

Sunday 24th October 2004

Mercury Waltham Sunday League Premier Division Match at the Old Owens Sports Ground, Northaw

F.C. BOCA HILL	3	EDMONTON ROVERS	2	HT 0-0
<i>Pritchett (67 mins.), Stanners (71 mins.), Christofides (87 mins)</i>		<i>D.Dorward (57 mins.), McGovern (64 mins.)</i>		

F.C. BOCA HILL'S LINE-UP: Rob ABRAHAMS (GK); Martin KENNEDY, Mark PRITCHETT, Scott BYLES, Gareth McGUIRE; Louis CHRISTOFIDES, Ollie FUSCO, Danny MARLOWE, Craig BARTON; Jamie BRIGHT, Pete STANNERS **Subs.:** None

EDMONTON ROVERS LINE-UP (with Marks out of 10): Simon JACKSON (GK) (5); John BEASLEY (7), Stuart DORWARD (7), Paul WOOLSTON (7), Adam STOCK (7); Eric IBEKWEM (7), Derek DORWARD (7), Paul ELLERKER (7½), Conor McGOVERN (7½), Kevin DEDMAN (7); Steve COKELL (7) **Subs.:** Ritchie COPUES (6), Gary COKELL (Not Used)

Referee: Richard MEIKLE

Weather Conditions: Sunny Spells

Attendance: 12



Report (by Laurence Hughes): Both sides came into this match suffering from major problems with injuries to key players so far this season, thereby resulting in Boca Hill lying bottom of the table and ourselves only four points ahead of them but having played two games more. This was therefore a bit of a 'six-pointer' already then, but we were a bit more confident of a victory this time than we had been before our previous four matches (which had all ended in defeats). That was because Adam Stock, Eric Ibekwem, Conor McGovern, Kevin Dedman and Steve Cokell were all available after missing the previous week's Cup defeat to Lea Valley Royals, although we were still missing Jon Ellis-Browne, Robin Pryke and Leon McKenzie-McKay through injury, goalkeeper Darryl Johnson because of work commitments, and Treasure 'Tex' MacCarthy, who has now seemingly disappeared again...his latest comeback therefore lasting only one full game and two substitute appearances ! (Is he not the most unreliable Rovers player ever !?) Despite the Reserve Team's match being called off, only Ritchie Copues volunteered to be named as a substitute, with our other two preferred choices, Tony Speller and Scott Robertson deciding to go swimming and wash the car instead !

However, it soon became clear that Eric Ibekwem, Conor McGovern and Steve Cokell were now fit enough to last most of the match without any trouble, and with Boca Hill missing arguably their four best players because of injuries, we gradually started to get on top as the First Half went on, but somehow failed to go in ahead at half-time despite creating at least five clear-cut chances compared to Boca Hill's none ! These included a spectacular flying save by Boca Hill's ex-Potters Bar Town keeper Rob Abrahams from Adam Stock's swerving long-range shot, a couple of bad misses by Conor McGovern and Kevin Dedman when they fired the ball high and wide from close range when they should have easily hit the target, and a fierce 30-yard drive from Dedman which rattled the underside of the crossbar with keeper Abrahams totally beaten...Dedman & 'Stocky' both seemingly trying to compete with each other as to who had the best left foot !?



We actually came off for the half-time break rather disappointed with our performance even though we were clearly the better side, but we really started to turn on the style early in the Second Half as the fact that we were fielding eleven 'quality' players for the first time this season sunk in with everybody. That saw us produce some dazzling passing moves which were highly entertaining to watch from the touchline and certainly had Reserve Team player Ritchie Copues 'purring' with delight, and we finally took a deserved lead in the 57th minute when Conor Mc,Govern put Eric Ibekwem through on the right to deliver a perfect low cross to the far post for Derek Dorward to run in and finish.

We then extended our lead just seven minutes later with an equally good goal when Conor

Mc,Govern and Steve Cokell played a sharp one-two just outside the area which saw Conor go clean through on goal to produce another good finish and at 2-0 up it looked as if the game was all over and we would go on and score a few more with Boca Hill not having any substitutes and starting to argue with each other.

Although they had managed a few dangerous crosses and forced us into some good 'last-ditch' tackles, Boca Hill had not tested Simon Jackson at all up until the 67th minute, but when a long throw came in it soon ended up in the back of our net (as usual !) as big defender Mark Pritchett out-jumped and out-muscled Jackson on the goal-line to head it in.

Not surprisingly, that gave Boca Hill some impetus, but we gave them another silly goal just four minutes later as Stuart Dorward stepped up to try and play forward Pete Stanners offside, only for our Club Linesman Gary Cokell to ignore the appeal (wrongly in Stuart's opinion !) and allow Stanners to run on and blast an admittedly good cross-shot across Simon Jackson and into the far corner to make it 2-2.

The game then became a lot more even after that in terms of possession, but we once again created far more clear-cut chances with Derek Dorward missing a couple of 'sitters' and keeper Abrahams making more good saves until Boca Hill scored an undeserved winner in the 87th minute when Simon Jackson had a 'nightmare' as instead of 'hoofing it long' (like he normally does), he side-footed a clearance straight to midfielder Louis Christofides, who then had an easy task in chipping the ball back over his head and into an empty net to make it 3-2.

We didn't give up at that stage though, as due to a number of stoppages there was plenty of Injury Time to be played, and Steve Cokell in particular was desperate for a goal on his last appearance before going backpacking in Australia for a year (or more). However, he then went and pulled his hamstring again to ruin his hopes, but at least we got a full 90 minutes out of him rather than the five that some of us may have expected when he initially declared himself fit to play.

Of course, it was worth remembering that Simon Jackson was also not 100% fit because of a back injury, and when the Final Whistle went to signal our 5th defeat in a row, it was a bit of a sorry sight seeing him and Steve Cokell limp away towards the changing rooms with their heads bowed !

Despite having a swollen mouth because of a stray elbow early in the First Half though, Jackson did actually turn up down the pub for Steve Cokell's 'leaving do' after the match, where he was then laughed at for drinking a pint of lager with a straw, while being called a 'f@cking kant' in jest at his usual Forum comments !

It may have been another demoralising defeat, but unlike other clubs, at least we can all laugh about our mistakes afterwards with no hard feelings.