

Sunday 21st January 2007

Mercury Waltham Sunday League Division One Match at Hazelwood Sports Ground

EDMONTON ROVERS	0	NORTHMET (RIVERSIDE)	1	HT 0-0
		I.Groome (70 mins.)		

EDMONTON ROVERS LINE-UP (with Marks out of 10): Darryl JOHNSON (GK) (7½); Paul WOOLSTON (6½), Andrew WARMERDAM (6½), Terry MOORE (6); FoysoL AHMED (6½), Danny HAGAN (7½), Clark WILLIAMS (6½), Peter MURPHY (6½); Stuart DORWARD (6½); Conor McGOVERN (7), Steve COKELL (6½) **Subs.:** Vernon 'Kizza' NXUMALO (6), Colin BESTER (6)

NORTHMET (RIVERSIDE)'S LINE-UP: Dave HALL (GK); Dave JONES, Paul HUMPHREYS, Rob CLOWES, Jamie WEBB; Gary STEVENS, Iain GROOME, Aiden MULLALLY, Jack SANGER; Clayton MILLS, Alan CHATTERTON **Subs.:** Andy LEEKS, Paul GROOME (Not Used)

Referee: Joe TEIXEIRA

Weather Conditions: Sunny & Windy

Attendance:
10

Factual Report (by Laurence Hughes): With two wins in a row after the Christmas break, both at Hazelwood, we were really confident of gaining another victory with a third Home game in succession and with our opponents Northmet (Riverside) having been apparently 'decimated' by injuries so far this season. However, after such a good result the previous week...what a let-down this was! Although we had key players from the previous week in Alan Barnard, Nick Vertigans and Derek Dorward all missing because of work and social commitments and there still being no sign of long-term absentees Paul Ellerker and Bobby Randall returning from injury, we were boosted by defender Andrew



Warmerdam being available for his first League game of the season, while forward Vernon 'Kizza' Nxumalo had also re-joined during the week after a year away 'on contract' at a Soccer Academy while having various unsuccessful trials for Semi-Pro clubs. (He was presumably deemed as being 'too small'?). 'Kizza' though 'got lost' trying to find Hazelwood...as he used to do regularly in his previous spell with the club...and therefore didn't turn up until just before Half-Time, although he had been named as a substitute anyway alongside Colin Bester, as Manager Trevor Hughes, returning from a week away in Cyprus, gave Foyso Ahmed a rare chance in the starting line-up instead in a 3-4-1-2 formation with Stuart Dorward as the main attacking midfielder.

With us having such a strong squad this season though, these changes didn't cause any problems at all, and with a strong wind behind us in kicking towards the 'cowshed end' in the First Half, we dominated possession for the first 45 minutes and created several good chances, the first of which came in the opening couple of minutes when Conor McGovern charged down an attempted clearance by Northmet keeper Dave Hall, but Steve Cokell lobbed the loose ball agonisingly wide, with a strong gust of wind not helping matters.

However, that was to be the only mistake Hall made in the match, as he went on to have a bit of a 'blinder', particularly in the First Half when he made two excellent saves to keep out well-struck shots from Danny Hagan and Stuart Dorward, while also foiling Cokell and McGovern (twice) with saves owing much to good positioning and bravery. Meanwhile, up the other end, Darryl Johnson was a virtual spectator with Northmet failing to muster a single shot on target or creating anything at all that could be classed as a clear-cut chance.

The eventual scoreless First Half meant we could have come off at Half-Time thinking we had blown our chance with us now having to kick into the wind, but we were still confident of winning as we had carried on where we left off from the previous week in terms of playing good football and looking solid in defence.

However, Northmet had gained their own confidence-boosting win the week before with a 2-0 win against Metroline Uniques and they were fielding a stronger side than they had been in most of their matches so far this season. That saw them come out for the Second Half a lot more fired up and it became a much more even contest with plenty of tackles flying in, especially involving the ultra-competitive Danny Hagan, while Northmet's players harried and chased and gave our players no time on the ball whatsoever. We still managed to create a couple of chances after the break though with Conor McGovern having a deflected shot well-saved by keeper Hall, while a downwards header by Andrew Warmerdam from a Steve Cokell corner was also well stopped by the Northmet keeper. However, Northmet forward Alan Chatterton missed three clear-cut chances in the first 15 minutes of the Second Half, one of which resulted in a good point-blank save by Darryl Johnson and a clearance off the line from the loose ball by Foyso Ahmed.

Northmet eventually replaced Chatterton with substitute Andy Leeks in the 69th minute but that wasn't really a factor in them taking the lead just a minute later...it was just a huge slice of luck as midfielder Iain Groome's hopeful shot took a big deflection off Clark Williams and looped over the helpless Johnson...this being in almost identical fashion to the goal scored by leaders Wormley Rovers in gaining a fortunate 1-0 win against us earlier in the season.



