

Sunday 15th March 2009

Mercury Waltham Sunday League Division One Match at Hazelwood Sports Ground

EDMONTON ROVERS	3	ENFIELD ROYALS	4	HT 0-2
Martin (46 mins.), Dorward (68 mins.) Nxumalo (90 mins.)		Ellis-Browne (8, 78 mins.), Careford (26 mins.) Burnett (79 mins.)		

EDMONTON ROVERS LINE-UP (with Marks out of 10): Darryl JOHNSON (GK) (5); Terry MOORE (6½), Alan BARNARD (6½), Martin LOVEDAY (6½); Tony KING (6), Rob BROWN (6½), Danny HAGAN (6½), Steve COKELL (6); Stuart DORWARD (6½); Jamie MARTIN (7½), Vernon NXUMALO (6½) **Subs.:** Daniel DALEY (On for Martin 65 mins.) (6), Terry BROWN (On for King 71 mins.) (6), Gavin MARDELL (Not Used)

ENFIELD ROYALS LINE-UP: Matt GORRY (GK); Joe HUGHES, Chris BURNETT, Lewis BEATTY, Lee STEBBING; Iyad ELIAS, Gary COLLISON, Charlie CAREFORD, Anthony TAYLOR; Matt HOSKINS, Jon ELLIS-BROWNE **Subs.:** Glenn REYNOLDS (On for Taylor in Second Half), Chris LINEY (On for Stebbing in Injury Time), Steve SMITH (Not Used), David NICOLAIDES (Not Used)

Referee: Andy MacRAE	Weather Conditions: Sunny & Dry	Attendance: 23
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Report (by Laurence Hughes): Our two matches against Enfield Royals last season saw us draw 3-3 with them at Hazelwood after being 3-1 down with 12 minutes left, then we only lost 2-0 to them at Enfield Playing Fields despite us fielding only 9 men all match ! With Enfield Royals finishing in third place and some 16 points clear of us, we therefore thought our short-passing style was maybe well-suited to overcome their style of play (of big strong blokes out-muscling us and pinging long balls about with a heavy reliance on set-pieces), as they didn't look a particularly good side at all. We were also very confident after picking up four points from our Double-Header against an in-form Turnford Geese side in our last match(es), while the return of skipper Stuart



Dorward, midfielder Terry Brown and forward Daniel Daley after long absences also gave us a boost. Unfortunately though, Enfield Royals were in really good form themselves with only one defeat in their last seven matches, while they were also fielding a certain Jon Ellis-Browne in their line-up this time, Ellis-Browne having had a brief spell with us in our Premier Division days in which he got sent off for two wild challenges in his last appearance, having been brought along to the club by his ex-St. Margaretsbury (Saturdays) colleague Conor McGovern. In those days, Ellis-Browne was a central midfielder, but since joining Enfield Royals this season just before Christmas as a converted forward, he had scored 11 goals in 6 matches coming into this match and was bound to be fired up against one of his former clubs...even though he only ended up playing three matches for us for some reason (which I can't remember !). We therefore appointed in-form defender Martin Loveday to keep a tight reign on him, but unfortunately we didn't realise how quick and sharp Ellis-Browne was, and he ended up giving Loveday (and the rest of our defenders) a bit of a torrid time...starting from the 8th minute when he pounced on mistakes by Terry Moore and Alan Barnard to rifle a half-volley on the turn into the roof of the net from 6 yards before Darryl Johnson even had time to move.

However, we composed ourselves after that and it was fairly even for most of the First Half with both sides having chances, although the best effort for us was actually from defender Loveday when he curled an excellent shot just wide after going up on a run. We then let in a really silly goal to go 2-0 down in the 26th minute though when a hopeful lobbed ball into the area from Royals' midfielder Charlie Careford took a freak bounce on the hard, dry pitch and went straight in over the stranded D.J.'s head. For some reason, Jon Ellis-Browne claimed the goal initially, but the video shows the ball bouncing at least 6 feet over his head and he was nowhere near it ! (Sorry Jon, but the League will have to be informed of that !!?)



