

Sunday 2nd December 2007

Mercury Waltham Sunday League Division One Match at Hazelwood Sports Ground

EDMONTON ROVERS	3	NORTHMET (RIVERSIDE)	7	HT 1-1
Mc,Govern (33 mins.), Hagan (47 mins.), Cokell (60 mins.)		Chatterton (1, 81, 82 mins.), Mills (54, 89 mins.), P.Humphreys (71 mins.), D.Humphreys (75 mins.)		

EDMONTON ROVERS LINE-UP (with Marks out of 10): Martin LOVEDAY (GK) (7½); Terry MOORE (6), Stuart BYHURST (6), Paul WOOLSTON (6), Simon GLENNIE (6); Nick VERTIGANS (6), Danny HAGAN (7), Clark WILLIAMS (6), Steve COKELL (6); Conor Mc,GOVERN (7), Leon Mc,KENZIE-Mc,KAY (6) **Subs.:** Daniel DALEY (On for Vertigans 77 mins.) (6), Tem ADIL (On for Williams 77 mins.) (6), Tony KING (On for Glennie 79 mins.) (6), Ozel OZERMAN (GK) (Not Used)

NORTHMET (RIVERSIDE)'S LINE-UP: Dave HALL (GK); Dave JONES, Martin HARDING, Jamie JONES, Jamie HALL; Dave HUMPHREYS, Aidan MULLALLY, Paul HUMPHREYS, Iain GROOME; Alan CHATTERTON, Clayton MILLS **Subs.:** Jamie WEBB (On for Groome 78 mins.), Rob CLOWES (On for Chatterton 88 mins.)

Referee: John STOCKMAN	Weather Conditions: Heavy Rain & Gale-Force Wind	Attendance: 10
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Factual Report (by Laurence Hughes): With two damaging defeats in our last two matches and a weather forecast of torrential rain and near hurricane-force winds, we were half-expecting mass drop-outs of players from our squad of 16 on the morning of the match, but as it happened, only one did so (namely skipper Stuart Dorward with a bad back and neck), while Paul Woolston actually declared his availability at short notice, having originally dropped out of the squad due to babysitting duties. That left Manager Trevor Hughes with five substitutes available and a difficult decision on who to leave out of the starting line-up to accommodate new signing Simon Glennie...a proper left-footed left-back who had been strongly recommended by his work colleague Conor Mc,Govern during the week to replace various right-footed players we had been forced to play in that position over the last few seasons.

Also, with the weather forecast turning out to be correct, it was no real surprise to see the diminutive Ozel Ozerman being dropped from the goalkeepers' position so that the much taller Martin Loveday could have a go, Loveday actually having been signed up as a goalkeeper anyway, but also being a useful central defender as well, as he had proved in recent matches. That meant 'Wooley' had to start the game so that we had a proper centre-half, while Terry Moore started at right-back and Stuart Byhurst remained as sweeper where he had played well the week before in the continued absence of the holidaying Alan Barnard. Unfortunately, this meant no place in the starting line-up for Tony Speller, who had volunteered to arrive at the venue at 9.15.a.m. to help me open up the changing rooms and put the nets up and should have had a better reward for that. We were therefore left with only four subs then when Speller decided to go home instead...Tem Adil, Tony King and Daniel Daley being the other three in addition to 'Oz', but Leon Mc,Kenzie-Mc,Kay's return after a two-match absence at least gave us a full-strength midfield and forward line.

With Dorward, Barnard and first-choice keeper Darryl Johnson all unavailable though, and with us kicking into the wind in the First Half defending the 'cowshed end', we were always likely to be severely tested defensively, but it was still a shock when we found ourselves 1-0 down after just 50 seconds when Dave Humphreys got over a perfect first-time cross from the right for forward Alan Chatterton to score with a bullet header that gave stand-in keeper Loveday no chance.

After that, the wind and rain increased dramatically, and in absolutely atrocious conditions we found it almost impossible to get out of our own half, but Northmet let us off the hook by squandering numerous chances, with Loveday making several good saves and watching various crosses and well-struck long-range efforts whizz just past the post. In fact Northmet keeper Dave Hall would have scored a First-Half hat-trick had Ozel Ozerman been in goal, as Loveday had to stretch up to catch or tip away the ball from right underneath his crossbar three times from Hall's long wind-assisted drop kicks !

