

Sunday 29th January 2006

Mercury Waltham Sunday League Division One Match at Hazelwood Sports Ground

EDMONTON ROVERS	2	LONDON AJAX	2	HT 1-2
Vertigans (37 mins.), Ahmed (93 mins.)		D.Brown (24 mins.), Terry Moore (Own Goal) (35 mins.)		

EDMONTON ROVERS LINE-UP (with Marks out of 10): Andrew WARMERDAM (GK) (7); Paul WOOLSTON (7), Stuart DORWARD (7), Terry MOORE (7); Foyso! AHMED (6½), Paul ELLERKER (7), Nick VERTIGANS (7), JUNEKA JUNIOR (7), Kris SPYROU (6½); Conor McGOVERN (7), Steve COKELL (6½)
Subs.: Daniel GEORGE (6½), Ritchie COPUES (Not Used)

LONDON AJAX'S LINE-UP: Bobby SMITH; Paul DUFFY, Aaron BULLOCK, Mark NELSON, Danny SMITH; Joe ANSELL, Rob BROWN, Marc BUSH, Terry BROWN; Danny BROWN, Gerard PRENDERVILLE
Subs.: Jamie MARTIN, Dan THURSTON

Referee: Denis COVENTRY

Weather Conditions: Sunny but Frosty

Attendance: 7



Factual Report (by Laurence Hughes):

Up until our disastrous 6-0 defeat to I.M.L. Red Cow the previous week, London Ajax were the only team we had played in Division One so far this season who had actually deserved to beat us, although maybe not by the 3-0 margin they managed in their victory at a windswept Enfield Playing Fields back in October. With London Ajax having won four and drawn two of their six League matches played since then (and sitting pretty at the top of Division One as a result), they were not the sort of opposition we would have wanted to be playing after a run of five defeats in a row. However, some sort of miracle happened here. Not so much that we managed to gain a point, but the fact that nobody

whatsoever dropped out of the squad after it had been named on the preceding Wednesday morning !!!

Although that helped in some ways, we still only had five survivors from the 13-man squad we put out against London Ajax last time, while we made five changes to our starting line-up from the I.M.L. Red Cow match the week before. There's no doubt that not being able to field a settled side due to injuries and work & family commitments has cost us dear, while the lack of available defenders for this game meant that Manager Trevor Hughes (who had just about recovered from a bout of flu) had no option but to play an experimental formation which this time consisted of a three-man defence with Foyso! Ahmed and Kris Spyrou playing as wide midfielders, but *not* as wing-

backs because we fielded two midfield holding players in Paul Ellerker and Juneke Junior. Nick Vertigans was then given a free attacking midfield role to support our usual front two of Conor McGovern and Steve Cokell, while defender Andrew Warmerdam this time volunteered to become our latest stand-in keeper with Gary Cokell unavailable.

Although we were missing no less than seven outfield players (in addition to 'Warmers') who would have been in contention for a place in the starting line-up (Derek Dorward, Chris 'Nugget' Beeden, Peter Murphy, Tony Speller, Robin Pryke, Colin Bester & John McLaughlin), we were still fielding a reasonable side which we thought might be capable of giving London Ajax a decent game, and so it proved.

We were a bit worried before the game kicked off though (or at least I was) as the pitch was still rather frozen after a hard overnight frost, and although it was almost as flat as a bowling green (thanks to the work put in by Saturday side Broomfield once again !) with not a divot in sight, Referee Denis Coventry's studs were making quite a loud 'clacking' noise as he walked across the surface 10 minutes before kick-off. Of course Paul Woolston (being the 'hard man' ? 🤔)



immediately said 'What are you talking about, frozen ?. This pitch is perfectly playable !'. The game then kicked off and Stuart Dorward immediately went skating across the six-yard box to gift London Ajax midfielder Joe Ansell a chance which was somehow not taken, while two or three other penalty area scrambles followed shortly afterwards which we managed to get the better of defensively...just.

The players gradually got more used to the surface though with the occasional change of footwear helping, but with London Ajax fielding a near full-strength and much more settled

side than us, it was no surprise that they managed to take the lead in the 24th minute when Danny Brown fired in a first-time shot from just inside the area from Terry Brown's cut-back from the byline...a good goal that we were not particularly at fault for.

Not that it was easy defending the 'cowshed end' as the sun was out with not a cloud in the sky, which at Hazelwood means the defenders are blinded, this being Stuart Dorward's excuse for a dreadful [Gary Southam](#)-style blunder which left Gerard Prenderville clean through, but 'Warmers' managed to make an excellent save diving at his feet. Unfortunately though, without a proper keeper there was always likely to be a 'cock-up' at some stage, and a misunderstanding between Warmers and Terry Moore in the 35th minute saw the latter's side-footed backpass trundle into an empty net to give London Ajax a 2-0 lead.

At that stage, most of our players probably would have conceded that the three points were already beyond us given the current form of both sides, although we had been passing the ball around well in midfield and getting into positions which should have seen our players try their luck at shooting a bit more. Thankfully though, Nick Vertigans got us back into the match just two minutes later when he rounded keeper Bobby Smith to finish off a good move involving Paul Ellerker and Conor McGovern and we ended the half well after that.

With London Ajax having to defend against the sun in the Second Half and the pitch gradually starting to thaw out (which suited us), we came out positively after the break, but London Ajax certainly proved they are one of the better sides defensively in the Division (except for when they play Europa ?) as apart from an excellent double save from Nick Vertigans and Steve Cokell in the 65th minute, we found it very difficult to really test keeper Smith despite having a lot of possession, while up the other end 'Warmers' had to make a couple of good saves and was lucky to see a shot from Terry Brown rebound off the foot of his far post late on when they had a four against one situation in their favour on the break. Not that we played badly ourselves though...far from it, as we continued to look quite comfortable playing with the 3-2-3-2 formation. We did start to get frustrated as the game went on though with Juneke Junior getting booked for persistent fouling and Steve Cokell getting booked for dissent, but then in the 3rd minute of Injury Time and with virtually the last kick of the match, we had the sort of lucky break that we

had been waiting virtually all season for when Foyso! Ahmed got down the right and chipped a cross over keeper Smith's head and into the far corner to make it 2-2 and give us a rare point ! On the balance of play, we couldn't really have complained if the score had stayed at 2-1, but after being victims ourselves of last-minute goals on more than one occasion this season which have cost us a win or a draw, it was about time we had our turn.

'Murf's Alternative Report !!: Unfortunately there is no 'Alternative Report' for this match as neither 'Murf' or 'Johnny Mac' were playing.

[Click Here](#) for London Ajax's website.