

Sunday 11th December 2005

Mercury Waltham Sunday League Division One Match at Hazelwood Sports Ground

EDMONTON ROVERS	1	EUROPA	3	HT 0-0
<i>C.Beeden (61 mins.)</i>		<i>Dear (53 mins.), Myford (67 mins.), Max Devizio (87 mins.)</i>		

EDMONTON ROVERS LINE-UP (with Marks out of 10): Simon JACKSON (GK) (6½); Robin PRYKE (6½), Stuart DORWARD (6½), Andrew WARMERDAM (7), Terry MOORE (6½); Derek DORWARD (6), Nick VERTIGANS (6½), John Mc,LOUGHLIN (6½), Chris BEEDEN (7), Steve COKELL (6½); Conor Mc,GOVERN (6½) **Sub.:** Ritchie COPUES (6½)

EUROPA'S LINE-UP: Marcello DEVIZIO (GK); Bruno AMORELLI, Terry SMITH, Giulio SANTANGELO, Andy Mc,KAY; Gary BRACE, Vince RODIA, Tony CARTER, Ricky DEAR; Michael MYFORD, Max DEVIZIO **Sub.:** Carlo CASALI

Referee: John STOCKMAN

Weather Conditions: Misty

Attendance: 9



Factual Report (by Laurence Hughes): Although we had only won once in our previous six matches coming into this game, we were not unduly worried by that statistic as we had been playing quite well and knew that we just needed to start fielding a settled side to get some results going in our favour. With Chris 'Nugget' Beeden re-joining us during the week from Division Two side Data, Paul Woolston returning from a two-week holiday and Flory Zinga and Robin Pryke both attending training and subsequently declaring their fitness and

availability for this match, it looked like we were going to be fielding one of the strongest squads we had ever put out, despite Paul Ellerker and Peter Murphy both being unavailable because of Saturday night social commitments and goalkeeper Darryl Johnson still suffering from a groin strain.

As usual though, it was all too good to be true. The first to drop out was Paul Woolston on the Friday afternoon due to family commitments, then his intended replacement Colin Bester dropped out on Saturday due to flu. However, we still had a squad of 15 who were all 'definitely' going to turn up (according to Manager Trevor Hughes who had spoken to them at training), but on the morning of the match there was no sign of (and no messages from) Flory Zinga, Foysol Ahmed and Juneka Junior, while Terry Moore was only coming along to play in an emergency, having dropped out of the squad the night before after aggravating an injury playing for his Saturday side Old Edmontonians First XI. On realising that Flory, Foysol & Junior were unlikely to turn up (at least before the kick-off) then, Terry decided to get changed and start the match, as Chris 'Nugget' Beeden had not played for nearly a year and preferred to be named as our only available substitute. However, to top things off, Tony Speller then went and pulled a muscle in the warm-up...which is always likely to happen when a 'typical Rovers warm-up' consists of whacking all five match balls at keeper Simon Jackson simultaneously before any sort of jogging and stretching routines have been undertaken !

That meant 'Nugget' therefore had to start the match as part of just a bare eleven, and with no real prospect of any further 'decent' players turning up after the kick-off, we were left with a starting line-up of admittedly good-quality players, but several of whom had just not been playing regularly enough so far this season and others who had never even met each other before. In fact only three players remained from the side that lost 4-2 to Europa in the Ridsen Wood Pre-Season Tournament back in July, these being Stuart Dorward, Nick Vertigans and Steve Cokell !

Mid-Table Europa though, like our previous opponents Broxbourne Rangers Old Boys, also had 'six players missing' for this game and turned up a bit late and seemingly disorganised, so at least we weren't the only ones having problems. Even though two of those missing players were former Rovers Player Of The Year Darren Rorie and another ex-Rover in Carlo Casali (who turned up late and had to be named as a substitute), Europa were still a lot more fired-up and competitive for this game than some of our more recent opponents and we found it a lot more difficult to produce quality passing moves and create clear-cut chances this time. In fact we only really had two opportunities in a goal-less First Half, one of which was tamely side-footed straight at former Rovers keeper Marcello Devizio by Conor McGovern on the volley from six yards and another just a few minutes later by Derek Dorward that was ruled out for a marginal offside. Maybe that was because Manager Trevor Hughes opted to go for a 4-5-1 formation with Steve Cokell unusually playing in a left-sided midfield position with McGovern on his own up front. Europa didn't have many opportunities either though, with their best chance being a first-time close-range shot from



Michael Myford which was spectacularly caught by Simon Jackson diving to his left.

