

Sunday 12th October 2003

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

EDMONTON ROVERS	1	ST. ANSELM'S	2	HT 1-0
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M.Ellerker (6 mins.)

Cormack (76, 80 mins.)

Edmonton Rovers Line-Up (with Marks out of 10): Simon JACKSON (GK) (7); Tony SPELLER (7), Stuart DORWARD (7), Robin PRYKE (7), Gary COKELL (7); Derek DORWARD (6), Marco ELLERKER (6½), Paul ELLERKER (7), Conor McGOVERN (6), Eric IBEKWEM (6); Steve COKELL (6½) **Subs. (None Used):** Steve BEASLEY, Russell BEEDEN, Darryl JOHNSON (GK)

St. Anselms Line-Up: Lee WILLS (GK); Michael DOWNEY, Michael KENNEDY, Robbie OKANY, Michael MURTAGH; Richard NAREYDOO, Paul KENNY, Osman AKIF, Raymond KAVANAGH; Danny CORMACK, Danny EMERY **Subs.:** John WORRALL, Craig JENKINS

Referee: Andreas ANASTASIOU

Assistants: Mark PATTERSON & Daniel BURKE

Weather Conditions: Sunny, but Strong Blustery Wind

Attendance: 18



Report: We came into this, our first-ever match at the highest level of County Cup football fully expecting our opponents to be of a similar standard to the likes of Brimsdown Rovers, Percival & Enfield Rangers Old Boys and we were not wrong ! Unfortunately though, we really needed to field a full-strength (and more importantly fully-fit) side in order to overcome *this* sort of opposition, but from our 17-man First Team squad at the start of the season, only six players in our starting line-up for this match had been playing regularly in the Premier Division so far (albeit on the rare occasions when we actually had a match arranged or when our opponents actually turned up), while Stuart Dorward, Marco Ellerker & Conor McGovern were all returning from long-term injuries, Gary Cokell was making his competitive debut and Reserve Team keeper Simon Jackson also had to play because First Team regular Darryl Johnson was due to miss the next round anyway if we had got through as he would be attending

Reserve Team Secretary Scott Robertson's Stag Do in Bournemouth that weekend. (The theory behind this was that if Darryl played in this match and Simon played in the next round, then it would leave the Reserve Team without a goalkeeper for their London F.A. Sunday Junior Cup campaign because both of them would then be Cup-Tied, so it was best to use Simon for the First Team and Darryl for the Reserves in County Cup matches). With central defender Paul

Woolston getting injured at training during the week though (by one of Gary Odell's specialist 'back-leg reverse tackle' challenges ?!) and John Beasley deciding to retire because he was 'bored with football' (although he would have played to help us out but then went down with 'flu'), we lost two quality players before the kick-off who would have started the match and with Chris 'Nugget' Beeden on holiday and Chidi Ibekwem and Peter Sutton still out injured, it meant we had to name three substitutes who would only be used in emergencies as they themselves were either injured (Steve Beasley) or were Reserve Team players who did not want to get Cup-Tied (Russell Beeden & Darryl Johnson).

However, St. Anselms also appeared to have some problems as they turned up just 5 minutes before the kick-off, while their season so far in the 'Senior Amateur Division' of the very strong Sportsmans Senior Sunday League in South-West London had not been particularly convincing...very similar to us in fact. That was a bit surprising as they had been entering this competition for years and had only lost 2-1 the previous

season to the eventual winners, Memorial Sports. Indeed when the match got under way (20 minutes late) they looked in quite a bit of disarray, especially when Marco Ellerker gave us the lead after just 6 minutes with an expertly-drilled half-volley from outside the area which zipped into the bottom corner past an unsighted keeper wearing a white t-shirt who's name appeared to be 'mate' ?!

