

Sunday 6th November 2005

Mercury Waltham Sunday League Senior Cup Second Round Match at Hazelwood Sports Ground

EDMONTON ROVERS	1	LEA VALLEY ROYALS	3	HT 0-3
Warmerdam (60 mins.)		D.Winger (9 mins.), R.Sharp (18 mins.), N.Winger (44 mins.)		

EDMONTON ROVERS LINE-UP (with Marks out of 10): Darryl JOHNSON (GK) (7); Tony SPELLER (6½), Andrew WARMERDAM (7), Paul WOOLSTON (6½), Terry MOORE (7½); Stuart DORWARD (7), Paul ELLERKER (7), Nick VERTIGANS (6½), Peter MURPHY (6½); Conor McGOVERN (6½), Steve COKELL (6½)
Subs.: Colin BESTER (6½), Daniel GEORGE (6½), JUNEKA JUNIOR (Not Used)

LEA VALLEY ROYALS' LINE-UP: Nick SHARP; Danny BEECH, Paul ANNIS, Dan WINGER, Darren BEECH; Joe COLLINS, Gary THOMAS, Nicky WINGER, Alex CROWHURST; Adrian DEVINE, Rob SHARP
Subs.: Aaron WHITE, Steve HARRISON, Angelo SINITTI

Referee: Trevor IRVING

Weather Conditions: Wet & Windy

Attendance: 19



Factual Report (by Laurence Hughes): During the week before this match there were one or two complaints on the [Forum](#) about Manager Trevor Hughes's decision to name a squad of 18 instead of the usual 16...18 because it included several players of whom it was uncertain whether they had Internet access to find out if they were in the squad or not, or who were currently suffering from 'flu' or niggling injuries. The complaints were actually down to our 'unnecessary' request for those not named in the 18 to come along and watch and bring their boots just in case more than four players dropped out on the morning of the match...and sure

enough, it happened !

Firstly, we received text messages from Vernon 'Kizza' Nxumalo and John Mc,Loughlin saying that they would not be coming (I don't know why, although I believe John gave Conor Mc,Govern a reason ?), then Stuart Dorward turned up to say his brother Derek had dropped out because he couldn't get his car to start and wouldn't be able to play without having transport straight after the game as he was due to be working in the afternoon. It then gradually became clear that new signing Flory Zinga was not going to appear, as his work colleague Derek Dorward had been on different shifts during the week and evidently didn't tell him he was in the squad, so that left us down to 14, including another new signing, Brazilian Juneka Junior. However, there was no sign of *him* at the kick-off, and when he turned up just after the start, it became clear that he didn't know he was in the squad either and had just turned up to watch, this being almost certainly down to the fact that he hardly speaks any English at the moment. At least he brought his boots and got changed though, so we had three substitutes in the end, but it was a close call, and our 'pessimism' was certainly justified !

The absence of Flory Zinga was a blow though, as befits a player who had played a couple of games for Cambridge United in the Football League last season, he had shown enough in training during the week to suggest he could be as good as the 'legendary' Marco Ellerker, and as we were playing an in-form and what appeared to be a full-strength Premier Division team in this match, he obviously would have come in very handy.

However, we still fielded a stronger side than the one we put out the previous week (when we lost 3-0 to London Ajax), as key players Paul Woolston and Paul Ellerker both returned, while Andrew



Warmerdam (another ex-Everest player of proven quality) was able to make his 11-a-side debut at last, having played for us in the Summer 7-a-side League. Unfortunately though, a Stag Night and other social commitments the night before had left a number of our starting line-up bleary-eyed and in a bit of a daze early on, and in facing a near gale-force wind and incessant horizontal rain in defending the 'cowshed' end in the First Half, we were really up against it right from the off. Indeed in our three meetings with Lea Valley Royals last season, they played the same way every time in really throwing men forward and not hesitating to shoot at every opportunity, but all the while taking some massive risks at the back...and

this game was no different. Unfortunately, we couldn't capitalise on that in the First Half, as Conor McGovern in particular looked half-asleep, as did skipper Stuart Dorward, who was playing in a right-sided midfield role for the first time since the late-90's, this being a position it was hoped would boost our current poor goalscoring ratio. We gradually started passing the ball about a bit better as the First Half went on, but found it very difficult to create many clear-cut chances and especially to test keeper Nick Sharp, who as in Lea Valley Royals' apparent recent 'tradition', was actually an outfield player !