Unfortunately, the most notable incident of the First Half came in the 38th minute when Terry Moore's decision to play in this game backfired badly when he tore a hamstring...an injury which will probably keep him out for a couple of months at least. That saw us down to 10 men, while our only spectators on the touchline in Ritchie Copues, Russell 'Tarby' Beeden and Paul Rebairo (who had all turned up late...as usual) were 'sized up' to see if there was any possibility of them having been sensible enough to have brought a pair of boots along with them. There was no chance of that of

course, but then nobody had really expected three players (Flory Zinga, Foysol Ahmed & Juneka Junior) simply not to turn up without letting us know. Rebairo couldn't play as he had failed to get himself registered after putting his passport-size photo in somebody else's front door by mistake...and he had also brought his one-year-old son Ben along with him anyway, while 'Tarby' had to leave early to go to work in the afternoon. That left Ritchie then, who volunteered to come on just before the Half-Time whistle, albeit wearing Terry's 'two-sizes too big' boots, and he just slotted in at left-back so that we could at least keep our shape.

There was no doubt that our players were feeling very deflated by all these problems though, especially as some of them were obviously worried that they may not last a full match, and the Half-Time team-talk wasn't just about how we had played in the First Half but also of how we had been let down by certain club members. It wasn't just that we had no further substitutes, but we also had Manager Trevor Hughes having to run the line yet again, nobody to run on with the medical kit, nobody to carry Terry Moore off the pitch (two of Europa's players had to do it), and nobody to look for the match ball that Simon Jackson had seemingly deliberately kicked over a back garden in frustration (which seems to be his 'party piece' !?). I did hear Stuart & Derek Dorward's mother (on the touchline) suggest shoving Ben Rebairo under the wire fencing to try and get it back, and the way things are going we will probably have to resort to that soon !?

As the Second Half started, a big black cloud came over which seemed to mirror our mood at the time. However, this was not a rain cloud but one of burning oil from what was apparently 'the biggest explosion/fire in Europe since World War Two' which had happened in Hemel Hempstead earlier in the morning. Players rushed for their asthma inhalers and the temperature seemed to drop to about -10°C as the sun disappeared behind the jet-black fumes, and combined with the foggy, misty weather that was already in evidence, it was absolutely surreal conditions...as if we were playing football on another planet ! (*See pictures left and above right !*)

The players all carried on regardless though, even though occasional glimpses of the sun were causing real problems. (A bit like watching an eclipse). Unfortunately for Simon Jackson though, he was now in goal at the 'Cowshed End' looking directly into all this, and typical of our luck, the sun came out in the 53rd minute just as Europa midfielder Ricky Dear curled a free-kick over his head and into his top right-hand corner a la Ronaldinho against David Seaman in the last World Cup ! Of course 'Jacko' was a lot more off his line and presented an easier target, but it was yet

another excellent goal that has been scored against us this season nonetheless.

Thankfully though, we didn't let our heads go down and we got back into the match in the 61st minute when Chris Beeden's low free-kick from the edge of the area squirmed past Marcello Devizio's left-handed dive and just inside the post to make it 1-1.

It was then anyone's game and both keepers made some good saves in the Second Half as the game became a lot more open, but as usual, we were punished for any mistakes we made at the back while we failed to punish mistakes by our opponents or finish off any of our clear-cut chances. The 67th minute was a nightmare for skipper Stuart Dorward when he appeared to be caught in two minds whether to head the ball away downfield or cushion it back to Simon Jackson, and he only succeeded in heading it backwards straight to Europa forward Michael Myford, a player who scored a hat-trick against us in our Pre-Season fixture with Europa and four in a game against Division One leaders London Ajax. The finish was predictably efficient and we found ourselves 2-1 down.

We therefore moved Stuart into midfield shortly after that with holding player John Mc,Loughlin dropping into the back four, but that was always going to leave us vulnerable on the break and sure enough, Europa killed the game off by making it 3-1 in the 87th minute when Giulio Santangelo won a crunching challenge on Ritchie Copues just inside our half and then raced away down the right to cross for forward Max Devizio to sidefoot in at the near post.

We didn't play well in this match, mainly because Europa were very competitive and didn't allow us enough time and space to pass the ball about like we had been doing in previous games, but on the balance of play and chances created, a draw would have been the fairest result and once again we were rather unlucky.

We now have no game until the 8th January (at the earliest), and as teams have all been beating each other in Division One so far this season, there is still a chance for us to go on a run and clinch promotion after our enforced three-week break, but we really need to find more of a settled side as soon as we can.

