

Sunday 11th March 2007

Mercury Waltham Sunday League Division One Match at the Holtwhites Sports & Social Club, Enfield

NORTHMET (RIVERSIDE)	4	EDMONTON ROVERS	2	HT 0-2 !
Humphreys (47, 73, 76, 78 mins.)		Woolston (1 min.), McGovern (5 mins.)		

NORTHMET (RIVERSIDE) S LINE-UP: Dave HALL; Dave JONES, Martin HARDING, Jamie WEBB, Jamie HALL; Gary STEVENS, Andy LEEKS, Aidan MULLALLY, Jack SANGER; Clayton MILLS, Alan CHATTERTON **Subs.:** Dave HUMPHREYS, Craig BOWLER (Not Used), Paul GROOME (Not Used)

EDMONTON ROVERS LINE-UP (with Marks out of 10): Darryl JOHNSON (GK) (6); Andrew WARMERDAM (7), Alan BARNARD (7), Paul WOOLSTON (7), Terry MOORE (7); Derek DORWARD (7), Clark WILLIAMS (7), Peter MURPHY (7), Steve COKELL (7); Daniel DALEY (7), Conor McGOVERN (7)
Subs.: None !

Referee: Gary BAILEY

Weather Conditions: Sunny & Warm

Attendance: 24

Factual Report (by Laurence

Hughes): Although our 'season was ended' the previous week with our 5-0 League Senior Cup thrashing by Upshire, it was commendable that none of our players had decided to 'walk out' because of that, and indeed we had a full squad of 16 available on the Thursday before this match who were all determined to see the season through no matter what the scorelines of our remaining five Division One fixtures might be. However, skipper Stuart Dorward's withdrawal on the Friday before this match (because he couldn't find anybody else to volunteer in giving relatives a lift to the airport) started off a whole host of different (and mainly laughable) excuses from five other players thereafter...right up until a couple of hours before the



kick-off. Firstly, Vernon 'Kizza' Nxumalo (who would have been in the starting line-up to inject some much-needed pace into our attack) dropped out on Saturday evening by sending an e-mail with a message explaining that he had a 'torn thigh muscle which will keep me out for a couple of weeks' ! (He obviously sees an unqualified physio then if **that** was the diagnosis !?). This prompted me to refer back to a club scrapbook of downloaded text messages 'Kizza' sent to Manager Trevor Hughes's mobile phone in his previous spell with the club that included such gems as 'I cant make trainin 2nite. I was lockd out ma yard n cudnt get ma kit', 'Hey Trevor, it's Kizza. I broke ma leg n im out 4 da rest of da season', 'Hay Trev, ma ankle is mashed up. I shud b ok ina week or two', 'I cant make trainin. Ma leg is stil bad, ma ankle is stil not runnable'...amongst others !

With Stuart and Kizza dropping out then, I decided to call up Andrew Warmerdam into the squad, as he had informed us that he was available for only the second time this season after non-stop work & family commitments...his only other appearance was also against Northmet (Riverside) ironically. It was a good job that decision was made though, as four more players dropped out on the morning of the match, namely Bobby Randall, who had injured his back playing for Cuffley in the Herts Senior County League the day before, Tony King, who texted Trevor Hughes to say he wouldn't be playing because he had 'been up all night' (whatever that was supposed to mean !), Paul Ellerker, who had failed to reply to various text messages and had presumably therefore been 'out on the piss' again, and lastly, but certainly with by far the most legitimate excuse, Tony Speller, whose wife gave birth to their first child during the night (six weeks prematurely !).

With Nick Vertigans still in New Zealand, Danny Hagan still out injured, and everybody else preferring to work rather than be named as a substitute, that meant we had just a bare eleven with nobody on the line whatsoever apart from Manager-Lino Trevor Hughes and the cameraman...although we did actually have a few supporters turn up during the course of the match, including a rare appearance by Scott Robertson (&

family), presumably to have a laugh at the 'creaking limbs' of his former Beehive team-mates Steve Cokell and Darryl Johnson ?

