

Sunday 19th November 2006

Mercury Waltham Sunday League Roy Bailey Challenge Cup Third Round Match at Hazelwood Sports Ground

EDMONTON ROVERS	3	ST. MARGARETSBURY (SUNDAY)	2	HT 2-1
S.Dorward (26 mins.), McGovern (36, 68 mins.)		Eldridge (16 mins.), Appleyard (62 mins.)		

EDMONTON ROVERS LINE-UP (with Marks out of 10): Mark DYER (GK) (6½); Paul WOOLSTON (7½), Bobby RANDALL (7), Terry MOORE (7); Tony SPELLER (7), Clark WILLIAMS (7½), Peter MURPHY (7); Stuart DORWARD (8), Danny HAGAN (7½); Conor McGOVERN (8), Derek DORWARD (7) **Subs.:** Colin BESTER (6), Kris SPYROU (Not Used)

ST. MARGARETSBURY'S LINE-UP (I think!): Guy LIPYEAT (GK) ?; Ronnie ELLIOTT, Mark ELLIOTT, Dan COBURN; Darren WOOD, Ian WHITE, David APPELYARD, Luke WITHERINGTON, Richard GREEN; Gerry ADAMSON, Gary ELDRIDGE **Subs.:** Steve BURTON, Lee WEATHERHEAD

Referee: John STOCKMAN	Weather Conditions: Sunny but Cold	Attendance: 20
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Factual Report (by Laurence Hughes): Having blown our chances of getting promoted back to the Premier Division at the end of this season by losing to Cheshunt (Sunday) the week before, we knew it was vital that we had a good Cup run in either this competition or in the League Senior Cup to keep our season alive. Thankfully though, we managed to field a reasonable side for this match in stark contrast to our Division One game [Away to St. Margaretsbury on the 29th October](#) when we had just a bare eleven and ended up playing half the match with only 10 men because of an injury to Derek Dorward. In fact we actually had six different players in our starting line-up from that match with Mark Dyer, Paul Woolston, Terry Moore, Tony Speller, Danny Hagan and Peter Murphy all playing this time, and although we were still actually missing five first-choice players in goalkeeper Darryl Johnson, sweeper Alan Barnard, midfielders Paul Ellerker & Nick Vertigans and forward Steve Cokell, we had a stronger side available than for any of our last three matches...and it showed in the end.



Ironically though, we still had a couple of players pull out of this match the day before with feeble-sounding (but genuine ?) excuses, namely Tem Adil because of a stubbed toe and Tony King because he 'forgot he was unavailable', but it didn't matter too much as we still had two decent substitutes available in Colin Bester and Kris Spyrou, while St. Margaretsbury turned up with what looked to be a weaker side than the one they fielded in the League match against us three weeks earlier. In fact when they turned up at the venue, I heard some of their players saying to each other 'Make sure you lock your car doors. This is Palmers Green !'...as if the 'reputation' of North London might have put some of them off travelling what is the longest distance between two member clubs in the Mercury Waltham League. As it happens, Hazelwood Sports Ground is actually surrounded by expensive houses, and the people walking their Bichon Frieses over there while I am putting the nets up at 9.00.a.m. are all 'church-goer' types with copies of the Sunday Times under their arm rather than the drug dealers/addicts with pit-bull terriers that you get over most of the other parks in the Edmonton area. Not that they clear up their dogs' mess though (as we have already found out this season), and that could have caused a problem had there been any deposits left on this occasion as the groundsman didn't turn up to open the changing rooms until 20 minutes before the kick-off as somebody from Enfield Council had mistakenly told him that all Mercury Waltham League matches kick-off at 11.00.a.m. rather than 10.30.a.m. !

Although it was a bit of a mad rush once the changing rooms opened then, we managed to kick-off on time, but the first 15 minutes were rather poor with a lot of mis-placed passes from both sides as we seemed to



bring our opponents down to our level...or at least our level of how badly we played the week before. We had just started getting things together though with a couple of good passing moves and half-chances when St. Margaretsbury took the lead in the 16th minute from virtually their first shot of the match as Gary Eldridge fired low into the far bottom corner after an apparently 'well-pissed' Terry Moore and stand-in sweeper Bobby Randall had both dived in to challenges and left themselves on their backsides.

