

Sunday 22nd January 2006

Mercury Waltham Sunday League Division One Match at Wormley Playing Fields (Pitch 6)

I.M.L. RED COW	6	EDMONTON ROVERS	0	HT 2-0
Nicky Marsh (4, 43 mins.), Andy Chapman (52, 58 mins.), Kai Ramshaw (77 mins.), Dan Burt (87 mins.)				

I.M.L. RED COW'S LINE-UP: Hans MAHER (GK); Chris HUMPHREYS, Lee BONE, Jamie NICHOLSON, Steve NIEBANK; Dan BURT, Lee NICHOLSON, Neil WILSON, Dom ALLUM; Nicky MARSH, Andy CHAPMAN **Subs.:** Kai RAMSHAW, Rob SYRETT, Paul KIELTY

EDMONTON ROVERS LINE-UP (with Marks out of 10): Gary COKELL (GK) (6); Colin BESTER (6), Ritchie COPUES (6), Paul WOOLSTON (6½), Peter MURPHY (6); Kris SPYROU (6), Derek DORWARD (6), JUNEKA JUNIOR (6½), Conor McGOVERN (7), Foysoh AHMED (6); Steve COKELL (6) **Subs.:** None !

Referee: Gary BAILEY

Weather Conditions: Sunny but cold

Attendance: 10

Factual Report (by Laurence Hughes): Back in the 2003-2004 Season, our opponents' I.M.L. Red Cow played our ill-fated Reserve Team twice in Division Four and encountered various examples of embarrassingly poor technique and ability such as [this](#) (*Broadband Connection recommended !*).

We therefore promised I.M.L. Red Cow that there would be no repeat of the 'Ali (Ahmed) Shuffle' *this* time, as our First Team were all quality players who would give their Senior Saturday football-quality squad a good close game. As usual though, whenever we come up against a team as good as this...and I.M.L. Red Cow had won 13 out of 13 in all competitions this season before this match...we go and suffer from mass unavailability which on this occasion actually saw us fielding a weaker side than the Reserves did in both of those fixtures two years ago !

It all started earlier in the week when we knew we would be without both proper goalkeepers, Darryl Johnson & Simon Jackson, because of injury, plus first-choice outfield players Terry Moore, Andrew Warmerdam and Nick Vertigans because of family & social commitments. Another key defender Tony Speller, then confirmed that he had still not recovered from a long-term injury (when we were hoping he might have done so by now), so he dropped out as well, then Chris 'Nugget' Beeden pulled out because of commitments with his girlfriend and John McLoughlin dropped out on the Friday before the match because of a catalogue of 'old-age wear & tear niggling injuries'. At that stage though, we still had a reasonable squad of 14 available of which we were confident might be able to spring a surprise on I.M.L. Red Cow, but there were still three more first-choice players to drop out yet...and that was what really did the damage. Firstly, Robin Pryke decided that he had not recovered sufficiently enough from a recent bout of flu, although he had studying commitments anyway which is now likely to keep him out for the rest of the season, then skipper Stuart Dorward had to drop out when his baby son Harry was rushed into Hospital over the weekend (thankfully, Harry is now back home and making a good recovery), then finally, on the morning of the match, key midfielder Paul Ellerker failed to arrive, leaving us down to just a bare eleven.

The reason for Ellerker's absence appeared to be because I put 'No Match Arranged' [here](#) under 'Opponents' on the Fixture pages on this website and then expected players to read the 'small print' underneath that explained 'No Match Arranged...*At The Moment*', because the League might re-arrange something for us 7-10 days before the date in question...as indeed happened on *this* occasion ! Of course invariably, players can only have a quick glance at the website at work as the boss is hovering around in the background, so they never read 'the small print', and from the 'bollocking' I got in the changing rooms from the usual suspects when Ellerker explained this to me at 10.15.a.m., obviously I am now going to have to put something on the Fixtures page which is going to leave players guessing all week from now on as to whether we have got a match or not when we don't have one arranged initially, something which their wives & girlfriends will definitely not be happy with !? Totally my fault...as usual !

All of this left us fielding a makeshift team which included just four first-choice players (Conor McGovern, Derek Dorward, Steve Cokell and skipper for the day Paul Woolston), while Peter Murphy had to play out of position at left-back and Juneka Junior, Foysoh Ahmed, Ritchie Copues and 17-year-old Kris Spyrou were all given rare starts, but at least they had been turning up regularly to training...unlike most other club members !