Undoubtedly in the First Half, we were still getting used to fielding yet *another* different starting line-up including four players new to the club (or First Team) this season, and indeed only three players remained from the side that lost by a narrow 4-3 margin to our opponents in a Premier Division match at Hazelwood almost exactly a year ago. That, and the dreadful weather conditions which never seem to suit us at all, saw Lea Valley Royals take the lead after just 9 minutes when a wind-assisted corner by Darren Beech was whipped in to the far post where Peter Murphy did well to head it off the line and onto the angle of post & crossbar, but Royals midfielder Joe Collins was first to react to the rebound and get in a close-range shot which deflected off the knee of Dan Winger to leave Darryl Johnson helpless. (Lea Valley Royals actually credited Winger with this goal, which seemed a bit harsh on Collins).

'D.J.' then had to face a battering from a number of fiercely-struck long-range shots thereafter, although apart from one spectacular flying tip-over save, most of them were fortunately straight at him, even though he got away with the odd fumble from time to time...these occasional spillages being as a result of him having to wear the proper club goalkeeper's grey top instead of his personally acquired new yellow one due to a colour clash with Lea Valley Royals new Yellow & Black striped kit. (The grey one has a shiny front and his new yellow one some sort of grip...apparently !).

Darryl could do nothing about Lea Valley Royals' second goal in the 18th minute though...an excellent glancing header by forward Rob Sharp from a whipped-in right-wing cross by Danny Beech, and at that stage it looked as if we were going to suffer a really heavy defeat with finishing like that. However, our teamwork started to improve as the half went on, even though it was real backs-to-the-wall stuff most of the time because of the strong wind against us, and with just a minute to go to the break, we thought that maybe only a 2-0 deficit wasn't too bad and we might have a chance in the Second Half. Unfortunately though, Referee Irving then gave a contentious free-kick against Paul Woolston for an aerial challenge just outside the area and Nicky Winger's deflected shot from that put them 3-0 up at Half-Time and left us feeling very deflated as we came off.

Thankfully though, we had a really good positive team-talk during the break and we really decided to give it a go in the Second Half and try and get a goal back straight away. It was fortunate that we didn't though, as it would have been missed on video thanks to Trevor Hughes not bothering with my request for him to tell Referee Irving to wait for me to adjust the camera's rain-mac in the blustery wind and insert a new tape and battery before he whistled for the Second Half to get underway...this being a 'job and a half' to complete in the ridiculously short 30-second 'let's not hang about getting wet and get back out there' Half-Time interval everybody *else* wanted !



In fact I had just about sorted everything out (except for a really irritating dangling lens cap rattling about in the wind) by the time Andrew Warmerdam pulled a goal back for us in the 60th minute with an expertly-drilled low shot into the bottom corner from the edge of the area, but unfortunately the rest of our players couldn't shoot like that and despite playing really well in the Second Half and being by far the better side, we rarely tested keeper Sharp and had to settle for numerous good efforts going agonisingly wide, especially from forwards Steve Cokell and Conor McGovern, who both played better than they did the previous week, but just don't seem to be getting much luck at the moment.

Once again then, we ended up going out of yet another Cup competition in the First Round...this was actually the Second Round, but we had a Bye in the First Round...but there were a few positives we can take out of this match in that it was another close game against good opposition, youngsters Colin Bester and Dan George both came on in the Second Half and did well, and the new players we have added to the squad this season are clearly a lot more consistent and committed than those we have lost since the end of *last* season.