However, despite that goal, we had already sensed that St. Margaretsbury were not as good as other sides we had played recently, especially in defence, and 18-year-old midfielder Danny Hagan almost capped his first start to a match with a goal just two minutes later, but

his header from Derek Dorward's corner rebounded off the far post.

After a good spell of pressure though, we did manage to equalise in the 26th minute when Stuart Dorward blasted in a first-time cross-shot on the half-volley into the far corner after the St. Margaretsbury keeper had made a good save to foil Conor McGovern's 'Goal Of The Season' contender which came as a result of an excellent move. Strangely enough, Stuart was actually wearing a pair of boots borrowed from the absent, but very left-footed Steve Cokell...which maybe suggested that Steve should use his right foot more for shooting bearing in mind he hasn't scored for 20 matches with that particular left boot !

St. Margaretsbury then came back into the match following Stuart's equaliser though, and they nearly regained the lead on a couple of occasions, firstly when our Club Linesman Colin Bester 'forgot' to keep his flag raised when the ball went out of play and the move was allowed to continue (See picture above right)...fortunately the eventual shot was sidefooted wide by Gary Eldridge despite being clean through on goal, and then just two minutes later a clearance off the line by Tony Speller from another Eldridge shot also kept us on level terms, although having now freeze-framed it on video, it was actually the ball from the adjoining pitch that he cleared, as the shot took a snooker-style cannon off it on the edge of the six-yard box !!!

However, the in-form Conor McGovern managed to put us into a 2-1 lead in the 36th minute with a good turn and finish after a scramble in the area and St. Margaretsbury's players seemed to get rather rattled after that with plenty of arguments going on amongst themselves, especially on the Half-Time whistle with us still leading by that scoreline.

We therefore expected them to come out for the Second Half a lot more fired up, but instead it was us who took the initiative as we kicked towards our 'favourite' 'cow-shed' end after the break, although Stuart Dorward missed a great chance to put us 3-1 up in the 57th minute when he allowed the St. Margaretsbury keeper (who looked as if he was probably an outfield player) to make an admittedly decent save in a one-on-one before slicing the rebound horribly wide with his left foot...so yes, Steve Cokell's left boot is definitely 'jinxed' !?

That turned out to be a costly one though, as St. Margaretsbury's David Appleyard made it 2-2 just five minutes later when he bundled in a low cross from skipper Luke Witherington through a crowd of players in the area from a quickly-taken short corner despite all our players being in their correct zonal marking positions. (See picture left).

Once again though we immediately raised our game and Paul Woolston had a header from a corner superbly saved just two minutes later before Conor McGovern put us ahead again in the 68th minute when he outjumped the keeper from a sliced high cross from Stuart Dorward in the 6 yard box to head in off the post with the ball going in almost in slow-motion. That actually saw more than one player congratulate Conor for scoring, which was a real rarity, but we stopped short of doing a military-style handshake celebration that had been talked about on the Forum...and wisely so, as St. Margaretsbury's players didn't seem the sort that would take kindly to something like that. In fact they were moaning about everything at that stage and were becoming increasingly upset with Referee John Stockman's decisions, even though most of them seemed to be correct, especially one earlier on in the half when Paul Woolston did a perfectly-timed sliding challenge in the area to deny a forward a 'certain' goal and Mr. Stockman rightly waved play on. Indeed the Referee was doing as well as he could bearing in mind he had 'Fruitbat' (the well-known 'madcap' Enfield F.C./Enfield Town/Cheshunt F.C. supporter) heckling him for a laugh from the touchline of the adjoining pitch where his own team were supposed to be playing.

That penalty claim was just about St. Margaretsbury's best chance of the Second Half apart from their goal though, as we were excellent defensively after that with Paul Woolston and Terry Moore having regained



their match fitness and Bobby Randall making up for his absence the previous week by deputising competently as a sweeper for Alan Barnard after his initial mistake for the first goal. In fact we could have easily won the match by a bigger margin as Stuart Dorward hit the post in the final minutes while we wasted numerous chances by over-elaborating too much in and around the area and in shooting wide when we had time to hit the target.

