

Sunday 5th December 2004

Mercury Waltham Sunday League Roy Bailey Challenge Cup Third Round Match at Hazelwood Sports Ground

EDMONTON ROVERS	1	EVEREST	2	(A.E.T.) HT 0-0 FT 0-0
<i>Mc,Govern (94 mins.)</i>		<i>Bates (102 mins.), Baxter (106 mins)</i>		

EDMONTON ROVERS LINE-UP (with Marks out of 10): Darryl JOHNSON (GK) (7½); Ritchie COPUES (7), Stuart DORWARD (8½), Paul WOOLSTON (8½), Tony SPELLER (7); Derek DORWARD (7), Paul ELLERKER (7½), Jon ELLIS-BROWNE (7½), Lee OSBORN (6½); Conor Mc,GOVERN (8), Kevin DEDMAN (7)
Subs.: Gary COKELL (6), Colin BESTER (6)

EVEREST'S LINE-UP: Danny COLE (GK); Bobby RANDALL, Andrew WARMERDAM, Keith TIMMS, Andy BRACE; Steve MILLAR, Neil WILLIAMS, Richard BATES, Dave BAXTER; Paul MORRISON, Nick VERTIGANS
Subs.: Carl RANDALL, Jamie STOREY (Not Used)

Referee: Trevor IRVING

Weather Conditions: Cloudy. No Wind

Attendance: 22

Report (by Laurence Hughes): With Everest currently top of the Premier Division table and having beaten Northmet (Riverside) 6-0 the previous week, the draw for this season's Roy Bailey Challenge Cup certainly could have been kinder to us bearing in mind the fact that we had lost 10 in a row before this game. A disastrous 10-1 defeat to Enfield Rangers Old Boys in our previous match was also not the right sort of preparation, but at least we fielded a stronger side for this game with Darryl Johnson, Stuart Dorward, Jon Ellis-Browne, Conor Mc,Govern and Kevin Dedman all returning, even though we were missing the likes of Eric Ibekwem (Injured), Robin Pryke (Injured), John Beasley (On Holiday), Leon Mc,Kenzie-Mc,Kay (Working) and Adam Stock (Pissed)...amongst others. 'Stocky's



absence was particularly annoying as he had made an effort to get his studying done so that he could play in this match, only to drink too much after his Saturday game for St.Margaretsbury (as usual) and therefore have no hope of getting out of bed to turn up for this one. With Gary Adamson also not turning up due to his usual last-minute family commitments and Scott Robertson dropping out at the last minute with a bad back, that meant Lee Osborn had to be named in the starting line-up as a left-sided midfielder as Gary Cokell had also turned up with a bad back and could only be named as our one lone substitute with the intention of only coming on if somebody else suffered a worse injury.

Luckily though, due to our current lack of players, the League had already agreed to our Reserve Team's match being called off (without them losing the points this time), and indeed as it turned out, if both teams had played on this date, the First Team would have fielded just a bare eleven and the Reserves would have been left with just nine men !

We were therefore able to name Colin Bester, Simon Jackson and Paul Rebairo as our other substitutes once they decided to come along to watch, so at least we had enough players to field a team, and we were also lucky that Everest were also missing five first-choice players, although they still turned up with a half-decent side that confirmed they had a strong enough squad to cope with such absences and win something this season.

Of course due to Stuart Dorward being a work colleague of Everest Manager Alan Dyer and half their squad playing cricket for Waltham Cross Rosedale during the Summer with a number of our players, we had been playing Everest regularly in Pre-Season Friendly matches during the past

few seasons, these being occasions which were played in a real 'old-fashioned Corinthian spirit' with even the slightest foul being a real rarity and always sorted out with apologetic handshakes. However, *this* particular encounter was anything *but* !

That was because this was our first competitive meeting since the early-90's and with Stuart having placed a large bet (as usual !?) with Alan Dyer on the outcome of this match, and having fired up all our players to win in the knowledge that he had done so, this was always going to be a really fierce battle, especially as there was no way Everest's players wanted to lose to a side who had been thrashed by their nearest Premier Division title rivals only the week before. With Paul Woolston actually turning up sober (somehow !) after attending a Rugby Club 'All-Dayer' the day before...although maybe he didn't go in the end because of the importance of this match ?..., we were able to defend properly for once with everybody in our line-up being experienced enough to concentrate on their game and play much more as a unit than we had been doing for some while. Manager Trevor Hughes's decision to play Kevin Dedman up front with Conor McGovern in a 4-4-2 was also an inspired one as we created some good chances while the competitiveness of Jon Ellis-Browne and Paul Ellerker in the centre of midfield made it easier for our defenders to cover the runs of Everest's forwards and force them into numerous long-range shots of desperation which were either straight at Darryl Johnson or 'miles' wide.

