

Sunday 31st August 2003

Pre-Season Friendly Match at the Ashton Playing Fields, Woodford Green

EDMONTON ROVERS RESERVES	1	KING WILLIAM IV & ST. JOSEPHS	2	HT 0-0
<i>L.Harrison (65 mins.)</i>		<i>Griffiths (50, 60 mins.)</i>		

Edmonton Rovers Line-Up (with Marks out of 10): Simon JACKSON (GK) (8); Laurence HUGHES ! (7), Mark HOWLEY (7), Terry DELLER (7½), Nebi 'Lee' SIMSEK (7); Lexton HARRISON (7), Brian KAMUTEKU (7), Barry MATTHEWS (7), Jerome HARRISON (7); Sheriff ALAGAN (7), Mashood BURAAHEE (7) **Subs:** None

King William IV & St. Josephs Line-Up: Martin SOUTHALL (GK); Nigel WHITMORE, Dave MASON, Mick WOLFE, Mark BUTCHER; Mike BOX, Robert COBB, Jon O'SHEA, Glen DOUGHTY; Rob BOX, Mark GRIFFITHS **Sub.:** Tim CARR (GK)

Referee: Peter HAYES (St. Josephs player)

Weather Conditions: Warm & Sunny

Attendance: 14

Report: Up until the Friday before this game it looked as if both our First & Reserve Teams would be fielding two strong squads for their respective matches with at least five substitutes each. However, a mass 'last-minute' cry-off by numerous club members and the non-appearance (without explanation) of Myron Mc,Kay and Dave Bagnall resulted in the First Team having just the bare eleven for *their* match and the Reserves having to field Manager Mark Howley (risking his 'dodgy back') and a certain 44-year-old Cameraman, Chairman & Secretary (who had not done any sort of sporting activity for four months due to work commitments and was therefore almost as unfit as Mashood Burahee !). However, we were fortunate that Sheriff Alagan and Nebi 'Lee' Simsek (a prospective new signing) both turned up unexpectedly and that allowed us to just about scrape up eleven for the Reserves as well.

With such a weakened side though (we had nine Reserve Team 'regulars' missing !), it was always likely that keeper Simon Jackson was going to end up as our man-of-the match, and it was all down to him (and the 'referee' playing only 35 minutes for some reason) that we managed to go in at Half-Time without conceding anything. However, Sheriff Alagan (who was playing in his first Rovers match for three years having moved to live in South London) did waste two or three good chances on the break in the First Half by shooting wide, straight at the keeper or not at all after using his pace to find himself clean through on goal. Division Three side King William IV & St.Josephs though, had a lot more experience and fielded a large number of players who had played against our First Team in Division One or Two over the last few years, so they didn't really need a helping hand from their own referee right on the Half-Time whistle when he awarded them a penalty for what was a perfectly good tackle inside the area by Lexton Harrison, who was actually on the receiving end of a foul himself in doing so...*and* nobody even *appealed* for a penalty ! However, Simon Jackson dived full-length to his left to beat the spot-kick away, this being one of many excellent saves he made throughout the match, and probably one of the best penalty saves ever by a Rovers keeper in our 27-year history...not that there have been that many.

Unfortunately though, our makeshift defence were always going to gift our opponents a goal sooner or later and roughly 15 minutes into the Second Half, King William IV & St. Josephs took the lead when Mark Howley was apparently pushed in the back somewhere in the build-up, which led to Terry Deller misjudging a headed clearance in the six-yard box and yours truly being outpaced in a two-yard sprint by speedy forward Mark Griffiths, who easily toe-poked the ball past Simon Jackson from almost on the goal-line.

It then looked as if we would really crumble, especially fitness-wise, but when the blazing hot sun finally went in for a spell 10 minutes later it signalled an urge from a certain Laurence Hughes to make his first foray over the Half-Way line to support the attack from the Right-Back position, only to get stranded way upfield when Sheriff Alagan gave the ball away...and when it was hoofed downfield, that saw Griffiths easily outpace the rest of our defenders to convincingly blast the ball past Simon Jackson and make it 2-0.

To our credit though, nobody's heads went down after that, even though Simon did have to make a few more saves yet to keep us in the game, and in fact several players started playing a lot better as the game went on, especially the previously-derided Mashood Burahee, debutant Nebi 'Lee' Simsek (who was playing out of position at Left-Back) and Brian Kamuteku (who suddenly woke up half-way through the match...as usual ?) and indeed we scored an excellent goal to pull it back to 2-1 in the 65th minute as a slick move ended with skipper for the day Lexton Harrison racing onto Sheriff Alagan's through ball to produce a good finish after using his pace in getting there first ahead of the keeper.

We never really looked like equalising though and the referee blew for Full-Time after a 40-minute Second Half to lessen the chances of us doing so anyway. However Manager Mark Howley was very pleased with the performance afterwards, despite this defeat, and the prospects for our Reserve Team in Division 4 this season don't look quite as worrying as they did before this match with certain players improving all the time and a number of new signings lined up during the coming weeks...if they remember to bring their passport-sized photos !