

Sunday 8th January 2006

Mercury Waltham Sunday League Division One Match at Hazelwood Sports Ground

EDMONTON ROVERS	1	TRENT PARK (ARKAY)	2	HT 0-1
Warmerdam (58 mins.)		Tony Oliver (42 mins.), Darryl Hanson (94 mins.)		

EDMONTON ROVERS LINE-UP (with Marks out of 10): Gary COKELL (GK) (7); Andrew WARMERDAM (7½), Stuart DORWARD (7), Paul WOOLSTON (7); Colin BESTER (6½); Nick VERTIGANS (7), Paul ELLERKER (7), Chris 'Nugget' BEEDEN (7), Peter MURPHY (6½); Conor McGOVERN (6½), Steve COKELL (6½) **Subs.:** JUNEKA JUNIOR (6), Daniel GEORGE (6), Kris SPYROU (Not Used), Ritchie COPUES (Not Used)

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

Referee: Michael MACKEY Snr.

Weather Conditions: Very Overcast

Attendance: 23



Factual Report (by Laurence Hughes): At our usual Pre-Xmas All-Day Drinking Session down On Broadway on the 18th December we had an excellent turn-out of club members, so it was therefore 'inevitable' that once we started playing football again after the three-week Christmas break we would have numerous key players missing ! On this occasion it was in defence that we had major problems as both goalkeepers, Darryl Johnson and Simon Jackson, were 'unavailable' (and it's probably best just to leave it at that on this website and leave any speculation to the confines of the dressing room !?), while

Robin Pryke *also* declared himself unavailable without giving a reason, Terry Moore & Tony Speller were still out with the injuries they suffered in our last match on the 11th December, John McLoughlin had family commitments in Kent, and Flory Zinga had failed to get in touch since 'disappearing' just before Christmas.

That saw outfield player Gary Cokell having to go in goal, while with five defenders missing, Manager Trevor Hughes had a difficult choice to make in either playing a normal 4-4-2 formation with inexperienced youngsters Colin Bester and Daniel George as the two full-backs (and dropping a 'quality' midfielder to accomodate them), or taking a huge risk by playing a 3-5-2 formation for only the third time in the club's history...the first time being an 8-0 defeat in our [Worst-Ever Performance](#), and the second time (4 years ago) when we drew 6-6 against Rangers in a Premier Division match after being 4-0 up at Half-Time ! On this occasion though, it appeared that we had players to choose from whereby the 3-5-2 formation would suit them, so Trevor therefore decided to go with that and bearing in mind we had only won once in our last seven matches and our opponents Trent Park (Arkay) had won their last three, it actually worked quite well for most of the match and at no time did we face any 'three-against-three' situations...which happened frequently with the 'too attack-minded' Chidi & Eric Ibekwem as our two wing-backs the last time we tried it.

Of equal concern before this match was our possible bad lack of fitness bearing in mind none of our players play in Senior Saturday football any more and therefore don't train or play over Christmas, while virtually all of our players had seemingly suffered from 'flu' at some stage over the past month.

However, we showed up quite well in that respect against a much younger Trent Park side, who were clearly fielding a much stronger line-up than the one they put out when we beat them 3-1 at Enfield Playing Fields back in November.

For most of the First Half though, we just couldn't get in a worthwhile shot on target, despite



conjuring up some decent moves with Conor McGovern and Chris 'Nugget' Beeden at the forefront of most of them, but Trent Park's players were much more prepared to shoot rather than over-elaborate and try to walk the ball into the net like we were doing. That saw them nearly take the lead in the 22nd minute when Riaz Daniels got behind our defence to fire into the bottom corner but he clearly used his arm to control the ball in doing so and celebrated a bit 'sheepishly' when Referee Michael Mackey Senior initially allowed the goal to stand ! When Stuart Dorward pointed out the muddy imprint of the ball on Daniels' white shirt (*See picture below left*) and the fact that most of their players obviously knew it was handball, Mr. Mackey then decided to ask our Linesman

Ritchie Copues, who obviously told him it was handball and the goal was eventually disallowed....about a minute later ! Trent Park's Captain Tony Oliver went a bit 'ballistic' at that decision and had to be calmed down, but the rest of their players (and supporters) to their credit accepted it without too much fuss. Maybe that fired Oliver up though as he then went on to hit a screamer against the crossbar from 25 yards in the 40th minute with Gary Cokell motionless, and then just two minutes later he put them ahead ('definitely' this time) with a free-kick from even further out which rocketed into the far corner, although a proper keeper would have moved his feet and maybe tipped it away, while for some reason Mr. Mackey counted out 14 instead of 10 when pacing out the distance for our wall, which gave Oliver a much easier target to aim at ! We found ourselves 1-0 down at Half-Time then, but it had been a very close game so far and we were by no means out of it. However, we continued to find on-target shots hard to come by until Andrew Warmerdam came up from the back to equalise in the 58th minute when he out-muscled Trent Park's diminutive defenders to head in Steve Cokell's corner. Unfortunately though, we then started to tire a bit after that and Trent Park had a good spell for 20 minutes or so with Gary Cokell making a number of good saves in diving at players' feet and blocking close-range shots from scrambles in the area, although again, they rarely had any chances where they ended up being 'clean through'.

