

Sunday 20th November 2005

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

TRENT PARK (ARKAY)	1	EDMONTON ROVERS	3	HT 1-2
T.Oliver (19 mins.)		Mc,Govern (20, 23 mins.), S.Dorward (47 mins.)		

TRENT PARK (ARKAY)'S LINE-UP: No Team Details **Subs.:**

EDMONTON ROVERS LINE-UP (with Marks out of 10): Darryl JOHNSON (GK) (6½); John Mc,LOUGHLIN (7), Andrew WARMERDAM (7), Paul WOOLSTON (7), Terry MOORE (7); Derek DORWARD (7), Paul ELLERKER (7), Stuart DORWARD (7½), Peter MURPHY (7); Conor Mc,GOVERN (7), Steve COKELL (7) **Subs.:** Colin BESTER (6½), JUNEKA JUNIOR (6½)

Referee: Lee ADDISON

Weather Conditions: Sunny & Cold

Attendance: 14



Factual Report (by Laurence Hughes):

Having lost our previous three matches, we were determined to put things right with a rare win, and although Enfield Playing Fields is not normally our favourite venue, we were glad to be playing there on *this* occasion as the vast open expanses allowed the sun to get on the pitch early enough to melt away a hard overnight frost that had put paid to several matches elsewhere.

With the weather being nice and sunny and crisp with no wind (for a change), it was perfect for watching football over there and we were hoping to get a big 'crowd' with most of our club members who were not named in the squad living within walking distance, but they all stayed away having obviously got wind of the fact that Assistant Manager Mark

Howley was on holiday and they might get roped in to being Club 'Lino' for the day !? That meant Manager Trevor Hughes had to do it, as three players dropped out of the squad on the morning of the match, while Assistant Secretary Russell Beeden deliberately turned up late so that he didn't have to do it and the previous week's Linesman Ritchie Copues also turned up late to say that he wouldn't be staying to take over running the line because it was his Wife's Birthday. That left just two substitutes in Colin Bester and Brazilian Juneka Junior on the line (alongside the Cameraman), which was a bit of a poor show and almost certainly another one of those 'It shouldn't matter if I stay in bed as there'll be plenty of others there' situations that we keep getting as a result of having such a large squad.

With Nick Vertigans and Flory Zinga dropping out, together with intended substitute Vernon 'Kizza' Nxumalo, (all of them having poor or unknown excuses by the way !), it meant Trevor had a bit of a last-minute re-shuffle to do, and in the end he settled on using 37-year-old midfield holding player John Mc,Loughlin at right-back and 41-year-old Peter Murphy on the left of midfield, thereby increasing the average age of our starting line-up from 30 to about 35, but then we did manage to beat Wormley Rovers 3-0 the last time we fielded a virtual veterans' XI such as this !

Trent Park (Arkay) though have a reputation as a young, fit side, and when they turned up wearing the same kit as North West Neasden (who had given us the runaround the week before), our players could have been excused for being a bit apprehensive. However, Trent Park (Arkay) were down in 8th place in the Division One table and had only won once so far this season, albeit in a London Intermediate Cup match against a Turkish side, which is no mean feat. All their other games so far this season had either been a draw or a one-goal defeat against good opposition though...except for one bad result when they lost 4-0 to Northmet (Riverside), which may well have been due to 'excess clubbing' by their players on a Saturday night according to what their Manager Dougie Daniels had been telling us during the Summer while they were training at the



Southgate Hockey Centre during our 7-a-side League matches.

In fact the only time we had ever faced Trent Park (Arkay) was in the 7-a-side League back in the Summer of 2003 when they were known as PAOK. They beat us on two separate occasions in that, albeit only by one-goal margins, but they were very fit, fast and skilful and the defenders we had playing in those games (which included Paul Woolston) struggled to cope with them.

However, after just 10 minutes of *this* game, it became apparent that the experienced side we were fielding were much more adept at coping with Trent Park's players at 11-a-side, although Trent Park were fielding just

a bare eleven and had their Manager in goal, so they could well have been fielding a weaker side than normal. That didn't stop them taking the lead against the run of play in the 19th minute though when midfielder Tony ? Oliver struck a first-time shot from 30 yards which he was obviously hoping to fire straight into the top corner in a direct line, but instead it skewed off his shin and went high up in the air in a sort of arc and sailed over Darryl Johnson...who will now apparently be given training in how to run backwards and **then** jump !?