'Murf's Alternative Report !!: There is no 'Murf Report' for this match as he was not in attendance. However, this week we have....

Johnny Mac's Alternative Report !!: There's nothing like a good bang to set you up for football on a Sunday morning but it is normally preferred sans the huge plume of black smoke and a lack of windows and doors in the Hemel area. However, this is exactly how many of the team were woken from their sleep as the black gold at Buncefield oil depot engaged in a row with a spark which the spark clearly won. Despite the explosion not being heard in Essex, this week's scribe made it to the ground on time only to find our manager Trevor Hughes scratching his head. There had been a couple of drop outs in the week to add to the absence of Messrs Johnson, Ellerker, and Murphy. There was also no sign and no message from three of the intended subs, Juneka Junior, Foysol Ahmed and Flory Zinga but Chris Beeden was making his return appearance for the club. As they say at KFC, if there's no Zinga, give them Nugget !! Thankfully Terry Moore had made the effort to attend despite taking a knock for his Saturday team on the previous day which at least gave us a squad of twelve. But no disaster struck as Tony Speller turned an ankle in the warm up and we were down to the bare eleven with no sign (as yet) of the three stooges Beeden (Tarby R), Copues and Rebairo, let alone Mrs Bester who was at home nursing Colin's flu (probably!). A 4-5-1 formation was opted for, with Conor McGovern ploughing the lone furrow up front, Steve Cokell dropping into the left midfield slot alongside myself (holding), Nick Vertigans, Nugget and Derek Dorward. Robin Pryke made a welcome return at right back and Stuart Dorward dropped back into the centre of defence alongside Andrew Warmerdam with Terry Moore completing the outfield line-up at left back. Simon Jackson was in goal again with Darryl Johnson still suffering from a groin strain.

Anyhow, the game got underway and it was evident that the early breakfast call had not helped our boys as Europa were sharp and physical and clearly more up for the game than us. We limited their attempts to long range efforts as they tried to gain the advantage but, following our previous two games, we were disappointed with the lack of chances that we actually created. In fact, we only managed two attempts on target in the half - the first falling to Conor which was struck straight into the keeper's arms and the second to Derek Doward (who temporarily shed his recent 'boots of lard' tag) where he expertly volleyed home with the outside of his right boot from a lobbed through ball, only to be (debatably) ruled off-side!! The only other incident of the half was the brave Terry Moore suffering at the hands of an air rifle sniper with the precision aim to find his butt from the grassy knoll or maybe he just pulled his hamstring. I switched temporarily to the left back position while the re-enforcements were readied. Luckily, Ritchie Copues had turned up by now and was changed and ready to come on in Terry's place, just as soon as he had borrowed Terry's boots - NB. Not all of the preceding sentence is entirely accurate ! Half time arrived and despite all our woes, we were still on level terms.

As what appeared to be 'Armageddon' closed in on Enfield Town in the form of a dark rolling smoke cloud, the second half got underway. The light was fading fast but the sun still managed to cast a shadow over goalkeeper, Simon Jackson, who had been faultless all game. Another long range (and hopeful) free-kick was floated into the area and somehow evaded Jacko's semaphore before dropping into the net. We battled straight back and as the little silhouettes of men (scaramouche, scaramouche!) danced around ahead of me, Nugget produced some 'golden' footwork going forward and drew a free-kick on the edge of the Europa area. He took the dead ball himself and hit a low drive to the bottom right-hand corner that the keeper got finger-tips to ... but not enough to prevent the equaliser. With twenty minutes to go the Titanic hit the iceberg when our illustrious skipper, Stuart Dorward, made an uncharacteristic mistake with a back-header from a through ball that left Jacko in no-mans land and allowed the Europa striker to finish neatly.

Drastic times require drastic measures so Stuart moved up into midfield and I dropped back to centre half as we went chasing the game. We managed one clear cut opportunity when I played the ball in towards Conor who nodded down neatly to Steve Cokell approaching the six yards box. Steve elected to wait for the ball to come down for a strike when the better option would have probably been to head home so the chance was lost. Soon after, Ritchie Copues second touch became a tackle - which the opposition won - and Europa charged down the wing in search of a third. The by-line was reached and the cross was finished with aplomb by the other Europa striker, leaving our ship sunk with no time to recover our position. We didn't deserve to lose this match and if you take away the errors, we wouldn't have. But then, if you take away the assassination, the Kennedy's had a lovely drive through Dallas in November'63.

[Click Here](#) to visit Europa's website. (Our former keeper Marcello Devizio does *their* reports...eventually !)