

Sunday 29th October 2006

Mercury Waltham Sunday League Division One Match at St. Margaretsbury F.C.

**ST. MARGARETSBURY
(SUNDAY)**

1

EDMONTON ROVERS

1

HT 1-0

Elliott (1 min.)

McGovern (59 mins.)

ST. MARGARETSBURY'S LINE-UP: (From what I could make out from the video and from their usual goalscorers' names on the League website...apologies to them if I've got any wrong !): 'Matt' (GK); Ronnie ELLIOTT, 'Mark' ?, Danny 'COATES ?'; Steve BURTON; Ian WHITE, David APPLEYARD, Luke WITHERINGTON, Gary 'ELDRIDGE' ?; Gerry 'ADAMSON' ?, Mark ANGELINI **Subs Used:** Richard ? GREEN, Darren WOOD, Lee WEATHERHEAD

EDMONTON ROVERS LINE-UP (with Marks out of 10): Darryl JOHNSON (GK) (7); Bobby RANDALL (7½), Alan BARNARD (8), Clark WILLIAMS (7½); Colin BESTER (7), Paul ELLERKER (7), Tem ADIL (7); Stuart DORWARD (7), Derek DORWARD (5 ...Off injured after 35 mins.); Kris SPYROU (6½), Conor McGOVERN (8) **Subs:** None !

Referee: Kevin DOHERTY

Weather Conditions: Warm & Sunny

Attendance: 13



Factual Report (by Laurence Hughes):

For the previous week's match against Larsens we fielded just 12 players from our current 22-man squad and there was 'uproar', even though we somehow managed to win the game ! For this game though, it really did get silly ! After such an encouraging run of form, surely here was proof that the majority of our players have playing football down as number three or four on their list of priorities for a Sunday morning behind volunteering to work, going away for the weekend, playing other sports, and babysitting ? Nothing wrong with that of course...except for cases like this one when almost half the team have those opportunities available to them on the same day. On this occasion that was compounded by numerous injuries or 'illnesses' and the undoubted expectancy by other absentees that we would have enough

players to cope without them. Little did they know that most of their team-mates were thinking along exactly the same lines !

For the record, here is the list of excuses from the absentees which left us with just a bare eleven to start the game, ten men for most of the match and nobody whatsoever to run on with the medical kit with Trevor Hughes having to run the line and myself filming the match (You can make your own minds up if you think any of the following excuses are 'feeble' !!!):

Paul Woolston...Wife gave birth to Kian Paul Woolston. (Congrats to Wooly). Dropped out on Saturday (Wooly that is, not the baby. He arrived earlier).

Terry Moore...Work Golf Weekend. We knew well in advance though.

Peter Murphy...Went away for the weekend (again). We knew well in advance.

Steve Cokell...Long-term Hamstring Injury.

Tony Speller...Hamstring Injury (Suffered the previous week).

Nick Vertigans...Had to take his car in for a service on Sunday morning due to other commitments over the weekend. Dropped out on Saturday afternoon.

Tony King...Forgot it was his Birthday and the missus had something planned !? (That seemed to be the gist of his Forum message...dropped out on Friday night).

Foysol Ahmed...Decided he was still too weak after Fasting for Ramadan. Would have gone sub if he had been on the Internet and seen people posting messages on the Forum that they were dropping out. Had already decided to work instead.

Gary Cokell...Would have played if he had looked at the Forum on Saturday and seen he was needed for the starting line-up due to people dropping out. Forgot to look at the Forum then decided to work instead because nobody had phoned him.

Danny Hagan...Still recovering from a blood clot after a minor operation. We knew well in advance though.



Andrew Warmerdam...Has long-term work & family commitments on Sunday mornings, but said he would try and help us out if we were 'desperate'. Was unable to do so on this occasion though. Not surprisingly, there were a few long faces about when our eleven available players turned up, especially as most of them didn't know in advance that so many had dropped out. We also had Colin Bester

suffering from flu and in danger of not lasting a full match, while there were also doubts concerning the fitness of one or two others. No way was the 47-year-old cameraman coming to the rescue to get changed as a substitute **this** time though...thanks to a slipped disc in my neck (from too much filming !), a 'gammy' left knee and slight flu symptoms (amongst other excuses !).

Skipper Stuart Dorward thought he had the answer though...in the shape of the old-style green & white Captain's Armband which Conor McGovern mistakenly wore in our 2-1 win the previous week instead of the more 'modern' black one. The green & white armband was obviously a lucky mascot then, even though we failed to win for about 25 matches in a row with it only a season or two ago. With St. Margaretsbury turning up with a full squad of 16 and with several others left on the touchline though, the armband would need to be pretty special as they were obviously fielding a strong side, and when they forced Darryl Johnson into a good save low down to his left after about 10 seconds the signs were ominous. Indeed they took the lead from the resulting corner when defender Ronnie Elliott was left with a free header at the far post which he easily buried (See picture below left) because Conor McGovern thought it had gone off for a throw-in and hadn't got into his zonal marking position...the reason for that being that Linesman Trevor Hughes hadn't actually flagged for a corner because he was still writing down the kick-off time in his notepad ! Yes, the goal came that early !