Up until that point, it looked as if the game was heading for a 'cert' 0-0 draw, which would have been harsh on us, as our First Half performance had been excellent (apart from a lack of goals). However, despite us bringing on substitutes Vernon 'Kizza' Nxumalo and Colin Bester for Foyso Ahmed and Peter Murphy in the 72nd minute and changing to a more attacking formation, we were quite woeful for the rest of the match with Northmet keeper Hall hardly being forced into action at all, and although our back three defended well to stop Northmet increasing their lead, our distribution from the back was shocking with Terry Moore saying 'Oh sh*t, sorry' after virtually every attempted pass, Andrew Warmerdam understandably looking very heavy-legged after such a long

absence and Assistant Player-Manager Paul Woolston hitting a succession of aimless long free kicks either straight at the first defender, straight down keeper Hall's throat or off for goal-kicks.

In fact we were lucky not to concede another goal (or two) as we pushed men forward and we had Darryl Johnson to thank for keeping the scoreline down when he spectacularly tipped over a long-range screamer from midfielder Aiden Mullally, although Northmet forward Clayton Mills also missed an open goal when he

lobbed wide after a bad mistake by Terry Moore had left 'D.J.' stranded.

A 1-0 defeat was how it finished then, which we didn't deserve over the whole 90 minutes but credit must be given to Northmet for their Second Half performance, and they certainly didn't look like a team who have lost matches by scorelines such as 9-4, 5-3 and 5-0 (twice) so far this season.

Although we have nothing much to play for in the League this season and are obviously treating the two Cups we are left in as our priority, our changing room was very quiet when I went in there afterwards to collect the dirty kit, gloves and silk underpants, etc., and it was certainly a very frustrating game to play in as well as watch...not that we had any supporters on the touchline at all apart from the cameraman !

To cap off a bit of a depressing day, substitute Colin Bester then announced that he would be looking for another club to play for due to a lack of opportunities in the starting line-up, and that fellow youngsters Kris Spyrou and Tem Adil may well join him...this not being too much of a surprise as it was always going to happen sooner or later once we had decided to fold the Reserve Team up 18 months ago, as we are now left with too many players for one team but not enough to run two teams.

The debate amongst those that were left in the changing room or those that bothered to go down the Pub was therefore whether Manager Trevor Hughes should have given/be giving the youngsters and other squad members such as Tony Speller, Gary Cokell, Foyso! Ahmed and Tony King a full game in Division One matches to keep them interested and that if we got relegated as a result, would it really matter because we are 're-building for the future' anyway ? The problem with that would then be if we rested our older (and supposedly better/more experienced) players for these Division One matches to give others a game, they would then have a lack of match practice and therefore be unfit for the Cup games in which they would be named as part of a full-strength side. Another problem is that 30-plus year-old players such as Conor McGovern (from Leigh-on-Sea), Peter Murphy (from Billericay), Paul Woolston (from Loughton), Clark Williams (from Hertford), Nick Vertigans (from West London) and Paul Ellerker (from Hackney) all live 'miles away' and are understandably not prepared to travel those distances on a Sunday morning to be named as a substitute if we give others a game in Division One matches.

At the moment, Manager Hughes's policy is to field his strongest available side for every game, and if players decide to leave because of that, then so be it.

My worry of course, is that we end up with a squad of just 14 (instead of the 22 we have now) and I end up having to play in frequent 'emergencies' again...at the age of 48 !

Surely this must not happen ?!

'Murf's Alternative Report !!: Murf was unable to do a report for this match as he had the builders in and couldn't gain access to his computer...and he was watching Arsenal v. Man United on TV !

TREVOR HUGHES'S MANAGER'S REPORT

After missing last week's cup victory against Premier Division side Broxbourne Rangers I was looking forward to a league match against Northmet with our side full of confidence. Despite the absence of Alan Barnard, Nick Vertigans and Derek Dorward we had Andrew Warmerdam returning in defence and Darryl Johnson in goal. Foyso! Ahmed started in midfield and Vernon 'Kizza' Nxumalo had re-signed for the club to strengthen the subs bench when he eventually arrived just before half time after travelling from Ipswich. We started the game well and Steve Cokell was unlucky when his lob towards an empty goal drifted wide in the strong wind. Stuart Dorward's shot was saved when he was left one on one with the keeper and we wasted several other chances to go in 0-0 at half time. We were confident of winning the game in the second half but we struggled to create clear chances as Northmet defended deeply and we fell behind in the 70th minute when a shot from the edge of the area deflected off Clark Williams and looped over the stranded Darryl Johnson. Despite the introduction of substitutes Colin Bester and 'Kizza' and a change to an attacking 3-4-3 formation the better chances fell to Northmet on the break with one spectacular save by Darryl particularly worthy of a mention. It was the second time this season we had lost 1-0 to a deflected goal, the previous game was against Wormley. Next week we have another cup tie against Upshire when today's absentees are all available to bolster the squad.