

Sunday 14th February 2010

Waltham Sunday League Division One Match at Hazelwood Sports Ground

EDMONTON ROVERS	5	CHESHUNT (SUNDAY)	1	HT 3-1
Dorward (12, 89 mins.), R. Brown (27 mins.), Cokell (45, 91 mins.)		Agapiou (19 mins.)		

EDMONTON ROVERS LINE-UP (with Marks out of 10): Simon JACKSON (GK) (6½); Terry MOORE (8), Alan BARNARD (8), Martin LOVEDAY (7½); Tony KING (6½), Rob BROWN (6½), Danny HAGAN (7½), Vernon NXUMALO (6½); Stuart DORWARD (7), Terry BROWN (8); Steve COKELL (7) Subs.: Darryl JOHNSON (On for R. Brown 56 mins) (6)

CHESHUNT (SUNDAY)'S LINE-UP: Adam MARSH (GK); Chris HEATON, Andy AGAPIOU, Andy HUNT, Tony WEBB; Jason BAYFORD, Robert DEARIE, Michael CUMNER-PRICE, Danny BRADFORD; Mark SUMMERS, Steve SUMMERS Subs.: None

Referee: Eddie ANDREWS

Weather Conditions: Cloudy and Cold

Attendance: 5

Report (by Laurence Hughes): During the week leading up to this fixture, we had a major inquest privately by e-mail regarding too many players having work & family commitments and therefore not having the time to keep themselves fit when we have numerous games called off, while also of concern was the possible retirement of various 'stalwarts' for that reason at the end of this season, the disillusionment of others following our London Cup defeat to Yavruvatan, and our woeful performance against St. Margaretsbury in our last match. However, a glance at [our results](#) since the 1st November (when we were humiliated 7-1 by Cheshunt Corinthians) actually showed that we had only lost once in five matches coming into this game, and in Division One, we were actually unbeaten in five matches and had not lost since mid-September, so maybe things were not quite so bad as it seemed! With the date of this match being Valentines Day though, there was always a strong possibility of us fielding a 'scratch' side, and sure enough we were left with just 12 players (including two goalkeepers) when Kris Spyrou dropped out at the last minute with the stomach bug that other players had the week before and Daniel Daley simply failed to turn up despite texting at 10.00 a.m. to say that he was on his way! With Conor McGovern, Paul Woolston, Jim Arrowsmith and Danny Smith all unavailable for various reasons we were certainly missing a few key players, but Spyrou's absence was frustrating as Manager Trevor Hughes was intending putting him in the starting line-up for his big chance at last...and in his favoured right-midfield position with Tony King switching to the left. Fortunately though, Vernon 'Kizza' Nxumalo and Terry Brown were both available to make rare appearances, so we were still fielding a very strong starting line-up with Steve Cokell moved up front to arguably his best position as a lone forward with Terry Brown and skipper Stuart Dorward in attacking midfield roles behind him as we went with the clever 3-4-2-1 formation that worked really well in our wins against Great Eastern and Nacional De Londres. That saw us dominate the first 15 minutes or so as Cheshunt's players didn't seem to have a clue what we were doing, but as usual we squandered several chances with weak shooting, and even our opening goal in the 12th minute was an example of that as Kizza and Terry Brown both mis-kicked attempted shots horribly until Stuart Dorward scrambled the ball in for a really scrappy goal.

Cheshunt (Sunday) were actually fielding a strong side themselves though as they turned up with a bare eleven this time instead of the nine they had the week before! Amazingly though, they still beat Premier Division side Wormley Rovers 3-1 in a Cup match with those nine, and despite still lying bottom of the Division One table because of a bad start to the season, they had in fact won 7 out of their last 8 matches in all competitions with their only defeat being a narrow (by our standards!) 3-1 loss to Cheshunt Corinthians!

We therefore couldn't afford to gift them anything, but for the second week in a row, that's what keeper Simon Jackson did when he misjudged a deep free-kick and allowed defender Andy Agapiou to equalise in the 19th minute with a far post volley. Like all our outfield players though, it was more a case of a lack of match practice than anything else and Jacko didn't let that affect him, thereby improving as the game went on. We had a bit of a problem in the 26th minute though when key central midfielder Rob Brown injured himself in making a typically fierce challenge and with Daniel Daley still supposedly 'on his way', we had no option but to stick Rob up in attack to limp about alongside Steve Cokell and drop his brother Terry back into a defensive midfield position alongside Danny Hagan, thereby switching to a slightly different 3-4-1-2 formation. Amazingly though, Rob actually put us 2-1 ahead just seconds later when he tried his luck with a first-time shot from the edge of the area which scuffed along the ground and bobbled underneath the dive of Cheshunt keeper Adam Marsh...in exactly the same spot that Jacko let in an almost identical silly goal the week before!

