

Sunday 20th September 2009

London F.A. Sunday Intermediate Cup First Round Match at Hazelwood Sports Ground

EDMONTON ROVERS	5	RUSSELLERS	1	HT 2-0
McGovern (12, 69 mins.), Dorward (31, 85 mins.), Loveday (47 mins.)		Bean (75 mins.)		

EDMONTON ROVERS LINE-UP (with Marks out of 10): Simon JACKSON (GK) (6½); Terry MOORE (7); Alan BARNARD (7½); Martin LOVEDAY (7); Tony KING (7½); Rob BROWN (7½); Danny SMITH (7½); Steve COKELL (7½); Stuart DORWARD (7½); Conor MCGOVERN (7½).
Subs.: Danny GREEN (7) (On for Smith 69 mins.); Peter MURPHY (6½) (On for Moore 69 mins.); Darryl JOHNSON (6) (On for Jenkins 85 mins.)

RUSSELLERS LINE-UP: Joe ASHBY (First Half GK); Tom REGAN, Jon PAVITT, Dean FLORENCE, Darren JALINK; Martin KING, Tom BEAN, Jake ARNOLD (Second Half GK), Nick COLES; Terry McLEAN, Luke PILGRIM
Subs.: None

Referee: Federico ARDILES

Weather Conditions: Fair

Attendance: 13

Report (by Laurence Hughes): Last season, we frustratingly lost 3-2 in the First Round of this competition to a team who actually folded up a week later because of poor League results. When we found out that our First Round opponents this time, Chislehurst-based Russellers, were only in Division Four of the Metropolitan Sunday League and had lost their first two League matches then, it therefore would have been a bit unwise for us to get too over-confident, especially as we had lost our first two League matches as well and had a history of going out of Cup competitions at the first hurdle.

However, despite Manager Trevor Hughes being on holiday in Cyprus and Caretaker-Manager/Captain Stuart Dorward turning up only 15 minutes before the kick-off...and Assistant Manager Gary Cokell turning up five minutes after it!, we did actually manage to field a strong side for once, even though last season's Player Of The Year Danny Hagan and this season's current top scorer Daniel Daley were both missing through injury. That saw us take control straight from the kick-off as we knocked the ball around with quick one and two-touch passing at a pace which was obviously a lot quicker to that which Russellers were used to in their League, as some of their players were puffing and blowing and even going down with cramp after just five minutes! Despite that, it took us 12 minutes to take the lead, but not as a result of the pitch at Hazelwood being in perfect condition (as usual) for our passing game, but from a set-piece which saw Steve Cokell whip over a perfectly-directed corner for Conor McGovern to lose his 'marker' and power in an unstoppable header from 6 yards. (See picture above right).

Russellers had already seemingly set out their stall by defending deep in 'two banks of four' before that goal and they didn't appear to change anything after it either, although that may have been because some of their players were not fit enough to get up and down the pitch, even though they were fielding a team with an average age of about 21 whereas our average was about 35! It certainly allowed us to have so much more time on the ball in midfield though, something which is unheard of in Division One in the Waltham Sunday League where we are invariably up against super-fit Semi-Pro players from Saturday football. The problem then was we tended to try and thread too many passes through the middle and they were getting cut out too easily, but we still managed to create numerous chances throughout the match, mainly because Steve Cokell was being given far too much time to look up and play some perfect balls into the danger area from the left. Unfortunately though, none of our players managed to get on the end of them with a decisive finish, although Russellers First Half 'keeper Joe Ashby did make some good saves.

However, it was a mix-up between Ashby and defender Dean Florence which presented Stuart Dorward with an easy chance to fire us into a 2-0 lead in the 31st minute with a shot in off the post, but it stayed at 2-0 until Half-Time when we really should have been 'out of sight', especially as Russellers had not managed a single shot on target.



We made a better start to the Second Half though when defender Martin Loveday headed us into a 3-0 lead just two minutes after the break after Conor McGovern had struck the crossbar with a header from another well-flighted Cokell corner, but Russellers certainly didn't give up, even though they only had a bare eleven. It needed some more good saves from their Second Half keeper Jake Arnold to keep them in the game, while McGovern did make it 4-0 in the 64th minute though when he fired a loose ball into the bottom corner from another corner, and then it was time for us to give substitutes Danny Green and Peter Murphy a run-out, with even sub keeper Darryl Johnson coming on towards the end as an outfield player (in defence) due to Tom Adil not turning up. Although Tom Bean pulled a goal back for Russellers in the 75th minute from their first clear-cut chance of the match and then created a couple of half-chances shortly afterwards, we were never in danger of being made to sweat late on, and indeed Stuart Dorward scored his second and our fifth in the 85th minute to wrap things up, this being by far our best goal of the game as Stuart made one of his typical 'un-noticed' runs straight from the back having now put himself in defence to give Terry Moore a breather. It was then off down On Broadway where we had our best turn-out of the season so far, no doubt due to Man United v. Man City and Chelsea v. Spurs being on telly, so the Marks Out Of 10 therefore had a bigger 'general consensus of opinion' than normal. Most of our players agreed with each other, then Stuart put an extra half a mark on everybody (except himself) for some reason, which I have now taken off having edited the video, as 7½'s (or more) for everyone should be for when we beat Division One teams 5-1, not a team who would probably be struggling in the bottom Division of our League if they were in it. Russellers were a good bunch of lads though and treated their football very much like us in having a laugh and a joke during the match, something that Danny Smith is finding a real culture shock bearing in mind where he has played previously, but I'm sure he will get used to it eventually. In fact Stuart gave Russellers 10 out of 10 for sportsmanship, and also gave Referee Federico (Son Of Ossie) Ardiles 100 out of 100, although it was an easy game to Referee though. At one point, the Referee Assessor stood right underneath my camera position scribbling down his notes, totally unaware that I could have easily focused in on his assessment of Ardiles Jnr and put it on You Tube. Instead, I panned round to film Conor McGovern slicing a volley wide from 6 yards to spoil one of Steve Cokell's several perfect crosses and pass up another chance to win Goal Of The Season! At least we won, but it should have been so much more.



