

Sunday 5th October 2003

Mercury Waltham Sunday League (Premier Division) Match at Hazelwood Sports Ground

EDMONTON ROVERS

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ENFIELD RANGERS OLD BOYS

1

HT 0-1

D.Dorward (86 mins.)

Leadbetter (45 mins.)

Edmonton Rovers Line-Up (with Marks out of 10): Darryl JOHNSON (GK) (7½); Robin PRYKE (7), Tony SPELLER (7), Paul WOOLSTON (7), John BEASLEY (6½); Leon Mc,KENZIE-Mc,KAY (6½), Derek DORWARD (7), Paul ELLERKER (7½), Stuart DORWARD (6½), Eric IBEKWEM (6½); Steve COKELL (7) **Sub.:** Lexton HARRISON (6½)

Enfield Rangers Old Boys Line-Up: Ian MITCHELL (GK); Dave TOWNSEND Jnr., Matt KEOWN, Dylan Mc,DONAGH, Paul CANAVAN; Byron HARPER, Gavin BIGNALL, Luke SWIFT, Jackson GASH; Levi WILLIS, Andy LEADBETTER **Subs.:** None

Referee: Ian ANDREWS

Weather Conditions: Sunny, but Cold

Attendance: 15



Report: Last season we managed to beat Enfield Rangers Old Boys 3-0 on both occasions in our Premier Division meetings with them, which were very impressive results compared to what other teams in the Division managed. In the second of those matches (at Enfield Playing Fields), Enfield Rangers Old Boys fielded a very strong side whereas we had a number of key players missing, so with the likes of Marco Ellerker, Chris 'Nugget' Beeden & Peter Sutton (amongst others) all unavailable again for *this* match, we were hoping that history would repeat itself in terms of other players coming in and playing better than expected.

However, on this occasion Enfield Rangers Old Boys put out an even stronger side, even though they played the first 20 minutes with only 10 men until midfielder Byron Harper arrived. They also had the advantage of having played every week so far this season...in stark contrast to us !...and they came into this game top of the table after two wins and two draws in their first four matches, including a 2-1 victory against last season's Champions

Percival.

As usual though, we had to deal with the disappointment of hearing just 30 minutes before kick-off that last season's Player Of The Year Marco Ellerker was once again unavailable (this time due to Family Commitments)...the reason for us not finding out *earlier* being down to Marco leaving a message on Manager Trevor Hughes's answerphone earlier in the week, not realising that Trevor was in fact on Holiday in Las Vegas and therefore missing this match !

That saw Leon Mc,Kenzie-Mc,Kay named in the starting line-up by stand-in Manager Russell Beeden, while Gary Cokell was named as one of only two substitutes (having signed up during the week...at last), our other intended substitute being Barry Matthews, who pulled out on Saturday night due to work commitments. With skipper Stuart Dorward returning after two months out with a rib injury though, our starting line-up was very evenly matched with Enfield Rangers Old Boys in terms of ability, but where *we* were missing key *midfielders*, *they* were missing two or three first-choice *defenders*, so that resulted in us having twice as many shots at goal in the First Half as we managed in 120 minutes in our last match against Northmet (Riverside) ! In fact even Robin Pryke had three efforts at goal which could have resulted in him getting on the scoresheet for only the second time in 114 appearances, but Enfield Rangers Old Boys also created chances and, frustratingly for us, made one of them count right on the Half-Time whistle when Andy Leadbetter fired home from 12 yards after a good run through our defence by Levi Willis.

That was the first real sign that Enfield Rangers Old Boys were just that bit sharper than us in terms of match fitness and teamwork and the Second Half saw that confirmed as they had long spells of possession in midfield as Stuart Dorward tired (understandably) and Leon Mc,Kenzie-Mc,Kay and Eric Ibekwem struggled to create anything from wide positions.

However, we looked very solid defensively as usual, while Darryl Johnson looked very confident in goal with a couple of good saves and some easy handling of fiercely-driven long-range shots which could well have troubled most other Sunday League 'keepers. That kept us in the match then, especially when Lexton Harrison was brought on in the 69th minute to give us a more attacking 4-4-2 line-up, but when Derek Dorward managed to equalise by tapping in Steve Cokell's low cross at the far post in the 86th minute it came totally out of the blue as we hadn't looked like scoring at all up until that stage. However, it was good to 'nick' a point by punishing a sudden lapse in concentration by our opponents for once instead of the same thing happening to *us*, but it was clear from this performance that we are not going to win anything this season unless we get some of our more creative midfield players back as soon as possible...even just *one* of them might be enough !?

Despite preserving our three-year long record of not having lost a League match at Hazelwood...by just 4 minutes !, we still ended up losing yet another £50.00 Nike Match ball when it seemed to just 'vanish into thin air' on the Final Whistle !!