

Sunday 17th February 2008

Mercury Waltham Sunday League Division One Match at Enfield Playing Fields (Pitch 15)

ENFIELD ROYALS	2	EDMONTON ROVERS	0	HT 0-0
Matt Hoskins (48, 75 mins.)				

ENFIELD ROYALS' LINE-UP: Tom LYNE (GK); Glenn REYNOLDS, Chris BURNETT, Charlie CAREFORD, Anthony TAYLOR; Iyad ELIAS, Lewis BEATTY, Joe HUGHES, Danny VYBIRAL; Steve SMITH, Matt HOSKINS **Sub.:** Chris LINEY (On for Reynolds 65 mins.)

EDMONTON ROVERS LINE-UP (with Marks out of 10): (9 Men !) Martin LOVEDAY (GK) (7½); Terry MOORE (7½), Alan BARNARD (7½), Paul WOOLSTON (7½); Tony KING (7), Tony SPELLER (7½), Stuart BYHURST (7), Tem ADIL (7); Conor McGOVERN (7)

Referee: Kevin HUGHES

Weather Conditions: Sunny & Warm

Attendance: 20

**Factual
Report (by
Laurence
Hughes):**

Normally in situations where we have played with a bare eleven or less it is only a one-off and the following week we end up with a squad including at least three substitutes, but not on this



occasion. The 'disaster' of Steve Cokell breaking his foot against Larsens and joining the likes of Clark Williams, Darryl Johnson, Peter Murphy and Paul Ellerker on the sidelines for the rest of the season was followed with skipper Stuart Dorward suddenly remembering he had family commitments instead of playing in this match, Derek Dorward being on the shift for work at the LIDL's warehouse, and new signing from London Ajax Rob Brown declaring himself unavailable straight away, also due to family commitments. That was in addition to Nick Vertigans still being abroad and Danny Hagan serving the second week of his three-match suspension, meaning we were without the whole of our usual first-choice midfield four (or five).

That left us down to a squad of just 12 by the Saturday night before this match, but then Gary Cokell dropped out as he was unable to find a babysitter, and worst of all, forward Vernon 'Kizza' Nxumalo and goalkeeper Ozel Ozerman both then dropped out on the morning of the match, 'Kizza' with a text message at 5.00.a.m. to say he was just going in to work, and Oz with no excuse at all (presumably asleep after working all night in a bar again ?).

That meant Conor McGovern had to play on his own up front and Martin Loveday was back in goal again when he prefers to play as an outfield player, as we were forced to field just 9 men for the first time since the bad old days of the late-70's in Division Eight of the Edmonton Sunday League when passers-by walking their dogs were roped into action. Yes, that was [Overington's](#)

Mate...at the 'Barrass Surround' (Jubilee Park) in 1978 !

Of course we are far too well-organised to play 'ringers' nowadays, and from our 34 registered players there was nobody else available without a week's notice anyway. With both my knees 'gone', there was no way I could play and risk having to take time off 'work', and although Ritchie Copues, a 20-stone ? Russell 'Tarby' Beeden and even Manager Trevor Hughes were mentioned, fortunately none of them were registered and we were better off playing with nine than have any of us four out there spoiling things.

We very nearly had even less than nine though, as Alan Barnard almost gave up half-way through his drive back from Portsmouth at 9.00.a.m. with the outside temperature gauge in his car reading -7°C ! His query of 'Is there any undersoil heating at Enfield Playing Fields' was therefore met with an answer of 'No, but the game will still be on'...this being because of a new League ruling whereby a team having more than two non-fulfilments of Sunday morning fixtures in a season are now automatically thrown out of the League. On the rare occasions we have 'non-fulfilled' in the Mercury Waltham League, it has been when we have had 9 or 10 players, but still called the game off in order to avoid a severe hammering while paying a £25.00 fine and conceding the match as a 0-0 defeat (i.e. With three points but no goals going to the opposition). Because of these new regulations, we were also panicking a bit when Tony King texted to say that his girlfriend had left his boots and shinpads round her friend's house ('Don't ask...long story' was the rest of the text !), while Conor McGovern and Stuart Byhurst failed to arrive until 10.20.a.m. after their long drive(s) from deepest Essex, but the presence of their WAG's on the touchline maybe explained that. It was certainly good to see some supporters at a Rovers match though...a rarity nowadays...but the hard overnight frost was soon burnt off by warm sunshine, and with no wind it was perfect conditions for playing and watching in the end.

In fact by the end of the First Half we had more supporters there than players...for the first time since the Reserves played in the League Reserve Cup Final four years ago ? Hopefully the watching youngsters (and future Rovers players ?) such as Stuart Byhurst's son, Ben Rebairo and Eddie & Ollie Carey (myself and Trevor's nephews) were not put off by the sight of us only having 9 players !?