Murf's Alternative Report: Cup fever came to town on Sunday as Rovers hosted Russellers, who hail from Chislehurst, in the first round of the London F.A. Sunday Intermediate Cup. Leading up to the game there was simply nothing else on everybody's lips, or fingertips, as the keyboards rattled and the forum buzzed. Chief topic amongst the debate was Cameraman Larry Hughes' questioning of Russellers' right to even be in the hat. Coming on the back of a start to the season featuring two league defeats, it was perhaps not the best tactic and this was reinforced by a Russeller taking the bait. Indeed, a photocopy of said posting was probably pinned to the away dressing room wall, thereby saving Russellers' manager the trouble of concocting and delivering a pre-match motivational which is just as well as he hadn't turned up. As befitting the Cup, the referee was the son of one-time Tottenham legend, Ossie Ardiles. The little Argie had been something of a Cup mascot for the white side of North London in the late 70s & early 80s. The tale went something like Spurs being on their way to Wembley and Ossie about to do it again. Only he didn't. Often, indeed, his career highlight must surely lay in him being the only outfield player in living memory to have the number 1 on his back as Argentina's 1978 World Cup winning squad went alphabetical. With kick off fast approaching, your scribe had some weighty duties to perform. There was a security theme running through them - that time honoured Sunday morning staple, the valuables bag, required a chaperone while the dressing rooms were in need of a key man. With these duties out of the way I retired to despatch the weightiest of them all as a fourth load of last night's dinner hit Edmonton's water course. Next up was the referee's quarters and this is where things began to go wrong. The key simply wouldn't turn and I began to fear for the official's trackies

and windcheater, not to mention his spare Acme Thunderer. After some frantic testing and retesting of the various keys, I relinquished my post as head of security to Darryl Johnson who, as an experienced goalkeeper, was a far more obvious custodian. My final duty was to trot down the street to fetch captain Stuart Dorward's inhaler from the family runabout. You just don't get this over The Emirates or Old Trafford.

The game itself proved to be something of the mismatch The Cameraman had prophesied. Rovers knocked the ball round in neat triangles and found time and space in all areas of the pitch. It seemed only a matter of time before the home side's experimental front pairing of Conor McGovern and Scott Jenkins filled their boots, or open toed trainers in the latter's case. And soon it came to pass as Steve Cokell sent over a well measured corner and McGovern rose highest to grab his 200th first team goal. Thereafter, the assembled throng awaited a second goal that simply refused to come. Even the referee's assessor took time out from his day job to join the head scratching and opine that the out ball was down Rovers' left where McGovern often peeled or Cokell chugged forward. Indeed, it was this avenue down which the move of the first half, indeed the match, was created. Rob Brown got out his slide rule to measure one inside the full back for Cokell to deliver yet another accurate centre. It should have been meat and two veg as well as game Rover to The Jades' marauding centre forward. But somehow The McGov'nor contrived to miss and those ranged along the touchline choked back an anticipatory chorus of "goal!" and returned clap ready hands to the sanctuary of respective pockets. Even the geezer peering through the fence at the bottom of his garden turned away in disbelief. Meanwhile, the assessor scribbled a feverish note, no doubt not about the ref.

The second half continued in a similar fashion with chance after chance being created and squandered. However, the odd one did find the back of the net though The McGov'nor, try as he might, simply could not complete his hat-trick. This in no small part seemed to delight a goodly number of the opposition though quite why they had taken such a dislike to Rovers' leading scorer and all round good guy was not clear. Perhaps it was his flashy set of wheels sitting in the club's on road parking facility or his recent walk on part in an episode of "What Katie Did Next"? Whatever, come the final whistle, it was a shame to report that he had not taken the opportunity to both silence his critics and set himself firmly on his way to his 250. The final tally in Rovers' plus column was 5 while Bean bagged the visitor's consolation in the 75th. So Rovers marched comfortably into the second round. The year may not end in 1, the destination may not be Wembley, but could this be their year?

