

Sunday 10th September 2006

Mercury Waltham Sunday League Division One Match at Enfield Playing Fields (Pitch 15)

<b>TRENT PARK (ARKAY)</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>EDMONTON ROVERS</b>	<b>0</b>	HT 1-0 !
Koffi (1, 68 mins.), R.Daniels (57, 58, 76 mins.), Smith (72, 77 mins.)				

**TRENT PARK (ARKAY)'S LINE-UP:** Douglas DANIELS; Aaron WALLIS, Ashley D'SILVA, Ilyas CIL, Michael NGUYEN; Greg CHRISTOFOROU, Gokmen DOGAN, Jacquessone KOFFI, Imran DANIELS; Malachi SMITH, Riaz DANIELS **Subs.:** Errol WILLIAMS (GK on at H-T), Ozcan ACAR

**EDMONTON ROVERS LINE-UP (with Marks out of 10):** Jon RICE (GK) (5½); Colin BESTER (6), Paul WOOLSTON (5½), Stuart DORWARD (5½), Tony SPELLER (6); Nick VERTIGANS (6), Paul ELLERKER (5½), Clark WILLIAMS (5½), Peter MURPHY (5½); Conor McGOVERN (6), Derek DORWARD (6) **Subs.:** Steve COKELL (6), Foysoh AHMED (6), Tony KING (6), Kris SPYROU (Not Used), Danny HAGAN (Not Used)

**Referee:** John STOCKMAN

**Weather Conditions:** Hot & Sunny

**Attendance:** 18



**Factual Report (by Laurence**

**Hughes):** We initially approached this first League match of the season in quite a positive frame of mind after a Summer which included keeping ourselves fit in the 7-a-side League, signing up some good new players to boost the squad, a 5-1 win in our Pre-Season Friendly against a useful Flamstead End side, and then a well-attended training session the Sunday before at which all of our players who were there showed a really good attitude. However, those 'plus-es' all went out of the window for this match when first-choice goalkeeper Darryl Johnson suddenly declared himself unavailable (for the rest of the season?) due to work commitments, while eight of our starting line-up had been out at parties the night before (which included the

Wedding Reception of former player Lee Osborn) and although they had deliberately 'not drunk as much as normal', they were still 'knackered and stiff from dancing' when Referee John Stockman blew his whistle to start the game...our new regime of a Paul Woolston-led 10-minute pre-match warm-up on the pitch actually doing more damage than good because of that, especially in the 80-degree heat !?

We then realised that nobody had bothered to bring the medical kit out of the changing rooms (which were half a mile away because we were playing at Enfield Playing Fields), so Kris Spyrou had to run in to get that as he was the only one of our five substitutes able to with Danny Hagan aggravating an ankle injury in the warm-up, Steve Cokell having to act as Club Linesman, Foysoh Ahmed forgetting his boots and having to drive home to get them (while wearing Conor McGOVERN's No.10 shirt !), and Tony King looking for lost balls somewhere behind the goal. Of course that meant skipper Stuart Dorward had no Captain's Armband (a £5.00 fine from the League), and we then had another disaster when Trent Park (Arkay) opened the scoring after just 26 seconds from a lightening quick move which saw midfielder Jacquessone Koffi run onto a right-wing cross and volley in from close range.

With Trent Park (Arkay) having been fortunate enough to have had a game arranged the week before (in which they impressively beat Northmet (Riverside) 4-2), we knew they were going to be fitter and quicker than us, so Manager Trevor Hughes had probably made the right decision to field three defensive midfielders in Paul Ellerker, Clark Williams and Peter Murphy and therefore defend deep, and after the shock of that initial goal those tactics worked quite well, as Trent Park (Arkay) failed to have another meaningful shot on target for the rest of the First Half and were shooting from ridiculous distances in frustration most of the time. However, they put us under so much pressure and gave us so little time on the ball that we couldn't create anything worthwhile ourselves, and our only decent effort in the first 45 minutes was a quickly-taken 25-yard free-kick from Clark Williams which went narrowly wide.

Although we had played well defensively in the First Half though, there were quite a few strong words said



at Half-Time as our passing and creative play had been abysmal. Thankfully that aspect of our game improved at the start of the Second Half and we were just starting to make it a much more even contest when in the 57th minute, our rookie 18-year-old goalkeeper John Rice made a mistake which we feared would happen because of a lack of experience at playing the 11-a-side game (and the lack of the necessary goalkeeping coaching from someone who knows what they are doing...rather than myself for just 10 minutes at training the previous week !). That saw him palm a cross up in the air which he should have easily tipped over the bar (See picture above right), leaving Riaz Daniels to head in on the goal-line and make it 2-0...this being an unassailable lead given the obvious difference in fitness between the two

teams. That mistake also saw our players heads go down badly, while Trent Park's players immediately upped a gear and they made it 3-0 within a minute as Daniels scored again with an excellent backheeled volley at the near post from another fast passing move which we had no answer to.

