the proceedings underway and those proceedings proceeded to take on a familiar pattern. Rovers were out of the traps early and, despite the conditions, passed the ball around well. However, unlike some recent encounters, there were not too many chances spurned. The midfield prodded and probed and, while Steve Cokell held the ball up superbly, strike partner Foysool Ahmed struggled to turn his supersub form into that of a 90 minute man. Despite dominating possession, quality was too often lacking in the final third and, by half-time, the home side had come closest even though they ended it at each others throats after 45 minutes' frustrated ball chasing.

In the break, the Manager and his Assistant crossed swords, each having his two penn'orth though, in the main, they agreed. I think. The certain consensus was that the team were again playing well and it was with a sense of frustration that, once again, this superiority had not been converted into a lead. Anyhow, the upshot of the discussion was a first for football at this and, one suspects, any level. The tactics were changed to assist the assistant referee. Fulfilling the role due to a lack of substitutes, Manager Hughes, despite amputating the Francis Rossi ponytail he's recently been sporting, had spent the first period rockin' all over the world, or at least the touchline, as his inappropriate soul shoes simply didn't cut it in the conditions. Unable to keep up whenever Rovers defence were turned, the Manager felt they needed to lie ten yards deeper to remedy. The argument that it would also draw out Rangers from their own deep lying position allowing Rovers in behind was purely secondary.

Once again, Rovers looked forward to a 2nd half with confidence. And, once again, it was misplaced. After Stuart Dorward's header had ricocheted off the bar, Terry Moore made his way into old Bailey's notebook and, on the hour, Rangers took the lead. A long ball over the top allowed Broxbourne's Roadrunner of a forward to make a Wile E. Coyote out of Terry Moore and a Tim Henman out of Tony Speller with a well executed lob. With the story looking familiar, Manager Hughes played his card, replacing Foysool Ahmed with the lately re-signed and late arriving Daniel Daley. Daley applied himself well though, understandably, seemed to be on a different wavelength to most of his team-mates.

And so, huff and puff as they did, Rovers simply could not reproduce their form of the first half. Then, on 73 minutes, Rangers grabbed a second courtesy of some comic book defending. Initially there seemed to be no danger as Murf threw the ball inside for a half volleyed clearance but Wooly's air shot, still causing cross winds down Rye Park way, served only to spin the ball perilously into Rovers' box. There then occurred two or three further chances to clear either side of a Speller spill. The ball was as near as in his arms, looking forward to a right good cuddle. All he needed to do was gather it after the bounce. But that was to trust the pitch. What a mistake. The ball moved off the seam, or more likely one of the numerous mounds of canine excreta, and suddenly Speller was in no-man's land. Another couple of ineffective thrashes later and the ball arrived at the feet of a Broxbourne midfielder who dispatched a well struck shot beyond the despairing stand-in 'keeper. Game over. Or so we thought. But, with three minutes remaining, Nick Vertigans went on a mazy run before delivering a thunderous shot from 25 yards. It was a hammer blow to Rangers but no less so to Rovers. For it gave them hope. And there's no crueller hope than that of falsehood. Within two minutes and with Rovers throwing men forward, Rangers broke two against one and,

despite Alan Barnard's heroic, lung busting attempts to get back on terms, they made the game safe.

TREVOR HUGHES'S MANAGER'S REPORT

This week's early morning text message was from goalkeeper Darryl Johnson who was sick due to something he ate. He really should stick to drinking alcohol like other Sunday morning footballers. We arrived with a bare eleven and Tony Speller volunteered for the goalkeeping duties on the basis that he was not fit enough to last 90 minutes as an outfield player. The first half ended 0-0 yet again with possession fairly even, Rovers arguably playing the better football but Broxbourne hitting the bar twice from their chances. At half time I was more concerned about my lack of fitness as linesman and urged our defence to sit deeper and as usual the first goal was scored with our defence high up the pitch, a long ball over the top to a forward who outpaced Terry Moore to lob over Tony Speller into the net. So many of our games this season have been close and the first goal is often crucial. Daniel Daley, returning to the club, had arrived to come on as a substitute up front but as we pushed forward Broxbourne scored their second with a well struck shot from a half chance. Despite lots of possession we failed to create many chances but Nick Vertigans scored from a long range effort with three minutes to go. Unfortunately, as we pushed forward Alan Barnard was left two against one in the last minute and a third goal sent us to a 3-1 defeat. We can now look forward to a vital Cup Quarter Final next week against Upshire which we must win to avoid leaving us with just a relegation battle for the rest of the season.