

Sunday 23rd November 2008

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

NORTHMET (RIVERSIDE)	4	EDMONTON ROVERS	4	HT 3-1
Constantinou (3 mins.), Johnson (Own Goal) (6 mins.), Chatterton (13 mins.), Barnard (Own Goal) (89 mins.)		Dorward (11, 65 mins.), McGovern (60 mins.), Arrowsmith (88 mins.)		

NORTHMET (RIVERSIDE)'S LINE-UP: Lewis HOWARD ? (GK); Iain GROOME, Jamie JONES ?, Jared PETTS, Martin GARWOOD; Peter STYLIANOU, Aidan MULLALLY, Dave HUMPHREYS, Gerardo RIZZO; Vas CONSTANTINOU, Alan CHATTERTON **Subs.:** Jamie WEBB ? (On for Rizzo 60 mins.), Kyle HODGSON (On for Chatterton 60 mins.), Paul FLYNN (On for Constantinou 82 mins.)

EDMONTON ROVERS LINE-UP (with Marks out of 10): Darryl JOHNSON (GK) (7); Paul WOOLSTON (7), Alan BARNARD (7½), Jim ARROWSMITH (7½); Paul AMICO (7½), Rob BROWN (7), Stuart DORWARD (8), Gavin MARDELL (6); Terry BROWN (7); Conor McGOVERN (7), Tony KING (7) **Sub.:** Vernon 'Kizza' NXUMALO (On for Mardell at Half-Time) (7)

Referee: Paul HERLIHY

Weather Conditions: Constant Heavy Rain

Attendance: 17

Report (by Laurence Hughes):

With our season more-or-less being ended the previous week in terms of winning trophies, it was perhaps not surprising that a number of players would start losing interest and decide to work instead...or not bother to get in touch to let us know if they were still injured or not. However, we still had a strong squad of 14 players available up until the morning of the match, but then things started to go wrong as usual. Although the threat of heavy snow had subsided and the game was definitely on, we only had two players at the venue at



10.00.a.m....Darryl Johnson and Jim Arrowsmith arriving at that time on the dot..., but everybody else turned up well after that for a variety of reasons, and by 10.15, we were still waiting for five players and in danger of kicking-off with only 9 men. We then had a phone call from Rob & Terry Brown asking if the game had been called off because they couldn't see anybody ! Evidently they had gone to the following week's venue (Pound Close in Hoddesdon) instead after mis-reading the website ! We then had Vernon 'Kizza' Nxumalo phoning shortly afterwards to say that he was stuck in traffic in Enfield Town Centre and that his SatNav was telling him he would be at Holtwhites in five minutes, so he would therefore get there at around 10.20.a.m. and be in time for the kick-off. However, there was no sign of Tem Adil and Daniel Daley (who Tem normally picks up), so we assumed that they must have been stuck in traffic as well and that they would have to be named as substitutes along with new signing Gavin Mardell, who had only been registered to play in emergencies due to a lack of fitness and never having played at this level before.

With Northmet having been out on the pitch warming up for 30 minutes and Referee Paul Herlihy getting impatient due to the torrential rain which had just started falling, Manager Trevor Hughes was therefore forced to promote all three of his intended substitutes into the starting line up as the clock ticked round to 10.35.a.m. and with a fine from the League being threatened. Thankfully though, one of those was right wing-back Paul Amico, who was now available again after several weeks out with family commitments and a back injury, while Mardell also had to be thrown in at the deep end in a left wing-back position (despite being right-footed). Tony King therefore came in to partner Conor McGovern up front with Daley still having not arrived (or phoned to let us know where he was), but it certainly wasn't the worst side we have put out so far this season. However, all the uncertainty and 'mad rush' just before the kick-off did us no favours whatsoever, as we had players putting the water bottles one side of the pitch and the medical kit the other, our Scottish skipper Stuart Dorward refusing to wear the League's new 'Respect Campaign' Captain's Armband because it had an England badge on it, Manager Hughes almost missing the kick-off because he was still looking out for Kizza arriving, and Tony King booting one

of our practice balls into a back garden...hopefully Simon Jackson's?...albeit by an unlucky deflection off the crossbar while he was booting 'shots' willy-nilly at Darryl Johnson in the 'warm-up' ! Having beaten us 7-3 in our only meeting last season (in a game that they deserved to win 15-0 based on the Shots Count from the video), it was therefore so predictable that Northmet would fly out of the traps having warmed up properly, and sure enough they took the lead after just 3 minutes when Vas Constantinou punished a mistake by Jim Arrowsmith with a good finish from close range. Not that I saw much of it, as the camera's viewfinder had misted up badly because it was so cold (only 2°C) and wet. Three minutes later I was therefore left wondering 'who the hell was that player in a jade shirt wearing No.15 who just made a horrendous mistake to let that through ball under his foot for their No.8 to drill a low shot onto the post and rebound in off Darryl's arse to give them a 2-0 lead already ?'. I actually had no idea at that stage that Gavin Mardell had started the game...then I looked over towards the clubhouse and saw Kizza only just turning up and realised why ! At that point, it looked like a 10-0 defeat (or more) was a certainty, as Northmet had also created four other clear-cut chances already, but Gavin and indeed the rest of our players settled down after that as the first 10 minutes was our warm-up ! In fact Stuart Dorward pulled a goal back after just 11 minutes when he cleverly re-adjusted himself to score with a diving header after Tony King's shot had rebounded off the post, and it then looked like a crazy scoreline was on the cards, especially when Northmet made it 3-1 just two minutes later when Alan Chatterton scored from the rebound after a good save by Darryl Johnson from Vas Constantinou's shot. Thankfully there were no further goals in the First Half as we gradually tightened up defensively, although we only really had one clear-cut chance ourselves when Paul Woolston shot narrowly wide from just inside the area following a set-piece after 30 minutes. We really got our passing going as the half went on though, with Gavin Mardell showing some good ability in that respect, but it was obvious that Kizza had to be brought on at the start of the Second Half to add more pace and fitness to our attacking options with us still 3-1 down. That clearly made a difference as Kizza was put up front for Tony King to play left midfield where he is far more effective in everybody else's opinion, even if for some reason he doesn't think so himself ! In fact we dominated the start of the Second Half almost as much as Northmet had in the first, with 5 or 6 really good chances being created, the best of them coming from a slick four-man move in the 52nd minute, but Stuart Dorward somehow sliced his shot wide after finding himself clean through from Tony King's pass. We therefore had to wait until the 60th minute for Conor McGovern to pull a goal back with a fierce close range drive after an excellent through ball from Paul Amico, then Stuart Dorward made it 3-3 just five minutes later after running straight through the Northmet defence who were appealing for offside against

