

Sunday 9th August 2009

Pre-Season Friendly Match at The Downs, Brimsdown Rovers F.C. (35 Minutes each way)

|                                              |   |                                                  |   |        |
|----------------------------------------------|---|--------------------------------------------------|---|--------|
| HIGHWAY UNITED                               | 2 | EDMONTON ROVERS                                  | 5 | HT 2-1 |
| H.Nolan (14 mins.),<br>D.Stephens (29 mins.) |   | Hagan (13 mins.)<br>Daley (58, 64, 68, 72 mins.) |   |        |

**HIGHWAY UNITED'S LINE-UP:** Aaron PEACOCK (GK), James THEEDHAM, Paul JONES, Dean WHITBREAD, Dan NOLAN; Trevor STEPHENS, Younis TOPAL, Steve ATKINS, Elfie NETHERCOTT; Harry NOLAN, Dwain STEPHENS **Subs.:** Gram NOLAN, 'Joe', Luke MOY, Mike GREENLAND

**EDMONTON ROVERS LINE-UP** (with Marks out of 10): Simon JACKSON (GK) (6½); Paul DUFFY (7), Alan BARNARD (7½), Clark WILLIAMS (7), Danny SMITH (7); Joe ANSELL (7), Tem ADIL (6½), Danny HAGAN (7½), Tony KING (6½); Daniel DALEY (8½), Ramel PALMER (6) **Subs.:** Scott JENKINS (7) (On at Half-Time), Oliver TEDDER (6½) (On at Half-Time).

Referee: Steve WILDGOOSE

Weather Conditions: Sunny and Warm

Attendance: 41

**Report (by Laurence Hughes):** Our first Pre-Season Friendly of the new 11-a-side campaign saw us facing mid-table Division Three side Highway United, a team we had never played before, but an established club in the Mercury Waltham Sunday League nonetheless. That saw them turn up with a squad of 15 and well before the scheduled 10.30.a.m. kick-off in order to put up the nets and have an organised warm-up...and it was good job they did as the pitch had been double-booked due to crossed wires between those in charge at Brimsdown Sports & Social Club, therefore leaving our newly-promoted Division One rivals Cheshunt Corinthians and their Edmonton Sunday League opponents Tommy's Bar having to stand on the touchline watching our match first before they could get on there. (If Highway United had turned up after 10.00.a.m. to put the nets up, then they would have been beaten us to it and it would have been us having a long wait!)

That saw our match having to be reduced to just 35 minutes each way, but that was good news for us, as predictably our squad of 17 the evening before had gone down to 13 come the morning of the match with Steve Cokell, Terry Brown, Jamie Martin and prospective new signing Rob Jackson all dropping out at the last minute for various reasons. In addition to that, Danny Hagan's mate Oliver Tedder and (as usual) Scott Jenkins had both turned up pissed, leaving Manager Trevor Hughes in a situation where he had to play numerous players out of position and utilise a 4-4-2 formation instead of the 3-4-1-2 system that had worked well for us towards the end of last season.

Although we were missing nine first-choice players through injuries or family commitments in Darryl Johnson, Stuart Dorward, Conor McGovern, Terry Moore, Martin Loveday, Rob Brown, Vernon 'Kizza' Nxumalo and the aforementioned Steve Cokell & Terry Brown, we intended to use this match to give several prospective new signings a game anyway, and indeed ex-London Ajax players Paul Duffy, Joe Ansell and Danny Smith were all making their 11-a-side debuts together with substitute Tedder (who was helping us out because we were short of defenders), while goalkeeper Simon Jackson was making his first Rovers 11-a-side appearance for a couple of seasons, Clark Williams was making a rare appearance after long-term injury problems and Ramel Palmer was playing in only his second game for the club after struggling in his debut last season having not played at this level of Sunday football previously.

Despite all that, we actually started off looking quite sharp with some crisp one and two-touch passing, no doubt because at least six of our starting line-up had been playing regularly for us in the Summer 7-a-side League. When recently-crowned Players' Player Of The Year Danny Hagan put us ahead in the 13th minute then with a Goal Of The Season contender already after a brilliant move with Daniel Daley, it looked as if the two-Division gap between us and our opponents would prove to be too great, despite the weakened side we were fielding. However, Highway United had most of their regulars from last season playing with only their goalkeeper failing to turn up, and they hit back straight away when forward Harry Nolan also scored an excellent goal just a minute later with a first-time chip into the far top corner which gave 'Jacko' no chance. It was then that we had a bad spell as Highway grew in confidence and started catching some of our players out of position, although the goal that put them 2-1 up in the 21st minute was slightly fortunate as Dwain Stephens' shot from just inside the area took a deflection off Paul Duffy and went into the bottom corner.