We then brought on some fresh legs towards the end with Juneka Junior and Dan George coming on for Chris Beeden and Colin Bester, and it was then anyone's game with both sides very evenly-matched and going for a winner. Indeed we were really unlucky not to get that winner ourselves in the 3rd minute of Injury Time when Nick Vertigans struck a fierce first-time shot towards the top corner, but Trent Park's (newly-signed ?) keeper made a brilliant flying save to tip the ball away. Of course it was then typical of our luck that they then broke away down the other end straight from the resulting corner and scored a winner themselves when midfielder Darryl Hanson (a regular for Ryman League side Ware on Saturdays) fired a low shot through a crowd of players and into the bottom corner underneath the diving



Gary Cokell before running off on a manic celebration (one of those where everybody all piles on top of each other a la winning a Penalty Shoot-Out in a Cup Final), and that spectacle was made even more galling for us when Referee Mackey blew the Final Whistle while they were all still in a heap and before the game could re-start ! In fact there was a foul on Juneka Junior in the build-up to that goal which could easily have been given, and we then would have got the draw we deserved from this match...which wouldn't have been a bad result in the circumstances, even though we knew beforehand that the only chance we had of gaining promotion at the end of this season was for us to win all nine of our remaining matches.

And so, it's now confirmed as yet another trophy-less season for us where all we are playing for is 'fun'...while watching other teams who we know are not as good as us get through to Cup Finals and win League Titles. It's 17 years for us in the Mercury Waltham Sunday League now...and still 'nothing' !

'Murf's Alternative Report !!: On a wet and windy morn, Rovers welcomed Trent Park Arkay to Hazelwood for their first match of the new year. There were a few changes in personnel occasioned by injuries to regulars Tony Speller and Terry Moore, social commitments in the life of

Johnny Mac and one match suspensions to blot the copy books of Foysol Ahmed and one match wonder Flory Zinga. And, though rumour has it the latter has recently been spotted loitering at work by workmate Derek Dorward, his suspension remained entirely academic. The other notable absentees were 'keeper Darryl Johnson who, according to rumour, may well have moved in with Flory, so scarcely sighted has he been of late, and his able deputy Simon Jackson.

However, Rovers squad is now deep enough to withstand such losses in numbers despite Manager Hughes' less than buoying words that it was "a new year, new formation, just the same old players." The new formation referred to was a deployment of 3-5-2 in front of stand-in 'keeper Gary Cokell. This saw a trio of centre backs in Stuart Dorward, Wooly and Warmers mirrored by a trio of midfielders in Nick Vertigans, Paul Ellerker and Chris "Nugget" Beeden who were flanked by wing backs Colin Bester and this old literary dog learning a new trick after 25 years of 4-4-2. Meanwhile, up front were Messrs McGovern and Cokell S. though the latter reported feeling a little under the weather. Altogether now, aaaaaahhhh....

For many, it was the first gathering since the pre-Christmas beer and skittles down On Broadway and it showed as the team spent most of the first half settling into the new formation. The away side had more of the play though Rovers' back three defended resolutely and, behind them, 'keeper Cokell dealt with all that came his way in a positive and decisive manner. The major scare came in the 22nd minute when Trent Park took the lead only for the goal to be rightly disallowed after the referee consulted assistant referee Ritchie Copues. This did nothing for his popularity with the away support gathered on his touchline who launched into a high octane tirade in his and all directions despite the fact the Trent Park forward handled the ball with both arms in controlling the through ball.

However, Trent Park took the lead in the 42nd minute when Wooly was somewhat harshly adjudged to have nudged his opponent as he won an aerial ball. Referee Mackey Snr. marched Rovers wall back a full 13 paces due to what he claimed was a modest gait before the free kick was struck unerringly past Gary Cokell's outstretched right hand. Rovers thus went in to the break one down and, on balance, it was probably about right. The jades had not muddled the 'keeper's knees and too often played their football in front of the away side's back four a la the best team in North London.

However, the second half was an entirely different affair as Rovers took the field determined to improve their game. Possession was dominated and Trent Park forced into errors all over the pitch as the home side pressed, harried, upped the tempo and generally settled into 3-5-2. The increased work rate also resulted in several flashpoints, the first of which saw Paul Ellerker and the Trent Park No.11 booked for slinging their satchels at each other in a less than friendly manner.

Within 13 minutes of the restart, Rovers new resolve brought its reward as Warmers headed home from Steve Cokell's expertly delivered corner. The game then ebbed and flowed with each side having their spells though, overall, Rovers were the better side in the second period. As the game reached its denouement, Stuart Dorward and Trent Park's centre forward tangled in the final flare up of the game which left the latter's footprint emblazoned across the former's upper thigh. The incident hastened another bout of handbags, the conclusion of which was the inevitable 50/50 booking of both miscreants though, tellingly, Trent Park substituted their man to save him from himself. He tramped off disconsolately into an empty changing room where he was sure to have found an argument had the mood taken him.

It looked like the right result - a draw - was on the cards but, in time added on, the game nearly swung both ways. First, Nick Vertigans so nearly capped an excellent performance with the winner but his well struck shot was brilliantly turned away by the Trent Park 'keeper. Then, the pendulum swung Trent Park's way as they secured victory with the very last kick of the match. As with the first goal, Gary Cokell didn't have a chance with a sweetly struck shot which took a bounce just in front of his despairing dive. The elevation and pace this imparted saw the ball leap over Cokell's left hand and find the corner. Trent Park went mad, demonstrating a celebration that would have had Conor McGovern drooling, as they knew they'd snatched victory from the jaws of a draw. As for Rovers it was another entry in a growing catalogue of "nearly" games.