Unfortunately though, Stuart Dorward then also injured himself after about 30 minutes and we therefore had to play the rest of the First Half with two passengers. That saw Cheshunt start to dominate and we had a number of lucky escapes because of bad finishing and a good save by Jacko with his legs, while several of our players (and especially sweeper Alan Barnard) frantically shouted at Lino Trevor Hughes and Cameraman Laurence Hughes to stop flagging and filming and phone Daley (and/or several others...NOW!). Not that we did of course, but Steve Cokell took the pressure off by putting us 3-1 up on the stroke of Half-Time with an excellent finish after running on to a quality through ball from the impressive Terry Brown.

That boost to our fortunes saw Rob Brown and Stuart Dorward's injuries miraculously heal to some extent during the half-time break and they were both able to start the Second Half at roughly 80% fitness, but Rob had to succumb eventually and with still no sign of Daley turning up, goalkeeper Darryl Johnson had to be brought on as an outfield player in the 56th minute, much to the amusement of those of our younger players who had never seen him play anywhere else other than in goal. Darryl actually played as a first-choice central defender for The Beehive against us back in the late-90's, but this time he was put up front alongside his ex-Beehive team-mate Steve Cokell and he did well in putting his foot on the ball and keeping possession with simple passes. However, some of our normal outfield players were not so good in that respect as they were giving the ball away in trying too much 'eye of the needle' stuff, while Vernon 'Kizza' Nxumalo (who is normally a forward) was having to learn the defensive side of his game very quickly as Cheshunt had a very useful right-sided midfielder who was one of several new signings this season who had not played against us before. However, our back three of Alan Barnard, Terry Moore and Martin Loveday defended absolutely superbly as Cheshunt threw more and more players forward as the Second Half went on, and we eventually took advantage of that by punishing them twice on the break in the final minutes as Stuart Dorward made it 4-1 with a close-range finish after an excellent move which could well be a Goal Of The Season contender, then Steve Cokell also scored his second of the game to make it 5-1 in Injury Time with a thumping left-footed finish from 12 yards that gave keeper Marsh no chance.

After all the worry during the week of how we were going to find new players to field a team next season, this victory certainly gave us a boost and will hopefully persuade one or two players that we are not as bad as it seems and that it is worthwhile them getting out of bed on a Sunday morning to play a bit more often.

Indeed a win against leaders East Herts in our next match would even put us in contention (with several others) to win the Division One title! I say let's go for it...and we worry about the strength of our squad for the Premier Division when we get there.



TREVOR HUGHES'S MANAGER'S REPORT

Although the only player missing as a result of Valentine's Day was Conor McGovern we still only managed a bare eleven for our fixture against Cheshunt (Sunday). Our opponents had been on good form in recent weeks despite being bottom of the table but they also only fielded a bare eleven. We started the stronger and Stuart Dorward gave us the lead after 12 minutes when he latched onto a loose ball following miskicks by Vernon 'Kizza' Nxumalo and Terry Brown. Cheshunt equalised after 19 minutes from their first chance of the match with a far post volley following a free kick. Central midfielder Rob Brown sustained an injury so I had to rearrange our formation and decided to put Rob up front with his brother Terry replacing him in the middle. The change had an immediate effect when Rob scored with his next touch firing in a low shot from the edge of the area. Cheshunt began to put us under pressure before half time as they pushed forward for an equaliser but a superb pass by Terry set up Steve Cokell to make it

3-1 just before half time. Our substitute goalkeeper, Darryl Johnson, replaced Rob in the second half for a rare appearance up front. Although we did not play as well going forward in the second half, we defended excellently to restrict Cheshunt to mainly long range shots as they pushed forward. Alan Barnard, Terry Moore and Martin Loveday were all excellent for us in defence. Stuart Dorward scored his second goal in the 89th minute to secure the points and Steve Cokell also got a second goal in injury time to seal an impressive 5-1 win.