It actually appeared that St. Margaretsbury assumed we are not a good side just because we were so disorganised when we played them three weeks earlier and rode our luck to gain a 1-1 draw. Revenge for that was clearly (and not surprisingly) in their minds, and from their demeanour you could imagine them having had a pre-match team-talk along the lines of 'Edmonton is a rough place. This lot are going to be hard and physical. We've got to match them, etc., etc.'. Of course we are not like that at all, even though [Terry Moore's Player Profile picture](#) may have given them that impression and he certainly put himself about a bit in this match thanks to his excessive alcohol consumption of the previous night. However, it was not enough for him to get booked, and we therefore kept up that proud record of no red or yellow cards for any of our players so far this season.

It was a good day for us then as we made a rare progression in a Cup competition, and nobody even complained about the showers being cold due to a faulty boiler...except for St. Margaretsbury's players, who walked straight off the pitch, into their cars, and home. Definitely a bad day for them.

'Murf's Alternative Report !!: Every season football drools over Third Round day and it was no different at Hazelwood this Sunday as Rovers hosted St. Margaretsbury. So what if it was the Roy Bailey Challenge version, cup fever is cup fever no matter what the stage and only a full complement of woodbines saw Mrs Bester through this nail biter.

It was the 2nd meeting between the two sides in just three weeks, the last ending in a 1-1 draw despite Rovers spending a sizeable proportion of the contest down to ten men. Bereft of substitutes on that occasion, they had suffered acutely when Derek Dorward picked up an injury which saw him alternate bouts of on pitch nuisance factor with a few of Mrs Bester's snouts.

So, with a fuller complement, Rovers approached their task with a fair degree of quiet confidence. The line-up saw Mark Dyer deputise between the sticks for Darryl Johnson behind Manager Hughes' new favourite 3-3-2-2 formation. The tight back three comprised the now sober Bobby Randall alongside Wooly and Terry Moore.

The next three comprised Clark Williams, Murf and Tony Speller with the latter two detailed to act like wing backs when possession was lost. Just in front of this bank of three were skipper Stuart Dorward and Danny Hagan who were given free rein to get forward in support of strikers Conor McGovern and Derek Dorward. Pre-match there had been a Harmony style debate between Stuart Dorward and Wooly. "Does she, doesn't she?" they'd questioned. Well, for the record, she didn't, at least as far as your scribe's footwear was concerned. Take a stud, that is.

And when referee John Stockman got the proceedings underway on an autumnal feeling November morn, the low sun facing Rovers, who were defending the changing room end, was bright and problematic for any flighted ball. Despite this, 'keeper Dyer elected against borrowing some of Colin Bester's homee headwear. After a promising start Rovers found themselves behind in the 16th minute when St. Margaretsbury took the lead courtesy of a neat left foot finish from an angle. The referee should take some credit here for playing advantage after Terry Moore had attempted some industrial intervention in the build-up. The away side recognised this and registered their approval. It was the last time they were so to do.

Rovers responded almost immediately when a Danny Hagan header from a right wing corner struck a post. And they only had to wait ten minutes before attaining parity, skipper Dorward despatching a fierce drive from a tight angle after Conor McGovern's shot had been beaten out by the 'keeper. The next chance in a first half that ebbed and flowed fell to St. Margaretsbury though there was controversy in its construction. The ball had clearly gone off though assistant referee Bester flagged like a man carrying a lump of lead. His arm pointed skyward for the briefest of moments before returning to his side. Play continued though, fortunately for Rovers and, one suspects, Bester's Children In Need sponsorship kitty, the chance was spurned.

The next goalmouth action saw Tony Speller clearing off the line before Rovers took the lead in the 36th minute. A fine diagonal ball saw Rovers overloading on the left. It evaded Danny Hagan's stride but fell straight into Murf's and, while the former continued his run into the box, the latter advanced before delivering a low centre toward Derek Dorward. Dorward's contact was minimal and, after a scramble, the ball returned out left where Murf delivered a right footed up and under toward Stuart Dorward at the back stick. His header found Conor McGovern who finished in tidy fashion.