In the 33rd minute though, we managed to mount a rare attack and when we were awarded a free-kick 40 yards from goal, Paul Woolston curled it perfectly behind the Northmet defence for

Conor McGovern to control and equalise with a low shot that squirmed in off keeper Hall's legs at his near post, this being our only clear-cut chance of the half. Despite more chances for Northmet as the wind and rain continued, we somehow managed to hold out until Half-Time, and at 1-1, we thought we had a good chance of a rare League victory with those conditions now behind us in the Second Half. Indeed we went 2-1 in front just two minutes after the break when McGovern teed up Danny Hagan for an excellent first-time strike into the top corner from the edge of the area. However, Northmet, who had only lost once in Division One so far this season, had already forced Martin Loveday into a good save despite them kicking against the wind, and they made it 2-2 in the 54th minute when Clayton Mills tapped the ball home from close range after a challenge on Loveday by Dave Humphreys that looked suspiciously like a foul. By that time the rain had stopped and the wind had died down almost completely, which was typical of our luck when we were expecting to 'batter' them with wind-assisted shots in the Second Half, but we did regain the lead in the 60th minute thanks to the wind and slippery conditions when Steve Cokell whipped a corner in towards the near post and the ball squirmed in through keeper



Hall's hands to make it 3-2. At that stage, we still thought we could pull off a good win against an in-form side, but we then went to pieces thereafter as Northmet's far superior level of fitness and teamwork took over,

with midfielder Paul Humphreys making it 3-3 in the 71st minute with a headed deflection onto a Dave Humphreys shot that was initially going wide, and although Clark Williams fluffed a rare chance for us a couple of minutes later with a tame effort straight at keeper Hall when clean through, Northmet dominated the rest of the match, especially in the last 15 minutes when they scored four goals and could easily have doubled their tally as we made some dreadful mistakes all over the pitch.

Dave Humphreys made it 4-3 in the 75th minute with a good finish on the volley into the bottom corner, and although we brought on three substitutes just after that, it only made us even more disjointed and further goals from Alan Chatterton with an 81st minute header and a tap-in a minute later after a comical fumble by Loveday, and then an 89th minute chip from Clayton Mills gave Northmet a 7-3 victory in the end and our third bad defeat in a row.

As usual, part of the inquest afterwards was that we do not do any midweek training, and that is undoubtedly what is causing the problem...but then what we can do about *that* when work and family commitments come first ?

TREVOR HUGHES'S MANAGER'S REPORT

We do now have a large enough squad that I was still able to field a good side with 5 substitutes on Sunday against Northmet despite missing key players including goalkeeper Darryl Johnson, sweeper Alan Barnard and captain Stuart Dorward. We had plenty of defenders available with Simon Glennie making his debut at left back so I was able to try Martin Loveday in goal. There was a strong wing against us in the first half and we had the worst possible start conceding after 50 seconds from a header before Martin had touched the ball. There were plenty more opportunities for Martin to impress during the first half, in particular several wind assisted bounces which would have caused Ozel Ozerman considerable difficulties due to his height. Playing against the wind we passed the ball well and Conor McGovern converted a free kick from Paul Woolston to put us level at half time. After only 2 minutes of the second half Danny Hagan put us in front with an excellent shot from the edge of the area. However, Northmet also played better against the wind by passing the ball and scored an equaliser when Martin dropped a ball under pressure and the rebound was converted as we appealed in vain for a foul. Steve Cokell put us back in front again with a wind assisted inswinging corner going straight in. It was now half way through the second half and the wind appeared to die right down. I was on the phone to Stuart after 71 minutes when Northmet equalised from a glancing header and four

minutes later I was on the phone to Russell when we went 4-3 behind. There was no wind to help us now and I made a triple substitution in the hope that fresh legs could get us back in the game but we totally collapsed. I had switched to three at the back and then Paul Woolston picked up an injury to leave us with two defenders. We conceded further goals after 81, 82 and 89 minutes for an embarrassing final score of 3-7 having been 3-2 up with 19 minutes left.