another player (Kizza ?) who was not active. Northmet were then able to bring on three good substitutes though, whereas Tem Adil and Daniel Daley had still not turned up for us, and that saw them get on top for a 10-15 minute spell, but we weathered the storm (literally as well as the rain had by now finally stopped) thanks to some good saves by Darryl Johnson and some solid defending, and it was then anyone's game in the last 10 minutes in what was a really entertaining match to watch on what had become an absolute mudbath of a pitch. With just two minutes to go, it looked like defender Jim Arrowsmith would be the hero for us when he made it 4-3



with a superb low drive into the far bottom corner from Tony King's lay-off that signalled some rarely seen 'manic' celebrations by the rest of our players. However Referee Paul Herlihy spoiled the fun when he missed an obvious foul on Paul Amico just a minute later which would have enabled us to slow the game down and play out the remaining minute or so. Instead, the ball ended up in the back of our net 30 seconds later thanks to an absolute freak goal as Paul Woolston's clearance hit Rob Brown and fell to Northmet defender Martin Garwood, whose shot was heading towards the corner flag but deflected off Alan Barnard into the corner of the net to give Darryl Johnson no chance. With our players (and Chelsea fan Wooly in particular) immediately haranguing the Referee for that goal and not letting the matter rest, it wasn't a surprise to see him blow for time a minute early...and for that, we only have ourselves to blame. Although a 4-4 draw was probably a fair result, it was a really cruel blow, and particularly for Jim Arrowsmith, but Refereeing mistakes normally even themselves out, and we may well get a point or win a game later in the season when we are the beneficiaries. The good thing was the performance (against a good side) after being 2-0 and 3-1 down so early on. The bad thing was Tem Adil forgetting to put his alarm on and Daniel Daley disappearing again...not the Referee's mistake !

TREVOR HUGHES'S MANAGER'S REPORT

Sunday morning started badly with snow falling but our match against Northmet was still on as the weather changed to rain. At 10.00 I still had a squad of 14 when Darryl Johnson arrived as the first of our players at the venue. It seems that our players have forgotten the club rule about fines for being late whilst our opposition were already changed and having their pre match team talk. At 10.15 I was still waiting for 5 players. Rob Brown and Terry Brown went to the venue of next week's game but at least they phoned to say they would arrive before kick off. Kizza also phoned to say he was relying on his Sat Nav to find the ground but he still arrived after the kick off due to an accident and the failure of his Sat Nav to find an alternative route. Tem Adil and Daniel Daley failed to arrive or phone at all so there is no explanation at the moment. As a result my three named substitutes were promoted to the starting line up but with Paul Amico having missed several matches through injury, Tony King missing last week through illness and Gavin Mardell making his debut the late changes disrupted our shape. In fact, we kicked off before I could give any sort of team talk and were 1-0 down before I reached the pitch. At least the injured Martin Loveday had attended and taken the linesman's flag in the pouring rain and I was reliably informed that a mistake by Jim Arrowsmith led to the first goal. After 6 minutes we went 2-0 down when a low shot rebounded off the post and unluckily into the net off Darryl's back. At this point we were in disarray and a heavy defeat looked likely but Stuart Dorward scored our first goal with a diving header after Tony King had hit the post. However, Northmet hit back almost immediately and Darryl's save rebounded straight to a Northmet forward to tap in and make the score 3-1 after just 13 minutes. Although Northmet could have added to the score we started to play a lot better as the half progressed and created some chances of our own to give us hope at half time. I made a tactical substitution in bringing on Kizza up front and moving Tony King to left midfield in place of Gavin Mardell and we looked the better side throughout the second half. Conor McGovern pulled one back with a fine shot after an excellent through ball from Paul Amico and Stuart Dorward equalised after 65 minutes after running clean through the Northmet defence who were appealing for offside against another player who was not active. Both teams continued to look for a winner and it looked like Jim Arrowsmith was going to be the hero with an excellent drive in the 88th minute. Unfortunately, the game still had a final twist as we appealed for a free kick for a foul on Paul Amico, Northmet played on and Paul Woolston's clearance hit Rob Brown fell to the Northmet forward whose shot was deflected off Alan Barnard into the corner of the net. The referee blew for full time before either of the teams could attack and the game finished 4-4. After the terrible start to the day it was a point won, but being 4-3 up in the last minute it was two points lost.