However, on obtaining St. Anselms' Team-Sheet from the Referee afterwards (because they didn't seem to receive the same one to fill in as we had to give them !?), it was clear that we were up against it as far as their *outfield* players were concerned as a large number of them were former (or current) Ryman League players with the likes of Danny Cormack being a regular with Tooting & Mitcham ([Click Here](#)) and Richard Nareydoo having played for Carshalton Athletic in the Ryman Premier Division in the late-90's. Of course we had Marco Ellerker who had played at that level many years ago,



but that was about it for *this* match with Paul Woolston, Peter Sutton & John Beasley (the others) all missing. That saw us gradually have to defend deeper and deeper and just hope for a chance on the break and after Simon Jackson had made a good save low down to his left (and got away with a fumble on the goal-line from a corner) half-way through the half, we nearly made it 2-0 in the 35th minute when Steve Cokell found himself clean through only for the St. Anselms keeper to rush out of his area and deliberately handle the attempted lob (which was apparently 'definitely' going in!). With official Assistant Referees being appointed for this game though, we were hoping for the correct decision regarding the colour of the card when Referee Anastasiou and Assistant Referee Burke conferred about the incident, but only a yellow was produced on the basis that there were defenders getting back who may have cleared it off the line.

We still went in at Half-Time 1-0 up though and it was just a matter of keeping our concentration for the rest of the game as

we knew we were capable of playing well defensively. However, St. Anselms really upped a gear in the Second Half, and we had two or three real let-offs within the space of about 10 minutes towards the end when Simon Jackson managed to tip a fierce shot onto the underside of the bar and was then relieved to see the rebound headed straight into his arms when it was easier to score (*See picture left*), while he also misjudged a couple of free-kicks into the 6 yard box which left players with free headers which should have been buried. It was at this point that our general lack of fitness (in comparison) was really starting to tell as Conor McGovern and Marco Ellerker started getting by-passed in the centre of midfield and Derek Dorward and Eric Ibekwem kept giving away free-kicks in dangerous wide positions with tired-looking challenges which only heaped more pressure on our defence.

Referee Anastasiou had certainly done us a favour by deciding to play only 40 minutes each way because of the late kick-off, but that was still enough time for us to crack under the pressure when with just four minutes to go, Danny Emery was left facing Tony Speller in a one-on-one due to our midfield all 'conking out' at the same time and not getting back to help out by 'doubling-up' on him, and when he easily skipped past Speller to get a 'hopeful' low cross in, it fell nicely onto the shin of Danny Cormack who netted the equaliser quite easily from 6 yards. Although we had created two or three reasonable half-chances on the break in the Second Half, we had never really looked like scoring a second goal and there was only ever going to be one winner after that. In fact we were probably lucky that St. Anselms scored their winner in the very last minute of normal time as a period of Extra-Time with no 'fit' substitutes available could well have seen us suffer another 6-1 defeat like we did to Aris in the London Sunday Intermediate Cup *last* season! Not surprisingly, the decisive goal (scored by the impressive Cormack again) was partly due to a lack of concentration on our part as we seemed to be 'shell-shocked' with letting in such a late goal for their equaliser after defending so well for most of the match, and that resulted in a through ball easily getting through to Cormack who rounded Simon Jackson with ease before tapping into an empty net.

Once again then, it was another early exit for us in a Cup Competition, but with St. Anselms undoubtedly being one of the better sides in the Sunday Challenge Cup we didn't disgrace ourselves and did as well as we could considering the side we were forced to field. In fact their Manager was very impressed with our tactics and organisation when I spoke to him afterwards, so at least we know we have got that right...we just need to get our injured players back, our fitness levels up and maybe sign a couple of quality players to replace John Beasley & Chris 'Nugget' Beeden (if they don't want to play any more) and there is still a chance we could win a trophy this season.

[CLICK HERE](#) to see how St. Anselms get on in their League for the rest of this season.

[CLICK HERE](#) to see how they progress in the London F.A. Sunday Challenge Cup....if the London F.A. ever update their website !