We ended up going in at Half-Time 2-0 down because of that, but in Manager Trevor Hughes's team-talk during the break it was felt that our two forwards for this match (Jamie Martin and Vernon 'Kizza' Nxumalo) were both playing too centrally and we needed a bit more width to try and stretch Enfield Royals' back four out a bit. Manager Hughes therefore decided to put Stuart Dorward in attack on the right for the start of the Second Half and Kizza on the left in more of a 3-4-3 rather than a 3-4-1-2 and it worked straight away when Jamie Martin pulled a goal back within 9 seconds of the re-start as he ploughed his way through a 'sandwich' challenge to rifle the ball into the roof of the net from just inside the area after a brilliant 4-man move involving Rob Brown, Vernon 'Kizza' Nxumalo and Tony King (with a clever dummy) had set him up.

We then had our best spell of the match with Stuart Dorward having a goal disallowed for offside in the 61st minute before he made it 2-2 after 68 minutes by tapping in the rebound after substitute Daniel Daley's shot had been well saved. Unfortunately though, Daley had not been brought on as an extra forward to get us back into the match, but as a replacement for the injured Jamie Martin, who had been causing the Enfield Royals defence all sorts of problems with his strength and determination and had been an excellent replacement for the holidaying Conor McGovern. When Martin went off, that effectively put paid to our chances of winning the game, as we needed a physical presence up front and Daley and Kizza were too similar in wanting to run at defenders. Predictably, it was Jon Ellis-Browne who put the nail in our coffin in the 78th minute, but it was another poor goal to give away from our point of view, as keeper D.J. tried to deliberately parry a long range shot in order to

pick up the rebound, but Ellis-Browne was more alert than he realised and easily got to the loose ball first to put his side 3-2 up (and annoyingly celebrate in front of the camera...although I suppose we can't really blame him). We then let in an even worse goal less than a minute later though, as defender Chris Burnett was left totally unmarked at the far post to head in a superbly 'pinged' free-kick from Matt Hoskins to make it 4-2 with Martin Loveday and Darryl Johnson both leaving it for each other to deal with...seemingly because Paul Woolston wasn't playing to do their calling for them !?

Vernon 'Kizza' Nxumalo managed to pull a goal back for us with an apparent mis-kick from close range as the game drifted into Injury Time, but we didn't really look like equalising in the five minutes added on by Referee Andy MacRae and it was a very disappointing performance in the end with Enfield Royals probably deserving to win because they were fitter, stronger and more competitive than us, and in Jon Ellis-Browne, they had somebody who could finish half-chances whereas we didn't. There was also no doubt that not having a game the week before was a major factor in us not playing as well as we should have done considering the side we were fielding, but the most worrying aspect of this defeat was that we let in our 'usual' four goals again after we thought we had sorted that problem out with an average of only conceding one goal a game in our last five matches. Relegation is therefore still a big possibility if that starts happening again.

TREVOR HUGHES'S MANAGER'S REPORT

We were confident going into Sunday's match against Enfield Royals with a strong squad including captain Stuart Dorward, Terry Brown and Daniel Daley, none of whom have played for several months. In fact, Terry Brown and Daniel Daley were named as substitutes due to our recent good form. Unfortunately, we fell behind after only 8 minutes when ex Rovers player, Jon Ellis-Browne latched onto a loose ball to volley home. There were half chances at both ends but a long ball took an unusually high bounce to deceive goalkeeper, Darryl Johnson and gift Royals a second goal after 26 minutes. Ellis-Browne was claiming a touch but video evidence will be needed. We were very positive at half time as we have had several second half comebacks this season and got off to the perfect start when Jamie Martin finished well from Kizza's through ball. Stuart Dorward was denied an equaliser by the linesman's flag but shortly afterwards did score from a rebound after substitute Daley's shot was saved. At this point with 20 minutes left we were expecting another victory but it all went wrong in the space of two minutes. Firstly, Darryl parried a long range shot straight into Ellis-Browne's path for a tap in and then a long free kick was headed in at the far post. Kizza pulled one back in the 90th minute but we ran out of time to force another equaliser and the result was a disappointing 4-3 defeat.

I am away next week for our crucial relegation double header against Uniques but we have a similar squad available and I am hopeful we can pick up the points to avoid relegation.