In fact the attendance was swelled quite a bit by Northmet Reserve Team players as they did not have a match on this date, which was Sods' law for us as it meant their First Team had no problems finding three substitutes, and with a run of only one defeat in their last nine matches behind them...and that to the best side in the League at the moment, Trent Park (Arkay), we were obviously really going to be up against it. Northmet also had another big advantage over us in that they were fielding a settled side of much younger, fitter players who all turn up to training, don't have half as many family commitments, and turn up an hour before the kick-off to warm up properly.

However, we found ourselves kicking downhill and with a strong blustery wind 'sort of' behind us in the First Half, and despite all of our problems both for this match and in not being able to find the net in our previous two games, we somehow managed to take the lead in the very first minute when Steve Cokell whipped a free-kick into the 6-yard box for stand-in skipper Paul Woolston to get on the end of with a mis-hit shot that rebounded off the post and went just over the line before ending up in keeper Dave Hall's arms....Referee Gary Bailey being in a good position to see that, and awarding the goal without any complaints from Northmet's players. In fact they were almost stunned into silence as they must have been aware of our dreadful run of form coming into this match.



Even though it was a bit of a fortunate goal, that really gave us some confidence and amazingly we went into a 2-0 lead in only the 5th minute when another quality delivery from Steve Cokell, this time from a corner, found Conor McGovern unmarked in the 6-yard box to toe-poke the ball home. We then suddenly realised that although we had no substitutes, we were actually fielding a half-decent side, as Peter Murphy was perfectly capable of playing in a central midfield role (which he had done on many occasions for our now-defunct Reserve Team), Andrew Warmerdam fitted in well as a makeshift right-back and made some impressive raids forward in the First Half despite claiming to be very unfit having not played for anyone for 'months', Steve Cokell looked very comfortable as a

left-sided midfielder (where I have been saying he should have been playing all season when we have two midfield holding players), and most obviously, Daniel Daley's inclusion in the starting line-up finally gave us some pace up front, and that caused the Northmet defence to panic on a number of occasions in the first 45 minutes.

Despite that early two-goal lead for us though, the rest of the First Half was fairly even in terms of chances created, but neither keeper had much to do apart from catching practice and we came off at the break still 2-0 up, and deservedly so. However, we threw away all our good defensive work of the First Half just two minutes into the Second Half when keeper Darryl Johnson called for a backpass from Clark Williams to be played to him, but Northmet substitute Dave Humphreys (who had come on early in the First Half for the injured Martin Harding) read it and nipped in to score easily.

Obviously that fired Northmet up unnecessarily when they had spent most of the match so far arguing with each other, but surprisingly we then had our best spell of the match shortly afterwards, despite kicking uphill and against the wind. That saw Terry Moore have a header cleared off the line from a Derek Dorward corner, Daniel Daley hit the post with a close-range low shot after a good move, and Conor McGovern fire narrowly wide in a one-on-one after another good move...all of this coming in the space of five minutes.

In the meantime, up the other end, Darryl Johnson had still not made a worthwhile save thanks to some good defending, this probably being down to the fact that we were playing four at the back and all of them were staying there and defending properly instead of wandering off into midfield. However, he was really put under pressure with a high ball in the 73rd minute which resulted in a big collision in the 6-yard box that left himself, Terry Moore and Paul Woolston all lying on the floor and Northmet's Dave Humphreys celebrating what was a rather undeserved equaliser on the balance of play, although who the ball actually came off last to end up in the net is still unclear even with video evidence !

That was a real turning point in the game though, as somewhat predictably we then finally started to go to pieces defensively as a result of our usual lack of sharpness, the age factor and on this occasion, having no substitutes. That saw Humphreys complete his hat-trick to make it 3-2 just three minutes later with a sharp finish following a scramble in the 6-yard box amidst claims of offside in there somewhere, but we then had



an even worse nightmare just eleven seconds after the re-start when Conor Mc, Govern, Steve Cokell and finally Alan Barnard all conspired to give Darryl Johnson a suicidal backpass, and with 'D.J.' still wringing his hand in pain after damaging his thumb in trying to stop Northmet's 3rd goal a minute earlier, it was no surprise to see the onrushing Dave Humphreys easily block his attempted clearance with the ball ending up in the back of an empty net for his and Northmet's 4th.

