

Sunday 20th February 2005

Mercury Waltham Sunday League Premier Division Match at Hazelwood Sports Ground

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| EDMONTON ROVERS | 2 | F.C. BOCA HILL | 7 | HT 1-2 |
| <i>Pritchett (Own Goal) (3 mins.), Nxumalo (77 mins.)</i> | | <i>Wackett (9, 79 mins.), Norfolk (19, 61, 68 mins.), Christofides (68 mins.), Barnes (76 mins.)</i> | | |

EDMONTON ROVERS LINE-UP (with Marks out of 10): Dave BAGNALL (GK) (6); Colin BESTER (6), Gary ADAMSON (6), Robin PRYKE (6½), John BEASLEY (7); Derek DORWARD (6), Paul ELLERKER (6½), Stuart DORWARD (6½), Eric IBEKWEM (6½); Vernon 'Kizza' NXUMALO (6), Kevin DEDMAN (6) **Subs.:** Gary ODELL (6), Peter WHITE (6), Tem ADIL (6)

F.C. BOCA HILL'S LINE-UP: Rob ABRAHAMS; Paul ANDREAS, Mark PRITCHETT, Jeff GOUMAL, Daniel MARLOWE; Paul WACKETT, Steve FUSCO, Louis CHRISTOFIDES, Neil BARNES; David NORFOLK, Pete STANNERS **Subs.:** Scott BYLES, Gareth Mc,GURR (Not Used)

Referee: Denis COVENTRY

Weather Conditions: Very Cold

Attendance: 14

Report (by Laurence Hughes): Back in October we 'only' lost 3-2 to F.C. Boca Hill in what was one of our best performances of the season and a game in which we created three times as many chances as them. That was because we actually fielded eleven proper First Team (and Premier Division quality) players, including the likes of Steve Cokell, Conor Mc,Govern, Paul Woolston and Adam Stock, all of whom were unavailable for this return fixture in addition to other First Team players Jon Ellis-Browne, Gary Cokell and goalkeeper Darryl Johnson, all of whom had Sunday morning work commitments yet again, while Reserve Team Captain (and an experienced First Team player over the years) Tony Speller was also missing due to social commitments.



With F.C. Boca Hill turning up with a much stronger side themselves this time, including four or five obvious 'quality' players who didn't play in the first game, we were always likely to be the underdogs even though only one point separated us in the Premier Division table before this match.

However, we actually took a 'shock' lead after only three minutes when Boca Hill defender Mark Pritchett headed John Beasley's long free-kick back over his own goalkeeper's head...the very strong and freezing cold wind blowing straight down the pitch maybe playing a part in that. Instead of the wind helping us though, it actually hindered us for most of the First Half as none of our players were prepared to try a long-distance shot from open play, while numerous through balls were over-hit and just ran straight out of play. Indeed we only really had two clear-cut chances of our own making, these being a cross-shot from Stuart Dorward which was fired wide of the far post when he was clean through and a low curling free-kick from John Beasley which was well-saved by keeper Rob Abrahams. There may have been others but I can't remember them and Manager/Club Linesman Trevor Hughes's hands were too cold to write anything down. (He wasn't able to keep himself warm by running up and down the line flagging for non-stop offsides because we had Gary Adamson and Robin Pryke as our central defensive partnership this time instead of Paul Woolston & Stuart Dorward !)

Adamson though, was getting himself into a right pickle because of the wind and a lack of match practice (no doubt ?), especially in the 9th minute when he allowed Paul Wackett to equalise from close range after a bad mistake in mis-controlling a through ball when he should have left it to run through to Dave Bagnall...who was playing despite still feeling rough from his asthma attack of the previous week.

Boca Hill then went 2-1 up in the 19th minute with a shot on the turn from David Norfolk, who

beat Robin Pryke too easily in a 50/50 challenge before doing so...Robin of course being another one of our proper First Team players who has hardly played at all this season.

Although it looked as if we might crumble at that point, we actually managed to give Boca Hill quite a decent game for the rest of the First Half and Dave Bagnall was only really forced into one difficult save (low down to his left to tip a shot from Pete Stanners round the post).

With the wind behind them in the Second Half though, Boca Hill were a much tougher proposition and we found it really difficult to get out of our own half. However it wasn't until the 61st minute that they made it 3-1 when David Norfolk got in front of 17-year-old Colin Bester to head in a cross from right-back Paul Andreas, who had caught a rusty-looking Paul Ellerker in possession. That really killed off the game and our heads went down badly after that, especially when midfielder Louis Christofides made it 4-1 just two minutes later with a well-struck first-time shot into the bottom corner from the edge of the area. Another goal then followed just five minutes after that when Gary Adamson played Pete Stanners onside near the half-way line and had no hope of getting back in time, even though Stanners had to retrieve the (overhit) through ball from near the corner flag first before crossing it to an unmarked David Norfolk on the edge of the 6-yard-box, who easily completed his hat-trick by side-footing a volley past the stranded Dave Bagnall.



Manager Trevor Hughes then made the sensible decision to give all three substitutes some valuable First Team experience with the game already lost, so Gary Odell and Peter White were therefore brought on in the 69th minute for Colin Bester and Eric Ibekwem, while 16-year-old Tem Adil was introduced seven minutes later for the injured Robin Pryke...just after Neil Barnes had made it 6-1 to Boca Hill with a spectacular first-time swerving shot that gave Dave Bagnall no chance.

Adil and White were actually making their First Team debuts, as was new signing Vernon 'Kizza' Nxumalo, an 18-year-old who had been on the books of Charlton and Southampton's academies before being released (for being too

small no doubt ?). 'Kizza' therefore showed some good touches, but it will obviously take him a bit of time to get used to men's football in a League which is undoubtedly a higher standard than those who have been involved in the professional game realise. (i.e. Players in *this* particular Sunday League do not all look like Russell Beeden !!). However, 'Kizza' had the consolation of scoring our second goal in the 77th minute when he ran onto Kevin Dedman's through ball to get a shot in which bounced into the net off the diving body of keeper Abrahams.

Not surprisingly though, Boca Hill just upped a gear again and made it 7-2 just two minutes later when Paul Wackett scored his second of the game with a close-range header after Dave Bagnall had come off his line and mis-read the bounce from a long free-kick punted into the area. We were then lucky not to concede more in the last 10 minutes or so as Boca Hill hit the post three times and forced Dave Bagnall into two or three good saves...although he was at fault for two or three of their goals (according to some of our players), hence his mark of 6 out of 10.

All in all, it was just more proof that we no longer have a big enough squad of First Team-quality players to compete in the Premier Division any more and it is now just a question of how many Divisions we will slide down through while the re-building process takes place.

At least on the final whistle there was no bollocking and accusations of 'not trying' though. Enough said !