

Sunday 7th November 2004

London F.A. Sunday Challenge Cup Second Round Match at the Westminster City School Sports Ground, Mitcham, Surrey

DEES	5	EDMONTON ROVERS	1	HT 1-1
Mc,Gregor (10 mins.), Smith (58 mins.), Coates (Own Goal) (69 mins), Boxhill (80 mins.), Cole (88 mins.)		Mc,Kenzie-Mc,Kay (24 mins.)		

DEES' LINE-UP: David NEEDHAM; Richard HUNTER, Kemar PERRIN, Steve MARK, Mohammed SHIVJI; Leon SMITH, Francis COLE, Damien BOXHILL, Augustin CAMARA; Andy Mc,GREGOR, Marvin Mc,CLEAN **Subs.:** Ashley Mc,DONALD, Dean DOUGLAS, Andrew EDWARDS

EDMONTON ROVERS LINE-UP (with Marks out of 10): Adrian COATES (GK) (6½); Chidi IBEKWEM (6), Stuart DORWARD (6½), Paul WOOLSTON (6), Daniel CASCOE (6); Leon Mc,KENZIE-Mc,KAY (7), Derek DORWARD (6½), Paul ELLERKER (7), Eric IBEKWEM (6½), Kevin DEDMAN (6); Conor Mc,GOVERN (7) **Sub.:** Daniel DALEY (5½)

Referee: Ronald ALBERT Assistant Referees: Graham BENBOW & Orville BENTLEY	Weather Conditions: Cloudy. No Wind.	Attendance: 27
---	---	-----------------------



Report (by Laurence Hughes): Having put ourselves out of contention for any Mercury Waltham League honours this season already (apart from the Roy Bailey Challenge Cup, which we are yet to play in), we informed our players that this was our most important match of the season so far and to try and make an effort to play, despite it being a really awkward journey to Mitcham in Surrey. As usual though, we ended up scraping up a severely weakened side at the last minute due to Jon Ellis-Browne, Adam Stock, Gary Cokell and John Beasley all pulling out for a variety of reasons (mainly long-distance travelling related), while Robin Pryke and Darryl Johnson were still unavailable and the likes of Gary Adamson and Treasure MacCarthy were still not answering their

phones for some reason. With Simon Jackson also not having made any contact since saying 'That's it, I'm finished' (or words to that effect) after our disastrous performance in losing 5-3 at Home to bottom of the table Northmet (Riverside) the previous week, Conor Mc,Govern's work colleague Adrian Coates was brought in for his Rovers debut in goal, while my late decision on Saturday evening to chase up Chidi Ibekwem, Daniel Cascoe and Daniel Daley to play (when Trevor Hughes wasn't going to bother !) proved to be the right one when Gary Cokell and John Beasley both pulled out on the morning of the match. (We would have only been fielding 10 men including myself otherwise, as Tony Speller had declared that he could only play for the Reserves as they were at Home and he had arranged some family commitments for the afternoon...This being exactly what we were telling our players well in advance **not** to do, but then Speller is supposed to be Reserve Team Captain anyway, so we can't really complain !). Once it had been sorted out who exactly was going to play, it was then a matter of finding the best route to get to Mitcham. Kevin Dedman decided to go from Cheshunt via the M25 and back up the M23 and seemed to do it in about 35 minutes (as promised !). This even gave him and his passengers Leon Mc,Kenzie-Mc,Kay and Daniel Cascoe time for breakfast when they got there in what they thought was a MacDonald's, but which turned out to be a Wimpy !? Myself and Trevor Hughes also arrived at the venue in plenty of time with our various passengers, as did Adrian Coates and the Ibekwem brothers of their own accord, but Conor Mc,Govern and

the Dorwards all seemed to think it would take less than an hour to get to Mitcham from Enfield and ended up getting there just 10 minutes before the designated 11.00.a.m. kick-off. With none of their mobile phones working for some reason and the match officials getting impatient, we were getting a bit worried before they arrived, but we were still missing Paul Woolston, who had been to an all-night party (hob-nobbing with various professional footballers !) and phoned to say he was on his way after getting home at 6.00.a.m. !

Fortunately though, Referee Ronald Albert and his two assistants had by now locked themselves in the changing rooms and seemingly thrown away the key as they didn't appear on the pitch until 11.10.a.m., meaning the game kicked off just as Wooly was sprinting on, having relieved himself in the bushes behind Adrian Coates' goal while Mr. Albert was counting the players on both sides ! (He actually mis-counted and blew the whistle to start the game before Wooly had crossed the white line, then had to re-start the game when it was pointed out to him...this all being captured on video for the 'Out-Takes' of course !)

Of course our opponents Dees, a mainly Jamaican team from the Premier Division of the very strong 11-Division ! Morden Sunday League, fielded a full squad of players from the Combined Counties League on Saturdays (South London's equivalent of the Spartan South Midlands League/lower Divisions of the Ryman League, a standard in which only three of *our* players in this match had played).