It was a really comical goal and not for the first time this season we were a laughing stock, especially as far as Northmet's players and supporters were concerned...some of whom could be heard singing the Circus Theme from the far touchline, while messers Mc, Govern and Cokell ranted and

raved at each other as to whose fault it was. However, although we let in some silly goals, we did actually play well in this game and created more clear-cut chances than Northmet, including another one in the 86th minute which saw keeper Hall make an excellent point-blank save to stop Daniel Daley making it 4-3.

Daley actually got better as the game went on, and although there were still a number of occasions when he and Conor Mc, Govern were on different wavelengths, it was certainly a more effective partnership up front than having two older players up there, so at least that, and the slightly better level of fitness shown by our players was some consolation, despite the eventual 4-2 scoreline being our 6th defeat in a row.

'Murf's Alternative Report !!: It's been a week of soul searching in the world of Jade. The fallout from the King/Cokell substitution at Upshire spawned heated website debate culminating in a vote of confidence, or non-vote of no confidence, in Manager Hughes. Having survived the week, all the manager needed was for Tony King to text in late knockings to say he would not be available having been up all night. But text in he did. When added to other late absentees - Bobby Randall demonstrating that playing Saturday football is perhaps not the fitness boosting panacea it's cracked up to be by picking up an injury 24 hours before Rovers' latest biggest game of the season, Tony Speller, his wife having whelped overnight, displaying a paucity of commitment by remaining bedside instead of pitch side, and Kizza, who joined Randall on the injury list - and Manager Hughes had just 11 fit men and true from which to fashion a side. He must have been musing, a Cokell, a Cokell, my kingdom for a Cokell.

The side lined up 4-4-2 with Warmers returning at right back, Alan Barnard and Wooly in the centre and Terry Moore at left back. In midfield Derek Dorward and Steve Cokell patrolled the flanks with Clark Williams and Murf reviving their one-off reserve team partnership in the middle. Up front Daniel Daley played the hare to The McGuv'nor's tortoise.

When referee Bailey signalled the off, Rovers' makeshift side immediately forced the play, pressuring the home side into mistakes. One such resulted in a corner and Steve Cokell's expertly delivered centre was despatched goalward by Wooly. It was hardly a screamer but somehow it had the legs to creep over the line by the slimmest of margins. The game was but a minute old. Buoyed by the early advantage, something about as common as an albatross in Rovers' season of goodwill but scant reward, the Jades continued to hound their hosts and, within 5 minutes, lightning struck a second time. Again the deliverer was Steve Cokell with The McGuv'nor applying a more emphatic execution via a neat volley at the far post. As Northmet conducted their inquests, Rovers floated back to the halfway line in dream land.

For the ensuing 40 minutes Rovers maintained their lead, competing tigerishly all over the park and restricting Northmet to a handful of hopeful crosses and little else. The half-time whistle heralded that rarest of interval discussions - how to maintain a winning lead. The main contributors were stand-in skipper and assistant manager Wooly, and his superior. After some slight disagreement about where to hold the line, the side re-took the field resolving to replicate the first 45, to keep the game tight and retain possession in anticipation of a fierce early onslaught from Northmet.

