

Sunday 11th January 2004

Mercury Waltham Sunday League (Division Four) Match at Albany Park (Pitch 6)

EDMONTON ROVERS RESERVES	0	TOLMERS	2	HT 0-0
		<i>Ford (78 mins.), Rogers (88 mins.)</i>		

Edmonton Rovers Reserves Line-Up (with Marks out of 10): Darryl JOHNSON (GK) (7); Lee OSBORN (5½), Matt STEELL (7), Scott ROBERTSON (6½), Terry DELLER (7); Ali AHMED (4½), Paul REBAIRO (7), Leon Mc,KENZIE-Mc,KAY (6½), Brian KAMUTEKU (6); Lexton HARRISON (5½), Lee BAZZONI (7) **Subs.:** Myron Mc,KAY (6½), Barry MATTHEWS (6), Mashood BURAAHEE (6)

Tolmers Line-Up: Ian BRIGGS (GK); Rob WILSON, Peter ELFORD, John KEELING, Darren CHARTERS; Neil JOBLING, Martin AIKEN, Nathan SOUTHWELL, Matt ROGERS; Andy CRUMP, Martin LEEDHAM **Subs.:** John FORD, David WHITEHEAD, Bradley JOYCE

Referee: Lawrence HARVEY

Weather Conditions: Cold & Windy

Attendance: 14



Report: For the 4th time in their last six matches, the Reserve Team had the benefit of the First Team having their match called off at the last minute...not that any of the First Team bothered to come and watch and give them their support (except for Coach Trevor Hughes and Cameraman Laurence Hughes !). That was due to the threat of more rain, which had already turned Pitch One at Hazelwood Sports Ground into a lake overnight, yet Pitch 6 at Albany Park was in excellent condition with only a couple of very small puddles in one of the penalty areas which soon cleared once the game got under way. (This is the benefit the Reserves have of nobody appearing to use the pitch on a Saturday or the alternate Sunday when we are not using it ?)

Having only lost narrowly to Tolmers the week before, we were not too bothered about having to play them two weeks in a row, especially as we fielded a similarly strong line-up with only two changes being made as Lee Osborn had recovered

from flu to replace Billy Burnham, who had been deemed 'too unfit' by Manager Mark Howley and therefore relegated to a place on the 'Subs' Bench', while Ali Ahmed came in for Jerome Harrison, who declared himself 'too ill' to play...but not too ill to shout and scream abuse at his cousin Lexton (and others) throughout the match in Jamaican 'patois' from the touchline !

Ali though, would have been a substitute had either Myron Mc,Kay or Barry Matthews turned up in time for the kick-off (presumably they had an excuse for being late...again ?) and unfortunately Ali again showed that he still hasn't quite grasped how to play organised 11-a-side football with a very hesitant display on the right of midfield in the First Half in which he didn't seem to know what he was doing and just stood there in a daze, although the watching Trevor Hughes blamed that on Manager Mark Howley running the line on the far side and not being able to give him instructions, Assistant Manager Russell Beeden telling him to 'push up and support the attack', Right-Back Lee Osborn telling him to drop back and cover him defensively and Skipper Paul Rebaire telling him to 'tuck in more centrally, get involved and get stuck in'...all at the same time !!! (No wonder the 'poor lad' was confused !?). Fortunately though, our other 10 players competed well enough to reach Half-Time with the scoresheet blank against a Tolmers side who were fielding a similarly strong line-up to that which they put out the week before. However, from a spectator's viewpoint the First Half was dismal, with hardly any clear-cut chances created by either side and Referee Lawrence Harvey seemingly blowing his whistle every two minutes for a foul throw committed by one side or the other....Lee Osborn being the biggest culprit with numerous 'foot off the ground' infringements or 'ball didn't come on, ref ' instances !?

With us failing to take advantage of a strong wind behind us in the First Half as well, it seemed as if there might be a few harsh words said at Half-Time, but instead, the spirit was quite good as we realised that it might suit the pace of Lexton Harrison and Leon Mc,Kenzie-Mc,Kay for the ball to hold up in the wind so that they could outpace defenders and get to it before the keeper. However, despite us introducing more pace during the Second Half with Myron Mc,Kay and Barry Matthews coming on for Ali Ahmed and Brian Kamuteku, Tolmers experienced defenders soaked it all up by defending deep and all we could manage for the majority of the time was the occasional good move and dangerous cross which nobody ever really looked like getting on the end of.

Meanwhile, defensively we then started putting in some tired-looking challenges which saw Tolmers start creating clear-cut chances with two or three of them forcing Darryl Johnson into excellent saves before they rather inevitably took the lead in the 78th minute from a corner as substitute John Ford was left unmarked to head in at the far post, this of course starting yet another post-match debate about whether the cause was the lack of zonal marking (which it undoubtedly was !).

Fortunately though, with three attacking substitutes at our disposal, we had plenty of 'fresh legs' from an attacking viewpoint and we managed to put the Tolmers defence under enormous pressure in the last 10 minutes and indeed Leon Mc,Kenzie-Mc,Kay was really unlucky not to equalise in the 87th minute when he did a brilliant piece of 'Okocha-like' skill

with the sole of his boot 'at pace' to send a defender onto his backside on the far touchline before beating two other opponents and hitting the foot of the post with a low shot for what would have been a definite Goal Of The Season Contender had it gone in. However, the rebound went straight to a Tolmers player who then cleared the ball upfield where Terry Deller tried to play their left-sided midfielder Matt Rogers offside (and failed of course !), Rogers then going on to blast a fierce wind-assisted shot inside Darryl Johnson's near post and into the roof of the net to put them 2-0 up when it could easily have been 1-1.

That of course killed the game off and with Rosemill Reserves gaining another shock win, this result put us even deeper into relegation trouble. Although the Reserves have now generally improved their availability and timekeeping for turning up to matches and do not seem to be getting too despondent with all these defeats, it would be nice to see them score a few goals and win a few more of these close matches, but there are too many experienced and well-organised teams in Division Four this season who have a head start on us in that respect and it now seems unlikely that our younger players who are new to organised men's 11-a-side football will learn quickly enough to be able to catch them up this season on the evidence of this performance.