Hopefully then, there is still much to look forward to this season, despite this defeat.

'Murf's Alternative Report !!: On the weekend the F.A. Cup got underway, Rovers themselves were in Cup action at home to Premier Leaguers Lea Valley Royals. On a typical cup morning – wet and windy – the major team news centred round the debut of training ground maestro Flory Zinga. Expectation was rife everywhere except within the Bester household for Colin's mum was, unusually, nowhere to be seen. Just like Zinga. For, in time honoured Sunday morning tradition, the new defender didn't turn up. And on the subject of Sunday morning traditions, another was upheld as several of Rovers' finest turned up clutching Red Bulls as an antidote to hangovers royally earned the night before.

Rovers kicked off into a head wind and it was soon clear that Red Bull's advertising should be taken with a large pinch of salt, some black coffee and an early night. Lea Valley dominated early possession and it was no surprise when they took the lead in the 9th minute. The goal came from a corner whipped in with the wind to the far post on which your scribe managed to get the finest of touches. This owed a fair slice of luck to the Murphy slap being left unshaven and diverted the ball onto the bar. The rebound was a little unkind and Lea Valley drove it straight back into DJ's bottom corner.

On 18 minutes it was 2-0 to the visitors as a well delivered cross was neatly headed home giving DJ no chance. A little shell shocked, Rovers then began to play their way back into the game. One or two promising moves broke down around the Lea Valley box before that well known football cliché, the turning point, reared its ugly head. Connor McGovern deftly controlled a falling ball and swivelled to steer a shot from 12 yards which grazed the bar. From the resulting goal kick, delivered like so many a full 70 yards into the heart of Rovers' half, the visitors were awarded a free kick for a push. The taker took a pot shot which cruelly found the net via Nick Vertigans' headed deflection.

The third came just before half-time and was a bit of a sickener for the jades who'd steadied their ship after a poor start. However, the half-time mood was positive and, as Cameraman Hughes wrestled with his lens cap and plastic sheeting, Manager Hughes urged his men not to succumb to the temptation to overhit the ball now the wind would be behind. Thus eager to return to the fray, Rovers took the field promptly though Cameraman Hughes was not ready. His plastic was still flapping, a tad like its owner who beseeched Manager Hughes to ask the ref to delay the restart. Receiving short shrift delivered in a four letter form with typical brotherly love, the Cameraman was still floundering when the ref blew his whistle. The Premiership waits for Sky, the F.A. Cup for the BBC but the Mercury Waltham Sunday League Senior Cup waits for no man. After a quiet first five minutes, Rovers slowly began to carve out some chances while at the same time adhering to Manager Hughes' half-time instructions. And on the hour mark, Rovers pulled one back through debutant Andrew Warmerdam's crisp low shot from a half-cleared corner. At 3-1 down Rovers pushed on and Steve Cokell was presented with a golden opportunity when put through one on one with the 'keeper. Now often 'keepers rush out to close the angle but this one bided his time giving Cokell what all strikers hate – time to think. As he made ground into the area the 'keeper finally ventured forward to divert Cokell's shot wide for a corner.

On 75 minutes Manager Hughes continued his policy of managing the Murphy finances by withdrawing the veteran in favour of Dan George - with another two quid in the bank, next week's trip to New York is becoming ever more affordable.

As the game drew to a close, a watching punter suffered an inverted umbrella moment (*See picture above right*) while Conner McGovern missed from three yards after excellent work down

the left by Steve Cokell.

The final score line of 3-1 was perhaps a little harsh as it had proved a veritable game of two halves, the first being Royals', the second Rovers'. In contrast to last week's disappointing performance, the positive was that Rovers looked far more creative and had given a decent side a good game. This resulted in an upbeat dressing room despite the defeat and once Wooly got Juneke Junior talking, there was no shutting him up.

So, after a cliché laden game which saw Rovers out of the second of three cup competitions entered, it is now time to concentrate on the league. Well, what else can we do?