With these words still dissipating into the ether, calamity struck. Clark Williams' back pass was short and, with DJ boosting the population of no-man's land to a contradictory one, Northmet gratefully accepted the invitation. Their tails up, Northmet could have been forgiven for expecting to ride the wave but Rovers were not about to go into their shell. Indeed, the away side so nearly struck back immediately. Capitalising on their new found deadliness at set pieces, Terry Moore's goal-bound header from Derek Dorward's corner was cleared off the line. And then, just two minutes later, Clark Williams' superb through ball put the lively Daniel Daley through one on one with the 'keeper. His shot eluded the custodian but ricocheted off a post to safety. Next up to see the whites of the 'keeper's eyes was Conor McGovern, again the provider being Clark Williams. And again the result was the same, a golden opportunity spurned. The McGuv'nor's shot by-passed the 'keeper and his left hand post though the Rovers forward attempted to deflect attention by claiming a corner deserving deflection.

And so, at 2-1 and having got out of jail twice, Northmet began to sense their time would come. And when it did it was so, so cruel on Rovers. As the ball was swung into the box, Terry Moore, Wooly and DJ displayed the ultimate commitment. All three put themselves on the line and attacked the ball with gusto and not a little courage. Unfortunately all three collided, hitting the deck with a collective thud and resulting in Terry Moore emerging with a cut chin and a Northmet forward the ball. From three yards the onion bag could not have appeared bigger.

Within three minutes Northmet had rode the train of momentum into a 3-2 lead, the ball breaking kindly inside the six yard box where once again Northmet really couldn't miss despite a hint of offside firmly

rejected by Assistant Referee Hughes. Rovers were metaphorically cut in half and, momentarily, allowed their heads to drop. The result was a fourth for Northmet straight from the kick-off for the third. Conor McGovern looped a ball out wide to Steve Cokell that bounced up chest high and was nigh on impossible to control. Under immediate pressure, Cokell attempted to lay the ball back to Terry Moore but Moore was not occupying that particular patch of Holtwhites. The ball instead ran through to DJ but it didn't really have the legs unlike Northmet's number 11. Gambling on the off chance, he bore down on DJ whose attempt to put his boot through the ball saw it cannon off the forward. And you need not have been there to know where it ended up.

At 4-2 down and feeling like someone who had dropped a tenner and found a fiver, Rovers still managed to create a fine chance as Cokell and Daley exchanged passes inside Northmet's box. The latter opened up his body to send in a right footer from the left which the home 'keeper managed to claw out for a corner. But this time, Rovers could not profit and so defeat was snatched from the jaws of victory.

TREVOR HUGHES'S MANAGER'S REPORT

After a big debate following last week's defeat it seemed that I was being urged to make drastic changes to the team. I considered all the options during the week and then found myself with a squad of 11 on Sunday morning so the team picked itself. Stuart Dorward had to do an airport run, Kizza and Bobby Randall picked up injuries, Tony King sent a text at 7.10 a.m. saying he had been 'up all night' and Tony Speller was at the hospital after his first child was born 6 weeks prematurely. Congratulations to Tony and Kelly.

At least we welcomed back Andrew Warmerdam in defence and Daley Daniel started up front with Conor McGovern. I told the referee before the game that our main problem was scoring goals and then we scored after only a minute of the game. An excellent free kick from Steve Cokell found Paul Woolston unmarked and his miskick went in off the post. Incredibly, it was 2-0 after 5 minutes when an excellent corner from Steve was turned in by Conor. The confidence of these goals and the energetic running of Daniel Daley up front helped us to control the remainder of the first half. Unfortunately, we conceded a poor goal in the 47th minute when Clark Williams' back pass was intercepted with Darryl Johnson stranded. We responded with our best spell of the match. In the next 5 minutes we had Terry Moore's header cleared off the line, Daniel Daley hit the post and Conor McGovern was through one on one but his shot was saved. We were defending well but suddenly a similar 5 minute spell turned the game against us. Firstly, a good cross saw the ball end up in the net with Terry, Wooly and DJ all lying on the floor from two aerial challenges. The next chance was a loose ball in the box which fell to a Northmet forward with our defenders appealing for offside. Straight from the restart, Steve Cokell played the ball back and DJ blasted it off the Northmet forward's chest and into the net. There was still time for Daniel Daley to be put through only for a fine save to prevent a comeback. It was yet another game where we had the better chances but lost but at least it was a better performance than last week.