

Sunday 4th October 2009

Waltham Sunday League Division One Match at Hazelwood Sports Ground

ST. MARY'S (EDMONTON)	1	EDMONTON ROVERS	1	HT 1-0
O'Donoghue (4 mins.)		Dorward (78 mins.)		
ST. MARY'S LINE-UP: Andrew QUINN (GK); Brian JOHNSON, Mark BATT, James O'SULLIVAN, Michael MOORE; Martin CRUICKSHANK, Alex BENJAMIN, Bradley JENNINGS, James FAULKNER; Jamie FREWIN, Jamie O'DONOGHUE Subs.: Alan SHEA (On for Cruickshank 2nd Half), Chris SMITH (On for Moore 2nd Half)				
EDMONTON ROVERS LINE-UP (with Marks out of 10): Simon JACKSON (GK) (6½); Paul WOOLSTON (7), Alan BARNARD (8), Martin LOVEDAY (7½); Tony KING (6½), Danny HAGAN (7½), Terry MOORE (8½), Stuart DORWARD (7½), Steve COKELL (7); Danny GREEN (6½), Terry BROWN (6½) Subs.: Danny SMITH (On for Woolston 60 mins) (7), Jamie MARTIN (On for Green 71 mins.) (6½), Kris SPYROU (On for King 71 mins.) (6½)				
Referee: Paul DOBSON		Weather Conditions: Sunny & Dry		Attendance: 25

Report (by Laurence Hughes): As our Hazelwood pitch-sharers and local rivals St. Mary's were in the Premier Division last season, the last time we played them was the season before last when we drew 3-3 with them in a Division One match despite us fielding Tem Adil at Right-Back and Reserve goalkeeper Ozel Ozerman at Left-Back ! That was the match when our new signing this season Danny Smith came on as a Sub for St. Mary's (with Rob Brown shouting out 'He's only got a left foot', but the previous encounter with St. Mary's that season was just as memorable, but for all the wrong reasons as far as we were concerned as they beat us 10-0 to inflict on us our heaviest-ever defeat in the Waltham Sunday League. We fielded just a bare eleven in that match with hardly any defenders available and with outfield player Tony King having to go in goal, but for this match we had two proper keepers, three good outfield players as substitutes and a very strong midfield and defence, so there was never much chance of St. Mary's running riot like that again.

With both sides in the bottom half of the table already though, neither team could afford another defeat, so there was quite a bit of tension before the game with it almost kicking-off before the kick-off thanks to some verbals (for some reason) between a St. Mary's supporter, one of their players and Danny Hagan's Dad, who had just parked his bike next to the changing rooms. Thankfully he didn't need to put his crash helmet back on as none of the other players on the pitch had a clue what the argument was all about, so everything calmed down to some extent. Referee Paul Dobson though, who was on his first visit to Hazelwood and had not taken charge of either team before, must have thought the League had given him the short straw by appointing him to an Edmonton derby...as if all our fixtures against St. Mary's at Hazelwood are like a West Ham v. Millwall match !

All of that caused a five-minute delay to the kick-off, much to Manager Trevor Hughes's frustration as he was planning to shoot off straight on the final whistle to get to Arsenal v. Blackburn in time for their 1.30.p.m. kick-off, and not surprisingly when the game finally started, there were some fierce challenges flying around.

Unfortunately for us though, St. Mary's scored with their first shot of the match after just four minutes when a speculative looping half-volley from well outside the area by Jamie O'Donoghue caught Simon Jackson unawares and sailed over his head into the far top corner, which therefore resulted in the usual manic celebrations whenever they score against us. In fact we nearly found ourselves 2-0 down a few minutes later when O'Donoghue, who was obviously their best player, 'skinned' a stiff-looking Martin Loveday down the right to get over a perfect cross which James Faulkner somehow headed wide.



However, that was to be St. Mary's last clear-cut chance of the match as we totally dominated the game after that as it became apparent that they had a much weaker side out than when we played them the last time they were in our Division. The problem for us though was the absence of first choice strikers Conor McGovern (on holiday) and Daniel Daley (injured), as although Danny Green and Terry Brown both played well as a makeshift pairing up front, they didn't quite have the cutting edge of a McGovern or a Daley, and too many shots were either hit straight at keeper Andrew 'German' Quinn or scuffed disappointingly wide.

We therefore came off at Half-Time 1-0 down but confident of getting back into the game at some stage. However, we had to wait until the 78th minute to equalise, when Martin Loveday flicked on a corner for Stuart Dorward to head in from close range, but although fresh legs were brought on in the shape of midfielder Kris Spyrou and forward Jamie Martin, both of whom were making their first appearances of the season, the panicky finishing continued, especially from a rusty-looking Jamie, and we had to settle for a draw in the end. Much of the credit for that had to go to St. Mary's keeper Quinn, who did make some useful saves, but especially their defenders, who were very committed and threw themselves into numerous good blocks and challenges when we looked certain to score. It was very much two points dropped for us though, as most other sides in the Division probably would have had out-and-out goalscorers playing up front for them who would have been a bit more clinical with their finishing.

At least it was 'three unbeaten' for us though and a very encouraging performance in terms of teamwork, passing and movement which suggests we will not have to face our usual relegation battle this time.



TREVOR HUGHES'S MANAGER'S REPORT

After an excellent win last week we wanted to keep the momentum going with more points in the league but once again our squad was much changed. Two goal hero Steve Cokell went back into midfield with Danny Green returning both to the squad and starting XI to play up front with Terry Brown. Paul Woolston returned in defence so Terry Moore moved into midfield as a holding player so that Danny Hagan could play in a more attacking position alongside Stuart Dorward. The game was only 4 minutes old when we fell behind to another unfortunate goal as a shot which appeared to be mishit looped over Simon Jackson into the top corner of the net. St Mary's had some lively forwards and looked dangerous on the break but some good passing football meant that we had the majority of the possession and the chances for the rest of the half. We carried on in similar fashion in the second half but we had to be patient until the equaliser eventually came in the 78th minute. A corner was flicked on by Martin Loveday for Stuart Dorward to score at the far post with a diving header. We felt that we were the more likely team to get a winner in the closing stages but time ran out and the game finished in a 1-1 draw.