That immediately brought cries from the likes of Assistant Manager Paul Woolston, Skipper Stuart Dorward and other beleaguered defenders of 'Trev...get some subs on NOW !' Ten minutes later then, after much agonising, Steve Cokell, Foyso Ahmed and Tony King were all brought on (for 35-year-old Conor Mc Govern, 35-year-old Derek Dorward and 42-year-old Peter Murphy), leaving poor Kris Spyrou as the one to miss out and therefore have to take over as Club Linesman for the rest of the game as per our new 'Rota Basis' system...something which he was not happy with at all, with his decision making while holding the flag confirming that, much to the annoyance of Referee Stockman and most of the players on the pitch. The Club Linesman problem rears its ugly head again and seemingly it is not going to go away !

As all four of our fit substitutes (including Kris) had been excellent in the 7-a-side League during the Summer, they all deserved to get a game and it was hoped that the three that were eventually chosen might get us back into the match having replaced such ageing limbs. However, Trent Park (Arkay) were fielding several quality new signings themselves and also at least three players who play for Ryman League side [Ware](#) on Saturdays (in the same Division as top Non-League teams like Canvey Island, Hornchurch, Enfield and Enfield Town !). In fact one of them, defender Ilyas Cil, had actually played professionally in Turkey for Galatasary (according to a player profile I remember reading on the Ware F.C. website), so we had no chance of getting back into the game against opponents of that calibre.

Although we had beaten Trent Park 2-1 in the Summer 7-a-side League and had two close games with them in Division One last season, they were fielding a much better side this time, whereas we were missing key defenders Terry Moore, Andrew Warmerdam and Alan Barnard, and that really started to show half-way through the Second Half (and just after our triple substitution) when Trent Park scored another four goals in the space of just nine minutes. The first of those came when Stuart Dorward tried to backheel the ball out of defence, but it was easily read by Trent Park's Koffi, who ran on to score with ease. That saw their left-sided midfielder Imran Daniels immediately go off for a breather...leaving them with 10 men for the final 22 minutes as they had already used all their substitutes ! That didn't stop them scoring another three goals though, with their 5th goal in the 72nd minute coming from a mistake by the previously impressive Colin Bester, who dived into a challenge on forward Malachi Smith (and missed), although John Rice was unlucky to see Smith's shot deflect off Foyso Ahmed's knee before sailing into the top corner. Trent Park's 6th goal in the 76th minute came from a bullet header by Riaz Daniels which completed his hat-trick, this coming from one of those rare occurrences where the delivery and execution from a corner were 'top drawer' and good enough to beat our zonal marking system (which was properly in place). Their 7th and final goal just a minute later though came as a result of our defence being a complete shambles from open play, with all four of them and keeper John Rice at fault in allowing Malachi Smith to run through onto a flick 'over the top' virtually unchallenged. By that stage, Assistant Manager Paul Woolston was concentrating more on whether his wife had gone into labour yet, while skipper Stuart Dorward had already started playing as a right-winger (before Manager Trevor Hughes gave him the go-ahead). Invariably, that left 18-year-old (and 8½ stone ?) Colin Bester as the 'last man' and having to deal with two or three players twice his size, but thankfully, Trent Park failed to score the 10 goals they probably deserved as they were very wasteful with their finishing, especially in the last 10 minutes, and in fact we went close to scoring a consolation goal on a couple of occasions towards the end, particularly with a Steve Cokell lob from the edge of the area which just went fractionally wide. With Trent Park not having a 'proper' keeper either and having two different outfield players in goal in this match though, it was very disappointing that we didn't manage a worthwhile





shot on target all game !

As it happened, our keeper in this match, John Rice, only really made one bad mistake and he had no real chance with any of Trent Park's other goals, but it was obvious that we need an experienced goalkeeper at this level who can organise the defence and take his own goal kicks (amongst other things). However, a number of our outfield players were also simply not good enough on the day, especially in midfield where we were totally outplayed, and there was no doubt whatsoever that those who had been out 'partying' the night before were the main culprits. When skipper Stuart Dorward came off the pitch at the end, he was so disgusted that he said this was our 'Worst-Ever Performance in the Club's History', but that is

absolute nonsense (in my opinion). Sometimes we have to give the opposition credit, and in my opinion, Trent Park's performance was as good as any team we have come up against in the Mercury Waltham Sunday League since we joined in 1988. (Broxbourne Rangers beating us 5-0 is one that springs to mind when we fielded what we thought was a good side).

**'Murf's Alternative Report !!:** Rovers returned to action after the summer recess on a hot and sultry Sunday morning at Enfield Playing Fields, the home of Trent Park and a multitude of others. The Jades' pre-season had consisted of just one friendly and Saturday evening saw half the starting line-up return to the scene of that particular triumph, Tesco Country Club, not out of superstition but for the odd celebratory pint and chicken drumstick. The occasion was Lee Osborn's marriage to the unfortunate Hayley Bewg and so, while some arrived nursing the morning after effects of the night before's nuptials, Nick Vertigans did so having come second to Philip Schofield's barber. Time to add some Grecian 2000 to the shower pack. Once all the avenues of grey hair jokes had been exhausted, Wooly led the side down another couple in the pre-match warm-up. This was an innovation for season 2006-7 as slow starting had been identified as a weakness during 2005-6 and consisted of a couple of cross pitch canters followed by some "get the feel" ball work. So Rovers kicked off better prepared than they'd ever been and how it showed. Within 60 seconds Trent Park had taken the lead, a poor clearing header seeing the ball worked out to the right before a well placed centre was met on the half volley by Trent Park's Kaffi. One can only wonder how quickly Trent Park would have scored had Rovers not been fully readied for action. Or perhaps Rovers had simply missed their traditional pre-match routine of belting the ball at the 'keeper from all angles and gathering in groups of two and three to yarn on about last night's antics.