Before that, we had been the better side but been very casual with our final ball, but that goal woke our players up straight away and Conor McGovern equalised less than a minute later with a well-drilled left-footed angled shot across keeper Daniels and into the far corner after pouncing on a loose ball inside the area.

That goal was actually celebrated with a 'wind-up' celebration that involved Stuart Dorward and John McLoughlin leaping around in joy...following Conor's 'complaints' on the Forum during the week that 'nobody' congratulates him any more when he scores, and we were at it again just three minutes later when McGovern put us 2-1 up with a similarly well-struck finish, albeit from closer range this time after Steve Cokell's cross was headed on by Stuart Dorward and again fell conveniently into Conor's path via a defender.

We then continued to be marginally the better side for the rest of the First Half but we didn't really create any further clear-cut opportunities, but then neither did Trent Park, although there was some good football played by both sides in midfield from time to time.

We came off at Half-Time still 2-1 up but we knew we really had to try and kill the game off with our only two substitutes being defensively-minded players. Thankfully we conjured up an excellent four-man move just two minutes after the break which Stuart Dorward got on the end of to finish with a toe-poke from close range to make it 3-1 and then the game really livened up after that as Trent Park Manager Dougie Daniels appeared to get fed up with shouting at his players from between the sticks and decided to swap with a 5 foot 4 inches tall outfield player and put himself out on the pitch as a central defender so that they could hear him a bit more clearly (presumably ?).

We then nearly gave Trent Park an unnecessary lifeline shortly after going 3-1 up though, when Darryl Johnson took exception to a late challenge and tried to start some sort of 'ruck', which thankfully only got as far as a few verbals and a bit of pushing and shoving, but of course if *he* had got sent off, Russell Beeden soon would have hidden behind a tree and then disappeared down the pub very sharpish instead of coming on as a substitute for someone so that we would have had a reasonably capable keeper for the rest of the match !

Referee Lee Addison (who had an excellent game) dealt with the incident sensibly though, but it did fire Darryl up sufficiently enough thereafter that he actually came hurtling off his line and dived head-first at the feet of an opposing forward on the edge of his area at one stage, something which has never been his strong point. Unfortunately it also fired Trent Park up as well though, and they looked a lot more lively after that, with two or three reasonable chances being created and a legitimate penalty claim being turned down when John McLoughlin clearly bowled over skipper Imran Daniels in the area. However, we had twice as many chances ourselves on the break in the Second Half which invariably involved either Conor McGovern or Stuart Dorward, with the post being struck by Conor, while two or three goalbound shots were brilliantly saved by Trent Park's diminutive replacement keeper.



As we looked fairly well in control then, it gave Manager Trevor Hughes the chance to bring on Brazilian midfielder Juneka Junior for his debut with 16 minutes left, together with Colin Bester, as Derek Dorward and Terry Moore came off for a breather. Although he still speaks very little English, 'Junior' actually did quite well and played some good precise passes to our forwards, although I wonder what he was thinking when one of Trent Park's more skilful players (and they had two or three very good ones) turned him inside out with a step-over trick which Brazilians normally do to English players and not the other way round !

We never really looked like throwing away the three points though and it was a very comfortable victory for us in the end, and really we should have won by two or three more on the balance of play. With five key players missing who would have been in contention for a place in the starting line-up, some of our players were very positive afterwards that our squad is now strong enough to go on a long unbeaten run which could see us in with a shout of winning the Division One Title and getting back into the Premier Division 'where we belong'.

'Murf's Alternative Report !!: This weekend George Best was put on life support in an attempt to prolong a life ruined by alcohol. In his prime, Best was the best of his generation, regaling one and all with his famous tale of where did it all go wrong. But it did go wrong. A class apart he may have been but eventually even Matt Busby tired of his reliably unreliable nature and Best's top flight career effectively ended at the age of 27. And on a crisp Sunday morning just a few miles from where Best lay, Rovers were afflicted by their own wayward genius. Yes, for the second time in three weeks, Flory Zinga failed to show. Let's just hope his excuse involved champagne, a bed strewn with £20 notes and a Miss World.