Rovers thus went into the interval holding the advantage. Manager Hughes declared himself happy with what he was seeing, that unlike last week the Jades were playing football, something Wooly put down in part to a return to the hallowed turf. The only area, Manager Hughes opined, that his charges were not matching or surpassing their opponents was in the appeals department. Indeed, the referee had been subject to more appeals than the House of Lords, an irony no doubt not lost on Rovers' Monday to Friday lawman. His "if you can't beat 'em, join 'em" solution was for each and every man to go out and appeal

like an Aussie slip fielder. Meanwhile the McGuv'nor bemoaned a return to Rovers' restraint in the goal celebration department. His strike had found only Clark Williams willing to go up and give him a kiss, the rest of the team somehow managing to resist the temptation.

The second period saw Rovers dominate. However, after Stuart Dorward spurned a one-on-one, St. Margaretsbury equalised when a short corner was flicked on into the danger zone. The ball took a couple of ricochets before tamely crossing the line off a St. Margaretsbury belly. But Rovers were playing with confidence and continued to press. Chances came and went before Conor McGovern capped a towering display with his second in the 68th minute. A long punt forward by 'keeper Dyer, who kicked impressively all day with his weaker left foot, created confusion in the visitor's box and McGovern took advantage by looping a header into the corner from Stuart Dorward's cross. This time the scorer was joined by more than Clark Williams.

For the remainder, Rovers created several good chances though a fourth goal simply wouldn't come. These chances were interspersed by an unseemly incident on the edge of Rovers' box when Wooly took exception to a challenge. The stud marks indicated the high tackle had endangered his tackle and so it was no surprise the new father momentarily lost his cool. After all, how many batsman are happy to declare on one?

In the final 5 minutes Danny Hagan, who'd run himself into the ground, retired nursing cramp. His replacement, Colin Bester, moved to the right with Tony Speller, who'd spent the last 15 minutes rope-a-doping like Ali, moved inside to endure yet more legwork. There was still time for Stuart Dorward to hit a post before referee Stockman blew the final whistle, signalling that Rovers were into the Fourth Round and a clash with either Upshire or IML Red Cow. They don't come any bigger.

TREVOR HUGHES'S MANAGER'S REPORT

This week's cup tie against St. Margaretsbury saw the inevitable team changes with Mark Dyer deputising in goal for Darryl Johnson, Bobby Randall returning to replace the Australia bound Alan Barnard in defence, Peter Murphy returning to left midfield and Danny Hagan being given a full debut after impressing as a substitute last week. I kept faith with our new formation which had been successful until a poor performance last week and reminded the players of the need for good accurate passing for the system to work. Fortunately, the players responded with probably our best performance of the season so far. We went behind after 16 minutes when referee, John Stockman, made an excellent decision to play advantage after a deliberate foul by Terry Moore and the St Margaretsbury forward raced clear with Terry out of position to fire a well struck shot into the bottom corner. Danny Hagan was unlucky not to equalise when his header from a corner hit the post but then an excellent passing move led to a good shot by Conor McGovern which was saved by the keeper only for Stuart Dorward to fire in the rebound. Stuart was wearing Steve Cokell's boots and used the rarely used right one to strike this shot. At this point the play was end to end and we survived a couple of scares firstly when Murf stopped for an obvious throw in which wasn't given because Colin Bester forgot to lift his flag but the St. Margaretsbury forward shot into the side netting and then Tony Speller cleared off the line. However, Conor gave us the lead with a good shot on the turn from our next chance. The half time team talk was very positive as I praised the players for their passing and in the second half our confidence grew and we played some excellent football to create numerous chances. Unfortunately, we couldn't add to our lead and the inevitable equaliser came when a cross was scrambled in through a mass of players following a corner. Ironically, in a match where our passing was the key to a good performance, the winning goal was 'route one' with a long goal kick from Mark Dyer being crossed by Stuart Dorward for Conor to beat the keeper in the air and head into the empty net. We continued to create the better chances but couldn't kill the game and we had an anxious 5 minutes of injury time before the final whistle and a 3-2 victory.