Despite the early setback, a tigerish and vastly improved Trent Park, and conditions that suited them and their generation rather more than Rovers and theirs, the away side settled into a solid if somewhat unthreatening pattern, harrying and competing, closing down and generally doing their jobs to restrict Trent Park to a succession of ever more optimistic long range potshots. So half-time was reached with the smallest possible deficit and the interval inquest began. Manager Hughes kicked off with, "we're playing well defensively but not threatening going forward, we need to keep the ball more" before assistant manager Wooly countered, "I disagree, we haven't played well...we've held out but need to offer more going forward". Lawro would call that one two threes and a six. Meanwhile, newly ex-committee member of 10 years standing Russell Beeden, whose outstanding services to Rovers should go unrecognised no longer, was not so in depth in his analysis. "Come on Rovers, this is rubbish," he opined.

The second half resumed in a not dissimilar pattern. Rovers huffed and puffed but the cleaner, crisper football came from the home team. But at 1-0 Rovers were still in it until the killer second goal arrived in the 57th minute courtesy of some Bepe Reina goalkeeping from Long John Rice. Rice, whose frame tends to make everything look big on him from his Gabor Kiraly trackie bottoms through to his Kenny Everett glove wear, elected to engage in a spot of patter-cake, patter-cake rather than catch the ball when presented with a hanging cross from Rovers' left. As the ball first rebounded off apologetic palms and then the bar Trent Park's Daniels gratefully bagged the first of what was to become a hat-trick from all of 12 inches. The second was quickly followed by a third, again from Daniels courtesy of a cheeky close range flick at the near post making the aggregate distance of his brace a grand total of three feet. At this point Manager Hughes was vociferously encouraged by his on pitch adjutant to make some changes. Compliantly, he reached for his pen but before the board could say, "we ain't accepting your resignation", Manager Hughes put a line through the names of McGovern, Dorward D. and Murphy and in their place he wrote Cokell S., Ahmed and King. No Sven Goran he. It was a full playing of his hand and, like the pre-match warm-up, it produced an immediate effect as 3 quickly became 7 despite Trent Park going down to 10 men. On the plus side however, Rovers did manage a shot in the 80th minute though at this point Rovers' insult was added to by further Trent Park injury, seeing the home side reduced to nine men for a spell.

By the final whistle, a game of two halves had been completed both on and off the pitch. A solid rearguard action had morphed into a pair of open flood gates while Steve Cokell's fine first 45 minutes of exemplary semaphore had found its antithesis in Kris Spyrou's flimsy flagmanship. Indeed, at times, the substitute midfielder seemingly couldn't bear to look. Literally.

In the final analysis it could be said the conditions didn't suit Rovers. And some thought it the worst performance in living memory though Rovers are unlikely to face better opposition than Trent Park in Division One this season. Indeed the litany of reasons, excuses and explanations was long and varied though personally I blame Osborn for getting married the day before Rovers first league game. No thought that

**TREVOR HUGHES'S MANAGER'S REPORT**

*Our first league match of the season saw us up against old rivals Trent Park with whom we usually have a close game. We decided to do a pre match warm up so we didn't start slowly but after 30 seconds we were 1-0 down. It was a quality cross and volleyed finish but our defenders looked like statues against the pace of the opposition. The remainder of the first half was mainly played in midfield with neither side getting a shot on target. At half time I was happy with our defensive performance but disappointed with the accuracy of our passing going forward. We actually started the second half quite well until a mistake by our young goalkeeper John Rice led to the second goal and just a minute later a third followed. I made a triple substitution in the hope that fresh legs may get us back into the game with Steve Cokell, Tony King and Foyso Ahmed all coming on. Unfortunately, the excesses of the night before were beginning to catch up with the other players on a hot day against very fit opposition. Clark Williams was allegedly the most pissed at Lee Osborn's wedding reception so we could try to blame Lee for the collapse that followed. Four quick goals came from a Stuart Dorward mistake, a deflected shot, a free header from a corner and a ball over the top outpacing our defence. In the end we were fortunate that Trent Park sustained injuries having already made their substitutions and we did create one or two chances in the last 10 minutes against 9 men. My overall thoughts were that they were a very good side. However, having kept them to 1-0 until the 57<sup>th</sup> minute we showed our ability and should not have collapsed to a 7-0 defeat. Next week is the London Cup so we need a few more players to stay in and watch Match of the Day rather than drinking until the early hours.*