This all left Manager Hughes with a bit of a quandary – just how long do you wait before re-jigging a line-up from those present? His answer was to give Zinga till about quarter past before announcing Jonny Mac at right back and your scribe at left midfield in a now familiar 4-4-2 formation. The side was made complete by Darryl Johnson donning the gloves despite suffering a heavy cold, no joke with that hooter. On the bench was Juneka Junior and Colin Bester but Mrs Bester's seat was left unoccupied. The rumour doing the rounds was this was less to do with Colin not being in the starting eleven and more to do with a bit of a bender. And before you dust off the Dale Winton jokes, my sources tell me this cat spent last night on the tiles.

Rovers opposition were Trent Park (Arkay) and the side took the pitch determined to arrest a mini-slump which has seen them lose three matches on the spin though two of these were Cup games. The return to league action was welcome though the venue, Enfield Playing Fields, was less so. It can hardly be described as a happy hunting ground. Still, everything has its compensations and an "evidently" and "obviously" laden rant wafting across the ether announced that Bloody 'Ell Osborn was in the vicinity. On the next pitch but one, to be exact, where his luridly kitted Vasco side were purported to be lining up against another recent ex-Rover, Myron McKay. Where with Osborn voice recognition suffices, with McKay seeing is believing and first squint drew a blank. Closer inspection revealed his presence though he's undergone a change of image. Yes, he's only gone and bought a new bandana.

The ex-Rover match-up finished level at 2-2 with Ozzie demonstrating that no matter how hard he tries, a leopard simply cannot change his spots. Before hot-footing off to Spurs he conceded the equalising last minute penalty. The pair's post-match verdicts varied wildly – while Ozzie maintained he'd lovingly placed his ex-team-mate in his pocket for the entire game, McKay opined that the Rantmeister General hadn't got within a country mile of him. The truth, no doubt, lay somewhere in between. As the cliché goes, football is all about opinions.

Back to the main event and Rovers held the slight upper hand in the early part of the game and it was against the run of play that Trent Park took the lead in the 19th minute. As Rovers cleared and pushed out from their 18 yard line, Trent Park's No.3 sent a 30 yard shinner arcing over DJ, his call of "step out" sticking in his throat as he tried to stretch his arm beyond its natural length. He had no chance. It was both a fluke and a corker. Rovers responded just a minute later through Conor McGovern. Put in about 10 yards out, Rovers all-time second top scorer despatched a well struck left footer into the far corner. Three minutes later it was 2-1 and again it was McGovern, this time profiting from a mishit clearance from Steve Cokell's left wing cross. Come the break the advantage should have been greater but a combination of poor final balls and wayward finishing kept it down to one. But Rovers were discernibly the better side and resolved to improve their passing. The resolution produced an immediate result as Steve Cokell and Terry Moore combined beautifully down the left before Stuart Dorward was put in for number three on 47 minutes. With a two goal cushion one or two Trent Park heads lowered and it seemed set fair

for Rovers to boost their goal difference. The Trent Park manager obviously came to the same conclusion and, having seen enough from between the sticks, he made the little bloke go in goal so he could come out and show the rest of his team-mates how it should be done. Oh, and to despatch his "you're sh*t" motivational skills from a closer quarter. It didn't work. Rovers went on to create several chances but further goals just wouldn't come.

At the other end DJ was largely unemployed save for a late challenge when the ball ran through. DJ's initial reaction was to push his assailant in time honoured handbags manner before suffering a Mamas& Papas moment as he got down on his knees to pray. Meanwhile all around him followed his lead and got out their handbags, allowing referee Lee Addison, who had an outstanding game, to practice his melee sorting skills. For Old Trafford and Man Utd v. Arsenal, read Enfield Playing Fields and Trent Park v. Edmonton Rovers. From top to bottom the game is the same.

The Trent Park forward emerged with a yellow as, later, did Jonny Mac for a foul on his winger. In the dressing room your scribe generously suggested it was for totting up but Jonny Mac was in far more honest mood. "No, I did him, he was getting on my wick, the nippy bounder..", Rovers' right back confessed with old pro pragmatism. The quip reflected the mood engendered by a 3-1 victory and a league campaign put back on track. Indeed, the only thing to fog the air emanated from Conor McGovern's behind just as your scribe was bending down over his kitbag. The pungent blast of last night's spinach and ricotta had me reeling back to my army training and it was all I could do to refrain from hitting the deck and shouting, "gas, gas, gas!" Let's hope McGovern's striking remains as deadly.