That saw us nearly concede a silly goal after just 30 seconds when despite Manager Trevor Hughes telling everybody to play 4-5-1, defend deep and for our defenders not to 'bomb forward willy-nilly' all the time, Stuart Dorward decided to go on a run straight out of defence straight away, only to lose possession to a midfielder, whose through ball was then cut out by Paul Woolston, who then gave the ball straight back to them because he was so pissed ! Stuart though, didn't seem to think Wooly would do such a thing and didn't bother to get back into the sweeper's position, leaving forward Andy McGregor clean through on goal to produce a bad miss as Adrian Coates came off his line towards him.

Unfortunately the trend then continued for the rest of the match, especially with our full-backs Chidi Ibekwem and Daniel Cascoe both being natural attacking players and not the best at covering and marking...but then we had no other options as usual.

It was therefore no surprise that Dees took the lead after only 9 minutes when McGregor volleyed in from 12 yards after being teed up by an 'ungainly sliced backwards defensive mis-kicked clearance' by Chidi Ibekwem, but that was the only goal they managed in the First Half thanks to some comical finishing in which they squandered numerous clear-cut chances, while they also kept getting themselves needlessly caught offside, even though we were not actually trying to play the offside trap this time ! (This appeared to be because they never come up against defenders in their own League who are quite so slow, unfit and disorganised and were therefore anticipating some sort of equal sprint challenge in racing through on goal, even though they were all 'lightning' quick themselves !).

Although Dees had some very good individual players though, they were nowhere near as well-organised defensively as teams in the Premier Division of *our* League and they clearly had problems dealing with our 4-5-1 formation and our lone centre-forward Conor McGovern, together with the movement off him of Leon McKenzie-McKay and Derek Dorward. That resulted in us having quite a few chances ourselves in the First Half and when Leon equalised after 24 minutes with a well-struck shot from just inside the area after running onto Paul Ellerker's through ball, it was well-deserved and when we came off at Half-Time on level terms, we thought there may have been a possibility of nicking a result if we could somehow tighten up at the back (and if Wooly could sober up quickly enough !).

With only forward Daniel Daley as our lone substitute though, there was no real chance of that, while Conor McGovern had now been forced into midfield because he had been getting kicked black and blue by Dees' uncompromising defenders, therefore leaving Derek Dorward to potentially suffer the same treatment for the Second Half...much to everyone's amusement during the Half-Time team talk.

Ironically, McGovern then had to be substituted anyway after just 9 minutes of the Second Half after a clash of heads in defending a corner which left him requiring six stitches afterwards, this no doubt being because he was wearing Paul Woolston's No.4 shirt as Wooly had turned up too late to claim it, while Kevin Dedman had got to the ground first to claim Conor's usual No.10 shirt !

With Daniel Daley having announced before the game that he was actually a midfielder and not a forward (after all these matches where we had been playing him up front !), we therefore continued with Derek Dorward up front in a 4-5-1 formation with Daley on the right of midfield, but with McGovern off the pitch our hopes had all but ended as we needed his extra strength and experience out there.



Not surprisingly, Dees then regained the lead just 4 minutes later when right-sided midfielder Leon Smith slammed in the rebound after Adrian Coates had made a good save from his initial shot in another one-on-one situation, but we actually had a chance to equalise again shortly afterwards when a good move saw Derek Dorward round keeper David Needham and get in a fiercely-struck goalbound shot, only to see it headed off the line by defender Kemar Perrin. That turned out to be our only clear-cut chance of the half though, and it gradually became just a matter of how many Dees would win by.

Their inevitable third goal came in the 69th minute, but we were really unlucky

with that one as our zonal marking system from corners worked to some effect with Eric Ibekwem being on one of the posts to block a header from a corner, but the ball then hit the unsuspecting Adrian Coates on the heel and went backwards into the net for a freak own goal !

We then started giving up after that with no more substitutes to bring on and Daniel Cascoe and Paul Woolston had nightmares in the last 20 minutes as a result of their respective late night outs, with both of them absolutely knackered and hardly able to move. This gave Dees' skilful forwards and attacking midfielders plenty of opportunities to give them both a 'fearful roasting' which was extremely embarrassing for us in a competition which is supposed to be for the best Sunday clubs in London, and indeed after Damien Boxhill had made it 4-1 with an unopposed solo run straight through our defence in the 80th minute and then when Francis Cole added a 5th eight minutes later, the numerous home supporters on the touchline next to the camera were in hysterics, with comments being uttered such as 'What are **this** lot doing in the **Senior** Cup ?' and 'Is there something **wrong** with that No.5 ? (i.e. Wooly) / No.2 ? (Cascoe), particularly after Cole's goal when all our defenders literally stood like statues in their own penalty area and allowed him to chest the ball up in the air, mis-time an attempted header up in the air and then mis-cue his next attempt into the bottom corner !

In fairness, the supporters making those comments hadn't seen the whole match and missed us giving Dees a good run for their money in the First Half, but once again we couldn't compete for 90 minutes because of a lack of substitutes and having too many key players missing (or having temporarily 'left' the club).

In the end we were lucky that referee Albert actually blew the Final Whistle five minutes early in sympathy, as it could have been a lot worse !

Despite still being pissed, Wooly made a sensible comment afterwards by suggesting that after this latest embarrassment, we might have to drop one of our teams out of the League soon and just run the one side for the rest of the season, as too many of our 52 registered players obviously now have other priorities and can only play once every three or four weeks on average. It is something that will definitely have to be looked at, as we cannot continue to have the First Team reduced to a laughing stock.