With us fielding such a makeshift side with at least five first-choice players missing it looked like we were going to be in for a real hiding and it brought back some nasty memories of the last time we played St. Margaretsbury at this venue back in November 1999...a game we lost 7-2 after being 5-0 down in the first 20 minutes (See our [Worst-Ever Performances...](#)that one is at No.13 !)

However, we certainly hadn't expected our three new signings this season of Alan Barnard, Bobby Randall and Clark Williams to make such an impact, as they once again had excellent games as a makeshift back three and it was amazing how well-organised they were as a unit despite never having met each other until recently when they were thrown together because of the absence of others. Admittedly, St. Margaretsbury did have a few more chances in the First Half, mainly from long balls after our own passing moves had broken down in attack, but not many of them were clear-cut chances and Darryl Johnson really only had one more difficult save to make in the first 45 minutes almost right on the half-time whistle. Although our youngsters Colin Bester, Kris Spyrou and particularly Tem Adil did well in the First Half though and gained yet more valuable experience, we did miss the likes of Nick Vertigans and Steve Cokell from an attacking viewpoint and we only really had two chances ourselves, a glancing header from Derek Dorward which went narrowly wide and a shot from Stuart Dorward on the run which also went just wide.

Our chances of getting back into the match were dealt a severe blow 10 minutes before half-time though, when 'Del' 'did his back in' and had to leave the pitch, although for some reason he didn't tell anyone. Not the Ref, not the Skipper, not the Manager ! Thankfully though, we didn't concede another goal before Half-Time with only 10 men, so things were then sorted out during the break with 'Del' opting to come back on to play as a statue...with the specific instructions from Manager Hughes to stand in an offside position (a la Henry & Van Nistelrooy) but for our other players not to pass to him. However, St. Margaretsbury were not caught out by those tactics as the ball never went in their half for the first 10 minutes of the Second Half as we were left with little option but to defend in numbers and just frustrate them. We did manage to catch them on the break a couple of times after that though, firstly when Conor McGovern went on an excellent run down the right to square the ball across for an unmarked Stuart Dorward who seemed to mis-read what McGovern was intending and the chance went begging, but then three minutes later we actually managed to equalise when McGovern celebrated his return to the ground he 'graced ?' on Saturdays in the Spartan South Midlands League a few seasons ago with a good close-range finish after Kris Spyrou had flicked on Bobby

Randall's well-flighted cross, although we did have to survive a vociferous offside appeal which could have seen the goal ruled out.

Although we certainly rode our luck defensively before conceding that goal, Derek Dorward obviously thought at that stage we were well capable of holding out for a draw without him, so having got bored with standing around doing nothing, he just walked off the pitch again as soon as Mc.Govern had equalised (while nobody was looking) and spent the next 30 minutes having a fag (or three) with Mrs. Bester...the reasoning behind that move being that his brand of ciggies might cure his back pain somewhat ?!

However, Colin Bester was also predictably starting to struggle because of his flu symptoms, as was Tem Adil because of a lack of match practice, while Kris Spyrou was finding it tough going again against much bigger opponents physically, so we just came under constant pressure for the last half-an-hour. All three youngsters didn't let us down at all though, but it was the more experienced players that saw us through in the end to claim an unlikely point...with the help of 'Del' who came back on for the last two or three minutes and walked about instead of standing still !

However, despite our players' heroics, St. Margaretsbury only had themselves to blame for not winning this match as they squandered a number of good chances with weak finishing from good positions and by failing to get on the end of good crosses and through balls. For the second week running then we had a bit of luck on our side, but there was still a sense of frustration afterwards that we seem to be nowhere near getting a full-strength side out in order to gain the convincing win that we know we are capable of against most sides in the Division.

Roll on to our next match then when we **do** have near enough a full-strength side available...or maybe not !?

'Murf's Alternative Report !!: Unfortunately Murf did not play in this match, so there is no 'Alternative Report' for this game !

TREVOR HUGHES'S MANAGER'S REPORT

After the recent publicity of the weekly team changes at Liverpool F.C., I expect Laurence will check our records to see the last time we fielded the same team two weeks in a row. In our case it is caused by unavailability with another set of unusual reasons. At least Paul Ellerker and Derek Dorward were back to replace Nick Vertigans and Pete Murphy and there was another opportunity for our three teenagers, Colin Bester, Kris Spyrou and Tem Adil to get a start. However, we had no substitutes and I was left with the linesman duties again. St Margaretsbury scored in the first minute with a free header from a corner but we have shown in recent performances that we have a good team spirit and we improved as the half progressed and went in at half time 1-0 down. Unfortunately, Derek Dorward suffered a back injury and, although he played some of the second half as a passenger up front alongside Conor, he spent most of the half sitting next to Gill Bester who offered Del the heat spray but not a healing back massage. We equalised after 59 minutes when Kris Spyrou flicked Bobby Randall's free kick into Conor McGovern's path and Conor finished with a first time strike. Despite being down to 10 men, I decided to keep our formation of three at the back as Bobby Randall, Clark Williams and Alan Barnard were all having excellent games and although we were under a lot of pressure we restricted St Margaretsbury to mainly long shots most of which went wide. We struggled to create much up front but Conor had an excellent game and I was always hopeful of a late winner like last week. However, the game finished 1-1 and we were happy with a point. It is very encouraging that we are keeping an unbeaten run going despite so meant team changes each week.