Outfield player Gary Cokell also had to go in goal yet again, while 18-year-old Colin Bester continued at right-back, but we had plenty of other problems in addition to our eventual line-up, as Manager Trevor Hughes was in bed with flu and Assistant Manager (and Club Linesman) Mark Howley was nowhere to be seen. Fortunately, Assistant Secretary Russell Beeden was not going up to Manchester for his latest 10-week job until the following day, so he was able to be Manager for the day, something he is very capable of doing, but as for myself, I was certainly not the best candidate for Club Linesman, as it meant the game would not be captured on video. However, with no other club members turning up whatsoever, we therefore had no choice unless we wanted to incur a £5.00 fine from the League. It was important that 'Tarby' was able to act 'properly' as Manager without having to run the line himself though, as there was a 'helluva lot' of organising and shouting to do if we wanted to get a result against this sort of opposition. Of course I did warn everybody on the Forum a couple of weeks earlier that I was going to end up as Club Linesman (for the first time ever instead of videoing a match !) sooner or later, but I was just 'laughed at'. As it turned out, it was a good job that this game was not captured on video, but if it happens when we actually win (or even score a goal !), then it *is* going to be very annoying. In addition to I.M.L. Red Cow's impressive record, we had come into this match ourselves on the back of an *appalling* record of having lost seven out of our last nine matches, and that from having fielded much stronger line-ups than this one, so it wasn't surprising that we found ourselves 1-0 down after only four minutes when Colin Bester appeared to be trying to play forward Andy Chapman offside as a first thought without looking across to see what his fellow defenders were doing, and instead of just marking him normally and getting goalside. Chapman then squared the ball across for his strike partner Nicky Marsh to produce a clinical finish, but despite that, our heads didn't go down at all and we actually played quite well for the rest of the half, with Steve Cokell and Conor McGovern both having some decent efforts at goal, some of which were well saved by I.M.L.'s former Astral United keeper Hans Maher, who I can remember being described as 'Buster Bloodvessel' by one of our players in his Astral days !?

I.M.L. had more chances though, simply because they were better players, but they didn't really test Gary Cokell much at all and hit quite a few reasonable chances high and wide, although the gluepot pitch obviously didn't help. However, we did well to stop them scoring from one move after about 30 minutes when Colin Bester made up for his error with the first goal with a brilliant headed clearance 'off the line' to stop Andy Chapman scoring a second from a Nicky Marsh cross....a piece of action which would definitely have been a contender for Clip Of The Week had the game been filmed ! In fact as the half drew to a close, we had actually done enough to suggest that we could actually nick a draw at least, as Conor McGovern, Steve Cokell and Derek Dorward were all quite capable of scoring, while Brazilian Juneka Junior was starting to get to grips with the English conditions more and more. However, I.M.L.'s Nicky Marsh had already shown that he was a cut above anybody else on the pitch (presumably he plays for a top Semi-Pro side on Saturdays...or has done in the past), as he easily danced his way past Ritchie Copues and Paul Woolston with some clever footwork to put his side 2-0 up just two minutes before the interval, which was a bit of a killer blow for us and something that we seem to allow quite often. We had a positive Half-Time team-talk though, but that all went out of the window just seven minutes into the Second Half when stand-in keeper Gary Cokell produced another howler for the second week in a row as Andy Chapman's harmless-looking shot squirmed out of his hands and the ball trundled over the line to make it 3-0. That of course killed the game off, and although everybody continued to try their best and nobody gave up, by that stage Ritchie Copues was more or less a passenger due to his long-term ankle injury flaring up again, and with I.M.L. bringing on three quality substitutes and us not having anybody, the rest of the game just turned into a 'piss-about' and a bit of a stroll for them, something which we feared would happen as soon as all our best players started dropping out during the week.

Chapman then scored his second and I.M.L.'s 4th just four minutes later with an easy tap-in from another Marsh cross from the right, then substitute Kai Ramshaw made it 5-0 in the 77th minute after easily getting past the injured Ritchie Copues and beating Gary Cokell in a one-on-one before Dan Burt rounded off the scoring in the 87th minute with a tap-in on the goal-line after a corner had been headed down to him. (I think our zonal marking system had been semi-abandoned by then !?).

Unfortunately, 6-0 was probably an accurate reflection of I.M.L.'s dominance in the end, but none of our players performed particularly badly considering the circumstances. Although Peter Murphy didn't play as well as normal through having to play in an unfamiliar role, the I.M.L. supporters on the touchline told me (as I was running the line in front of them) that they were impressed with the way he controlled the ball and played it simple, plus the fact that they knew he was a 41-year-old from reading this website and that they hoped they would be able to play at this level when they are his age ! At the other end of the scale, Colin Bester and Kris Spyrou both played

much better defensively in the Second Half, even though Colin was struggling with an injury towards the end, but Foysoh Ahmed had a very quiet game, which was a bit disappointing when he had looked very sharp at training during the week.

All in all though, it was good for some of these fringe players to get a full game and the experience will do them good, but everybody agreed afterwards that we must make sure we get a full-strength side (or as near as dammit) out when we play I.M.L. Red Cow at Home, then we can really see just how good they are...or how bad we are !!!?

'Murf's Alternative Report !!: It was a dark day in Rovers' season made worse by the squad being reduced to a bare eleven for a variety of reasons from injury to a breakdown in communication. This resulted in people being played out of position from Gary Cokell in goal through to Cameraman Hughes running the line, the latter due to Manager Hughes going down with the 'flu. In the context of the day it was perhaps a blessing that The Cameraman was relieved of his normal duties for this was a video nasty if ever there was one. Suffice to say, your scribe had a nightmare, a performance in no way worthy of the shirt. A day to forget. And I'm making a start already.

[Click Here](#) for I.M.L. Red Cow's website.