

Tuesday 29th April 2008 (7.00.p.m. Kick-Off under floodlights)

Mercury Waltham Sunday League Division One Match at St. Margaretsbury F.C. (Main Pitch)

ST. MARGARETSBURY (SUNDAY)	1	EDMONTON ROVERS	2	HT 0-1
Ian White (76 mins.),		Own Goal (33 mins.), Williams (79 mins.)		

ST. MARGARETSBURY'S LINE-UP: Gareth EVANS (GK); Mark ELLIOTT, Darren WOOD, Steve BURTON, Gary ELDRIDGE; Alan CLARK, Mark DONNO, Ian WHITE, Luke WITHERINGTON; Jamie SWEENEY, Barry WHITE **Subs.:** Lee WEATHERHEAD (On for Eldridge at Half-Time), Dan PERRY (On for Sweeney 66 minutes), 'Harry' (On for Elliott 81 minutes)

EDMONTON ROVERS LINE-UP (with Marks out of 10): Darryl JOHNSON (GK) (7); Terry MOORE (7), Alan BARNARD (7½), Martin LOVEDAY (8); Andrew WARMERDAM (7), Rob BROWN (8), Danny HAGAN (8), Kris SPYROU (7); Nick VERTIGANS (6...off injured after 5 minutes); Conor McGOVERN (7½), Tony KING (7) **Sub.:** Clark WILLIAMS (On for Vertigans 5 mins.) (8)

Referee: Alec HOLLOWAY

Weather Conditions: Torrential Rain,
Cold & Windy !

Attendance: 16

**Factual
Report (by
Laurence
Hughes):**

When we had a midweek game arranged at the end of last season, we ended up having to concede the match (against Trent Park (Arkay) at Enfield Playing Fields) due to



numerous players having too many work and family commitments, so we knew we were taking a bit of a risk in agreeing to travel all the way up to St. Margarets/Stanstead Abbots/Ware in the rush hour from Edmonton, Enfield or the City straight from work. After all, we had already had one 'non-fulfilment' of fixture this season and the League would obviously be very concerned if we were guilty of another one, even though it is not a fineable offence if it happens in midweek. After having 17 players turn up for the Double-Header against Larsens though, we were confident of fielding at least a squad of 14, but predictably, on the day of the match, certain players started crying off with various excuses, these being Ozel Ozerman (Working late), Tem Adil

(Stomach bug), John Beasley (For reasons unknown), and most frustratingly of all, Vernon 'Kizza' Nxumalo, who kept changing his mind about whether he had a valid rail ticket or not, whether he had his kit at work or not and whether his boss would let him get off work to play anyway ! This led to the [longest-ever 'match thread' on the Forum](#) as myself and Assistant Secretary Conor McGovern desperately tried to find ways of getting him to St. Margaretsbury's ground in addition to Daniel Daley, who was also in two minds whether to play or not, in his case because he is a Manchester United supporter and they were playing Barcelona in the Champions League Semi-Final Second Leg just at the wrong time as far as we were concerned. That scenario also ruled out Scott Jenkins and Steve Cokell, although they may not have played anyway for other reasons, but Daley actually told McGovern that he would be playing but then just failed to turn up...and we have not heard from him since !

That left us down to just 10 men, but fortunately Kris Spyrou and Clark Williams had both read the Forum as the problems increased during the day and put themselves out to help us field a team...in Kris's case travelling all the way from University in Richmond, Surrey during the late afternoon, and in Clark's case having a pain-killing injection in his foot in order to play.

(Thankfully his proposed operation during the week had been postponed for some reason).

As Clark was the last to arrive at the ground though (after getting away from babysitting duties), Manager Trevor Hughes had to name him as our one and only substitute, but we were fielding a strong starting line-up anyway with Darryl Johnson returning in goal, a more-or-less first-choice back three, Danny Hagan and Rob Brown together in the centre of midfield, Conor McGovern skipping the side on his old 'stomping ground' from Saturday football and the experienced Nick Vertigans replacing the injured Stuart Dorward in the 'hole' behind the front two.

Although defender Andrew Warmerdam had to play out of position as a right-sided midfielder and Tony King had to somehow try and replicate the pace of a Daley or a Kizza up front, we were still confident of getting a result, having beaten St. Margaretsbury 4-1 at Hazelwood back in February. However, Nick Vertigans went and pulled a hamstring in the warm-up and had to be replaced by Clark Williams after just 5 minutes, leaving everyone else having to last the whole 90 minutes just two days after our last match and with an ageing side out on a pitch that was much bigger than most we play on. For the cameraman though, it was a good job we were playing in a 'stadium' under floodlights, as the ramshackle main stand afforded good cover from the torrential rain that fell all match and it gave me a decent vantage point over the pitch, albeit with one of the floodlight pylons obscuring part of the centre-circle. (I have had far worse to contend with in other Non-League grounds though !).