Because we had a decent 'keeper and virtually all our regular defenders available though, playing with only nine men didn't turn out to be as much of a problem as it could have been, as Manager Hughes deployed a 3-4-1 formation consisting of our first-choice back three with four good well-disciplined defensive midfielders in front of them. Our opponents Enfield Royals had lost 3-2 to Cheshunt (Sunday) the week before and they seemed to be missing one or two key players themselves, but they had a full side and plenty of people on the touchline, including at least one substitute. However, they didn't seem to know how to cope with only playing against nine men, as they stuck to a rigid 4-4-2 formation in which their four defenders all marked Conor McGovern, thereby making it a close game in the First Half, and we actually managed to get through to Half-Time at 0-0 fairly comfortably, with Martin Loveday only having to make just one decent save. In fact McGovern actually could have given us a 1-0 lead at one stage with a

left-footed
shot quite
early on
which went
just wide of
the near
post,
although not
surprisingly,
that was our
only chance
of the half.
Indeed even
when
Referee
Kevin Hughes
turned his

ankle and needed a bit of treatment (from a rusty ¼ full can of heat spray from our medical kit bag) before he could continue, we didn't need to pray that he would abandon the match. Enfield



Royals must have been worried though. We therefore came out for the Second Half with the instructions to just continue as we were, but to make the most of any set-pieces that might come our way.

However, a mistake by our only inexperienced player Tem Adil just three minutes after the break put paid to that, as it was punished by an excellent shot from Matt Hoskins that screamed past Martin Loveday, who did well to get a hand to it, and it was then obvious that we had no chance of getting anything out of the match after that. We therefore had to take a few chances and get players forward to support Conor McGovern, but that just gave Enfield Royals more space to get shots in from the edge of the area rather than 35 yards away, and the remainder of the match saw Loveday having to make two or three good saves, while conceding just the one goal (to Hoskins again with a good finish as we were caught on the break with only Alan Barnard back defending). Enfield Royals wasted four or five good chances by shooting wide or feebly at Loveday from good positions though, and we would not have been able to complain had we lost by four or five.

We only had the one chance ourselves in the Second Half...a diving header from Tony Speller from Tony King's cross, but the Royals' keeper was well-positioned to save easily. It was a bit disappointing that we didn't have a few more shots though, as there were several occasions where players made good runs into attacking positions but failed to receive a decent through ball as players picked the wrong options, and that was where we missed the Dorward brothers in particular.

In fact, Enfield Royals direct style of play seemed to suit us, and it was very frustrating that we fielded weak sides against them on both occasions this season, especially as three points for us from this match would have taken us level with them in terms of the number of games drawn and lost so far in Division One this season...and they are in second place in the table !

To only lose 2-0 was still an achievement though, and there was a good spirit amongst our players in the changing rooms afterwards with no threats of leaving the club. However, we have now only won once in our last 9 matches, so that has to be sorted out, but hopefully some imminent new signings to replace our recently injured and departed players will do the trick.

TREVOR HUGHES'S MANAGER'S REPORT

More unavailability this week meant that I could only name a team of eleven on Saturday evening. By Sunday morning I had received text messages from Tony King at 00.58 that he had no boots and at 05.53 from Vernon Nxumalo that he was on his way to work and couldn't play. Goalkeeper Ozel Ozerman didn't turn up or answer text and voicemail messages but at least Tony King borrowed some boots to give us a team of 9. Fortunately we had Martin Loveday to go in goal and an experienced back three in Alan Barnard, Terry Moore and Paul Woolston. We fielded a 3-4-1 formation with Tony King, Tony Speller, Stuart Byhurst and Tem Adil in midfield leaving Conor McGovern as the lone striker. Our opponents, Enfield Royals, played 4-4-2 and strangely made no adjustments to take into account our lack of players. This meant that we were able to compete well in defence and midfield and the score was still 0-0 at half time with no real scares. Our best chance was a Conor McGovern strike that just went over the bar. After three minutes of the second half I received a phone call from our captain, Stuart Dorward, and just as I said that it was 0-0 a well struck shot from outside the area put us 1-0 down. We survived a lot of pressure with some excellent defending and goalkeeping and Tony Speller had our best chance to equalise with a diving header from Tony King's cross. We started to take more risks pushing men forward from midfield but the second goal came from a breakaway with only Alan Barnard left at the back just as Director of Football, Russell Beeden, made his customary phone call with 15 minutes to go. The final score of 2-0 was a good result in the circumstances but it was a game we probably would have won with eleven or even ten men.