By the time it got to the 90th minute there was nothing written down on Trevor Hughes's 'Match Facts' notepad at all, as both teams had really cancelled each other out with very few clear-cut chances created, but we then had a good spell of pressure in Injury Time when we were really unlucky not to win the game as Kevin Dedman saw a free-kick deflected narrowly wide with keeper Danny Cole going the wrong way, Paul Woolston then had a goalbound shot headed more or less off the line by Everest skipper Richard Bates with keeper Cole 'nowhere near it' (according to Wooly), and then with almost the last kick of normal time Jon Ellis-Browne fired a fierce drive against the foot of the post from an acute angle...all of these chances being greeted by some loud 'oohs' and 'aahs' of support for us from the kids' match on the adjacent pitch and various wives, girlfriends and mums who had come along to watch (or were they saying 'ooh' and 'aah' to two-month-old Jack Dorward instead ?)

The game therefore went into Extra-Time, much to the surprise of Lee Osborn, who was almost back inside the changing room and in the showers before he suddenly realised and shouted out 'What ! Is this a Cup game ?'

Despite that bout of silliness, we got our concentration back and carried on where we left off once the game re-started with Jon Ellis-Browne and Conor McGovern both seeing shots saved or blocked almost straight away before we deservedly took the lead in the 4th minute of Extra-Time when Kevin Dedman curled over a perfect inswinging cross from the right for McGovern to power in a header at the far post.

It looked at that stage that we could hold onto our lead and even nick another goal or two as most of Everest's players had played the day before for various Senior Saturday sides (unlike ours of course) and were starting to look a bit tired, but then we went and pressed the self-destruct button again...as we always do year after year in Cup matches.

It all started in the 8th minute of Injury Time when Jon Ellis-Browne flew into a 'man and ball' two-footed challenge on Everest left-back Andy Brace which was reminiscent of our founder and former Player-Manager Dave Ashton in his prime.

Although Ashton would probably have been encouraging that sort of play if he was still in charge, these days it is an automatic booking and 'Ellis' was lucky it wasn't Steve Wildgoose (or

several other referees from our League) in charge who would have produced a straight red.

Unfortunately though, 'Ellis' was still too competitive for his own good and when he caught Dave Baxter on the knee with a late challenge just three minutes later, he was off for a second bookable offence leaving us down to 10 men...when Trevor Hughes was just about to substitute him anyway because he was another one of our players who didn't realise it was a Cup match and had arranged to go to work in the afternoon ! Most of our players just stood there in stunned silence as they knew they couldn't really complain about the decision, but they all switched back on straight away to concentrate on defending the resulting free-kick...except Lee Osborn, who spoilt what had been a much better personal performance than normal by switching himself off



and allowing Richard Bates to volley into the far top corner too easily from just inside the area to make it 1-1.

We then had to bring on defender Gary Cokell for Derek Dorward who had started going down with cramp, so *that* didn't do our prospects of scoring a winner much good with only 10 men on the pitch. We were still managing to defend quite well in general though and nobody's heads had gone down too much at that stage as there was always a chance we could hang on for a Penalty Shoot-Out. However, our heads certainly went down when Darryl Johnson 'mis-read the backspin' on a deflected shot to spill the ball into the path of the onrushing Dave Baxter in the 106th minute, and he made no mistake from virtually on the goal-line to make it 2-1 and not surprisingly we were unable to come back from that.

Although this was our 11th defeat in a row, the general consensus afterwards was that it was our best performance of the season so far bearing in mind the number of first-choice players we had missing and the quality of the opposition, and indeed the marks out of 10 given by Trevor Hughes reflect that. It was also encouraging to see Reserve Team players Ritchie Copues, Tony Speller and Lee Osborn all playing their part in a good team performance, and in fact Osborn did a better job defensively on the left of midfield than Adam Stock would have done, although 'Stocky' would have undoubtedly given us more quality going forward if he had turned up. In the end though it was the harsh reality of mistakes being punished at this level, even though the culprits Jon Ellis-Browne, Lee Osborn & Darryl Johnson only really made one each in the whole match and played really well otherwise.

Delving back into the 'Rovers Archives', I have found out that we only have another three matches to go to beat the club record for number of defeats in a row...which was set way back in 1978 in our Edmonton Sunday League Division Eight days when we lost 14 in a row. In nine of those 14 matches we actually let in more than 10 goals each game, including a 21-2 defeat in one of them ! At least we are not as bad as that, and of course we are now playing at a much higher level.

Incidentally, some of our players may well remember a disastrous spell we had between March and December 1991 in Division Five when we went on a run of 17 competitive matches without a win. However, this included quite a few draws and a couple of wins in Pre-Season Friendlies, so it's fair to say we are in a worse rut than that at the moment.

That particular run ended when the 'legendary' Willie Platt made his debut and scored a hat-trick in a 6-4 win. Maybe somebody else will be the hero in our next match on the 19th December and we can all celebrate down On Broadway afterwards. That would be excellent...and on the evidence of our performance against Everest we may not be too far away from doing it !