However, it also meant that I had no idea that we had actually made a substitution and missed it on camera because I was too far away from the touchline to hear Manager Trevor Hughes shout out 'Ref, Sub'...although none of our players ever seem to hear him shouting that **either** half the time. (Speak up, Trev !?).

Clark's introduction saw us automatically become more solid defensively as bombing forward and joining the attack (a la Stuart Dorward) just isn't his game as he prefers to sit in front of the

back four. We therefore really started missing the pace of Kizza, Daley and even Danny Green up front to hit St.

Margaretsbury on the break, and most of the First Half was quite 'boring' with defences on

top and the ball skidding off the wet pitch into a river on the far side almost every time somebody made a challenge. Apart from an Own Goal for us in the 33rd minute when a defensive ricocheted clearance went in at the far post from Danny Hagan's corner, the only chances of the half seemed to fall to just two players...Conor Mc,Govern and St. Margaretsbury skipper Luke Witherington, who missed three really good chances by firing wide every time with our defenders slithering about trying to keep their feet, although midfielder Mark Donno missed their best chance when he lobbed over the bar with only D.J. to beat. Mc,Govern at least managed to test St. Margaretsbury keeper Gareth Evans a couple of times and was also unlucky with a header that was headed off the line via the crossbar by defender Mark Elliott, but we were probably slightly fortunate to be leading 1-0 at the break.



Referee Alec Holloway then blew for the start of the Second Half almost before I had put the tape in the camera as the rain became even more torrential and massive puddles were starting to form in the centre-circle, causing real

fears of an abandonment. That didn't stop us playing the ball around on the floor with our usual short passing game though, and somehow we managed to get away with it and look well in control of the match...until the 76th minute when 'Lino' Trevor Hughes's trainers (and glasses) just got too clogged up because of the conditions and he 'missed an obvious offside' by being too far behind play, thereby allowing Ian White to eventually equalise with a good finish from close range, and with St. Margaretsbury bringing on three good substitutes (and us having none left), we looked to be up against it.

However, we managed to regain the lead just three minutes later when Clark Williams actually decided to make a run towards the opposing penalty area and the 'gamble' paid off when Conor Mc,Govern's cross was deflected into his path for a good first-time finish from 12 yards. We then rode our luck on two or three occasions in the last 10 minutes thanks to a good save from Darryl Johnson, two clearances off the line by Kris Spyrou and a bad miss by Donno, and the eventual 2-1 victory in what was our last game of the season gave us a respectable mid-table finish, well clear of any relegation problems in the end. Three seasons in a row of pulling clear of relegation in the last month or so is not quite what we want though...we would much rather be at the other end of the table battling to get back up into the Premier Division, and once again it was a lack of commitment from far too many players to be able to play every week (plus some frustrating injury problems) that was our downfall for long spells of the season.

As usual, the team spirit was excellent with everybody staying for a drink after the match and having a good laugh, but it would be so much better if we could actually win a trophy and do so. We all know we have good enough players to do it.

TREVOR HUGHES'S MANAGER'S REPORT

Our last match of the season was played on Tuesday night under floodlights in pouring rain against St. Margaretsbury. There had been a record thread on the Forum during the day due to last minute unavailability and the fear of a postponement due to the weather. However, we arrived on time with a squad of 12 with Clark Williams becoming available due to his foot operation being cancelled and a pain killing injection. Clark was named as substitute but came on after just 5 minutes when Nick Vertigans pulled a hamstring. The first half was mainly a midfield battle but St Margaretsbury wasted several good chances with poor finishing. We took the lead after 33 minutes with a comical own goal when Danny Hagan's corner was cleared off the line and hit another defender to rebound into the net. It brought back memories of a famous Gary Southam / Paul Rebairo moment for Rovers. Conor McGovern was unlucky not to extend our lead when his header hit the underside of the crossbar but it remained 1-0 at half time. In the second half the rain got worse and the puddles bigger and an abandonment was a possibility. The referee was happy to continue and may have been influenced by the fact that our central midfield trio of Clark Williams, Rob Brown and Danny Hagan were still playing our usual passing game through the puddles. The rain was partly to blame for the equaliser as the linesman, myself, was unable to run in trainers through the water and could not keep up with a quick break. A square ball was played and our defenders stopped appealing for offside with me several yards behind the play. Fortunately, we retook the lead just three minutes later when Conor McGovern's good run and cross fell perfectly for Clark Williams to score a rare goal. Some excellent defending, particularly by Martin Loveday, meant we held on for a 2-1 victory which moved us into mid table to finish the season.