

Sunday 13th September 2009

Waltham Sunday League Division One Match at Hazelwood Sports Ground

EDMONTON ROVERS	0	EAST HERTS	4	HT 0-1
		McCall (44, 47, 76 mins.), Woolston (Own Goal) (48 mins.)		

EDMONTON ROVERS LINE-UP (with Marks out of 10): Simon JACKSON (GK) (6); Terry MOORE (6½); Alan BARNARD (6½); Paul WOOLSTON (6); Tony KING (6½); Rob BROWN (6½); Danny HAGAN (6½); Danny SMITH (6½); Scott JENKINS (6½); Conor MCGOVERN (7); Steve COKELL (6½) **Subs.:** Darryl JOHNSON (GK) (On for Jackson 66 mins) (6); Tem ADIL (On for King 74 mins.) (6); Martin LOVEDAY (On for Woolston 78 mins.) (6)

EAST HERTS' LINE-UP: Dave BELFORD; Liam COXALL, James COSLETT, Dean SMITH, Robert BLACKSHAW; Luke MAY, Ronnie HOWARD, Tony PALGRAVE, Zak BARBER; Rob DENNETT, Stuart McCALL **Sub.:** Gavin KIRBY (On for Barber 2nd Half)

Referee: Simon DRINKWATER

Weather Conditions: Cool & Cloudy

Attendance: 13

Report (by Laurence Hughes): We only played East Herts once last season due to the 'infamous' occasion where the Referee somehow deemed their pitch playable when it was frozen solid and we therefore conceded the match...much to East Herts' disgust. We then annoyed them even more by beating them 3-2 at Hazelwood in a midweek match when we had numerous first-choice players missing, thereby putting a severe dent in their Division One title hopes. (They finished third in the end). Not surprisingly then, they were well fired up for this game and were out on the pitch warming up before any of our players had arrived (except for Terry Moore, who was helping me put the nets up as usual). At least we didn't have the debacle of the previous week when most of our players turned up just before the kick-off though, and in fact this game even kicked off four minutes early because both teams were so keen to get on with it. Indeed it would have kicked off even earlier if East Herts had not turned up in a very dark blue and black kit which forced Referee Simon Drinkwater into changing into his spare red top after complaints from some of our players. We were probably lucky that the Referee was not one or two others we have had in recent seasons who have brought a jade spare top along (a la Premiership), meaning the game might have been postponed if they had been appointed !?

With five extremely competitive players back in our line-up for this game in the shape of defender Paul Woolston and midfielders Danny Hagan, Rob Brown, Danny Smith and Scott Jenkins, not surprisingly the fierce challenges and verbals were evident straight away, but Referee Drinkwater did an excellent job in controlling it and the game flowed really well. However, he did upset some of our players by turning down a couple of apparently 'clear' penalty appeals in the First Half for handball by East Herts defenders, while we also had no luck at all in front of goal in the first 45 minutes after creating by far the better chances, with Steve Cokell and Paul Woolston both heading wide when it was easier to score and Scott Jenkins forcing an excellent save from keeper Dave Belford after our best move of the match just before Half-Time. Unfortunately though, the rebound from that save was quickly cleared downfield where Paul Woolston was caught in possession by a much quicker, younger and fitter Stuart McCall, who raced away to beat Simon Jackson with a clinical finish in a one-on-one to give his side a totally undeserved 1-0 lead at the break.

That was a real kick in the teeth after we had played so much better than the previous week, but it got worse just two minutes into the Second Half when Wooly decided not to hoof the ball into 'Row Z' and keep it in play, thereby allowing McCall to catch him in possession and run on to hit an absolute screamer into the top corner from 25 yards, this being an even better goal than the one scored against us the week before by Enfield Royals' Matt Hoskins. Although we couldn't do much about that, we really gifted East Herts a third goal just 30 seconds later when Jacko called too late to come and claim an overhit through ball, by which time Wooly had already chested it back towards him and the ball trickled agonisingly into the empty net, with McCall racing in claiming to have got a touch before it crossed the line, although for the time being it is going down as a 'Paul Woolston Own Goal' on the say-so of our players who were nearest to the incident. (The video is inconclusive).

Ironically, Wooly had actually played as well as anybody but been punished for three mistakes, whereas we continued to look a bit toothless in our finishing and lacking a bit of pace and sharpness up there with Daniel Daley and Stuart Dorward both out with ankle injuries and Vernon 'Kizza' Nxumalo preferring to work so that he can eventually afford to pay his £38 subs owed.

Of course East Herts then really raised their game for the rest of the Second Half by being more competitive in midfield and tightening up considerably at the back, and with no attacking options on our bench, we knew we had already lost the game and it was just a case of playing for pride. Most of the Second Half was then a bit of a midfield stalemate with neither side really creating much, but East Herts then really killed us off with a fourth goal in the 76th minute when McCall completed his hat-trick with another really emphatic finish after we had been left outnumbered at the back, although by that time it was Darryl Johnson who couldn't stop the shot as Jacko had limped off 10 minutes earlier with a groin strain, which he appeared to do in mis-hitting a goal-kick?

We had deserved a goal ourselves though, but we had no luck again as the game drifted into Injury Time when Conor McGovern (who had worked tirelessly up front and been our best player in this match) hit the bar with a header from Danny Smith's free-kick and Danny Hagan and substitute Martin Loveday both missed great chances to grab a consolation goal from the rebound.

In the end then, it was almost an exact replica of our 4-0 defeat to Great Eastern last season when we outplayed our opponents for the First Half especially and should have won the game, and also the same as last season in losing our first two competitive matches 4-0 and 4-2. During the Summer we have been determined to be a bit more consistent and field more of a settled side, but unfortunately once again, injuries and other commitments are already putting a stop to that and it looks like yet another season of lower/mid-table mediocrity unless our luck starts changing soon.



TREVOR HUGHES'S MANAGER'S REPORT

After losing our first league match against a very good Enfield Royals side we faced another potentially tough game against East Herts. We were strengthened by the return to midfield of Rob Brown, Danny Hagan and Scott Jenkins along with new signing Danny Smith but we were missing captain Stuart Dorward and forward Daniel Daley with injuries. We started the first half well with lots of possession and we were unlucky with two penalty appeals for handball. The first one was not given as it was deemed 'ball to hand' by the referee and the second one was not given because the referee could not see it even though he said he 'heard it'. We also created plenty of chances with Steve Cokell and Paul Woolston both heading wide when unmarked. Our best move of the half was just before half time when Scott Jenkins was denied by an excellent save but the ball was immediately launched upfield and a mistake on the half way line by Wooly allowed the East Herts forward to run clear and score with probably their first shot on target. At half time we were confident of a comeback as we had so much possession but we conceded a second goal just two minutes into the second half when a fierce drive into the

top corner gave Simon Jackson no chance. Incredibly, a minute later a long ball was chested back by Wooly but Jacko had come off his line calling for the ball and it rolled agonisingly into the net to make it 3-0. Jacko then pulled his groin but fortunately we had a substitute keeper and Darryl Johnson came on in goal. We continued to push forward but were caught on the break again to go 4-0 down. It just wasn't our day and even in the last minute Conor McGovern's header hit the bar and both Danny Hagan and Martin Loveday missed chances from the rebound.