

Sunday 9th November 2003

Mercury Waltham Sunday League Premier Division Match at Bush Hill Park

PERCIVAL	2	EDMONTON ROVERS	1	HT 1-1
Clarke (11 mins.), Woodward (87 mins.)		Woolston (27 mins.)		

Percival's Line-Up: Michael HAYES; Richard DAGGER, Dean BINGLE, Ben WINCH, Scott OYSTON; Scott DIPPLE, David WILSON, Ian BARNES, Steve WEAVER; Dave WILTON, Alex CLARKE **Subs.:** Ian HILLIER, Darren WOODWARD, Emmanuel DARKO

Edmonton Rovers Line-Up (with Marks out of 10): Simon JACKSON (GK) (7½); Robin PRYKE (7), Stuart DORWARD (7), Paul WOOLSTON (7), John BEASLEY (7); Jerome HARRISON (6), Paul ELLERKER (7), Steve BEASLEY (7), Derek DORWARD (6½); Lexton HARRISON (7), Conor McGOVERN (6½) **Sub:** Eric IBEKWEM (7)

Referee: Bob SWALWELL

Weather Conditions: Cold & Cloudy

Attendance: 22



Report: Our usual start to a season continued with this defeat, our 5th in our last seven matches, as our injury-hit side once again struggled to find the back of the net or keep a clean sheet, mainly due to a lack of decent (or fit) substitutes being available. On this occasion we had no less than 10 prospective players unavailable who would have been in contention for a place in the squad, these including Marco Ellerker, who dropped out on the morning of the match due to a blood clot on his leg, and Eric Ibekwem, who had to be named as a substitute due to a severe bout of flu which had seen him confined to bed for the previous two days. That saw Reserve Team regular Jerome Harrison have to come in for his competitive debut in the First Team, which was a real risk at this sort of level when he had only had experience of kickabouts over the park before this season. Indeed that was to show throughout the match as all he was capable of was to just battle for the ball and make a nuisance of himself without doing anything creative, hence his mark of 6 out of

10 when most others managed a 7.

However, our players certainly didn't look to be heading for those sort of marks during the first 20 minutes as Percival really came out of the blocks and battered our defence straight from the off and we had already had two or three real escapes before Alex Clarke gave them the lead after just 11 minutes when he converted Dave Wilton's low cross from close range after a good slick move.

Strangely though, despite fielding a much stronger team than in some of their more recent matches, Percival gradually started losing their momentum as the half went on when it looked initially as if we were really going to get hammered, especially after Paul Woolston split his shorts in the warm-up after finding the Size-40's in our newly-sponsored kit too small for him ? However, 'Wooly' regained his composure to grab an equaliser for us in the 27th minute when he bundled in the rebound on the goal-line after Derek Dorward's looping header had dropped down off the crossbar and that saw it become a much more even match. In fact we started creating some good chances late on in the First Half, including three within the space of about two minutes when Derek Dorward, Conor McGovern and Lexton Harrison all had clear-cut opportunities to get a shot on target from close range but delayed for too long and let defenders get a challenge in. That gave us some confidence though as we realised that Percival were missing the influential Steve Ritter at the back and that recent signing Dean Bingle (Ritter's replacement) was still trying to get to know his new team-mates. The introduction of Eric Ibekwem for Jerome Harrison in the 62nd minute gave us more chance of grabbing a winner, but again we just didn't look confident enough in front of goal without the likes of Steve Cokell, Peter Sutton, Marco Ellerker and Chris 'Nugget' Beeden and it was Percival who scored what proved to be a winner in the 87th minute when substitute Darren Woodward curled a clever shot through a crowd of players in the area and into the bottom corner to make it 2-1. In fact Percival could then have easily scored another in the few minutes remaining after that as we pushed Sweeper Stuart Dorward into midfield and left just three at the back, but Simon Jackson made a couple of excellent flying saves, despite hobbling about with an ankle injury for most of the match.

With Robin Pryke and Paul Woolston also having to play through injuries and nobody else available to come on as a substitute except the watching Paul Rebairo...who was even more injured himself with a back problem !...it was once again a case of everyone battling away and playing the best they could, but at Premier Division level it needed a bit more quality to beat the likes of current Champions Percival (and all the other top teams we have played so far this season) and with so many players missing, there really wasn't much more we could do.