Although 'Jacko' was not tested again apart from a few crosses, we didn't really create much ourselves in the First Half apart from Danny Hagan's goal and we probably deserved to be 2-1 down at Half-Time. Clark Williams and Daniel Daley then came off for a breather with Scott Jenkins and Oliver Tedder having both 'sort of' sobered up enough to come on for the start of the Second Half, Daley's problem being asthma due to it being a very humid day with no breeze whatsoever. However, he managed to find one of Stuart Dorward's old inhalers in the medical kit, and despite it being covered in rust and fungus, it still worked well enough to relieve his symptoms and allow him to come back on for his cousin Ramel Palmer with 17 minutes left, which was quite timely as we had been looking very flat without Daley's pace up front, and no doubt the watching Cheshunt Corinthians players on the touchline (which included one of our ex-players Adam Stock) were rubbing their hands in anticipation of an easy six points against us this season.



We then made another substitution four minutes later with Clark coming back on for Tem Adil though, who had just seen a good curling shot go wide but was struggling with his fitness as usual. That saw Danny Smith go from left-back into his more favoured position in midfield and that made a difference straight away with Daley equalising a minute later with a good finish into the bottom corner after a quick turn just inside the area.

Highway then decided to make a rash of substitutions but unlike us, they preferred to start with their strongest side and give fringe players and unknown trialists a game towards the end of the match. That saw Daniel Daley have a field day in the last 10 minutes as massive gaps started appearing in the Highway defence (unlike what happens in Division One matches), and he really should have put us 3-2 up in the 61st minute when Scott Jenkins put him clean through but he sidefooted wide with only keeper Aaron Peacock (an outfield player) to beat and with most of their players standing on the half-way line having given up!

However, Daley soon made amends for that with a brilliant solo goal just a couple of minutes later which was reminiscent of the one he scored against St. Mary's at Hazelwood the season before last when he bulldozed his way through several defenders, and then just four minutes after that he completed his hat-trick to put us 4-2 up with a close-range finish from Joe Ansell's low cross following a raking cross-field ball from Danny Smith.

Highway did have a chance to pull it back to 4-3 when the impressive Harry Nolan (who was by far their best player) curled a close-range shot against the top of the crossbar after a clever piece of skill, but Daley once again showed him how to finish when he made it 5-2 with the last kick of the game despite being hauled down by keeper Peacock, who had misjudged an awkwardly-bouncing long ball.

The final scoreline did flatter us a bit as most of the game was fairly close, which was what we had expected beforehand with us fielding an experimental side, but it was three players who really made the difference, namely Daley for his four goals, Danny Hagan for his work-rate in midfield and Alan Barnard for holding our defence together as usual, and they all proved in this match that they will definitely be three of the first names on Manager Trevor Hughes's team-sheet this season if they are going to be available regularly. It was good to see the ex-London Ajax players fitting in well though, and it was pretty obvious that they will all be pushing for a regular place in the starting line-up, and that some of our long-standing players will have to start playing a bit more regularly if they want to keep their places in the side.

Meanwhile, Stuart Dorward's old asthma inhaler is currently being sent to a laboratory for analysis!

### TREVOR HUGHES's MANAGER'S REPORT

Our first pre season friendly was against Division 3 side Highway United. Despite our large squad we only managed to muster a squad of 13 by Sunday morning. Debutant Oliver Tedder and, not surprisingly, Scott Jenkins were suffering from Saturday night so were the obvious substitutes. Simon Jackson returned in goal but the only regulars from last season were Alan Barnard, Danny Hagan, Tem Adil, Tony King and Daniel Daley. We had three new signings from London Ajax making their debuts, Paul Duffy, Dan Smith and Joe Ansell. Ramel Palmer partnered his friend Daley up front. Clark Williams made a welcome comeback after injury and started at centre half. Another midfielder, Dan Smith started out of position at left back as we were short of defenders.

The game was reduced to 35 minutes each way because of a double booking for the pitch but that suited us for a first friendly as we are always concerned about our lack of fitness. We took the lead with an excellent goal in the 13<sup>th</sup> minute from Danny Hagan after Daley's superb turn and through ball put him clear. However, just a minute later

Highway equalised with an excellent first time chip leaving Jacko with no chance. We struggled to play good football in the first half as the combination of new players and players playing out of position hindered our team play. We went behind after 29 minutes when some poor defending led to a deflected shot beating Jacko. At half time Daley came off as he was suffering from asthma and Scott Jenkins came on up front. I found an old asthma pump in the medical kit and after a 15 minute breather Daley came back on replacing Ramel up front. I also moved Dan Smith into midfield and within a minute Daley equalised after a good move. Daley then scored a brilliant solo goal and completed a 10 minute hat trick from Joe Ansell's cross after a fine pass by Dan Smith. Two minutes into injury time Daley found himself clear again and after a mistake by the keeper he tapped in with the last kick of the match to give him a fourth goal in just 14 minutes and give us a flattering 5-2 winning margin.