

Sunday 23rd March 2008

Mercury Waltham Sunday League Division One Match at Enfield Playing Fields (Pitch 16)

UNIQUES	5	EDMONTON ROVERS	0	HT 2-0
Fisher (26 mins.), Lewis (32 mins.), Hassan (68 mins.), Palmer (82 mins.), Sivi (86 mins.)				

UNIQUES' LINE-UP: Michael NEOFIT (GK); Muka MASON, Kevin ANTOINE, Derek BROWN, Andy SIVI; Tarik HASSAN, Joel BURNETTE, Arraine FISHER, Devon LEWIS; Raphael JOSEPH, Tyrone PALMER **Subs.:** Muriu LEIGERTWOOD, Nathan BAPTISTE (Both on after 73 mins for Lewis & Burnette)

EDMONTON ROVERS LINE-UP (with Marks out of 10): (10 Men !) Ozel OZERMAN (GK) (6½); Tony SPELLER (6½), Alan BARNARD (6½), Martin LOVEDAY (6½); Kris SPYROU (6), Rob BROWN (7), Tem ADIL (6), Tony KING (6½); Derek DORWARD (7); Daniel DALEY (6½)
Subs.: None

Referee: Russell HOWES

Weather Conditions: Very Cold with occasional drizzle

Attendance: 9

Factual Report (by Laurence Hughes): 28 days before this match, although we knew Manager Trevor Hughes would be away on holiday, we only actually had one player definitely unavailable, namely defender Terry Moore (on his honeymoon). We therefore didn't bother using up our one allowable



'release date' and having a week off, as with 36 players registered we thought we would have no problems fielding a team...and indeed we have played on Easter Day for the last few seasons without any struggle to field a side. However, on this occasion, we ended up with 12 regulars unavailable and numerous others unable to help out (which is what most of them were registered for), leaving us with just 10 players including Kris Spyrou...our 33rd different player used so far this season, no Manager (due to Russell Beeden deciding to go on holiday as well as Trevor and the injured Stuart Dorward having last-minute family commitments), no Club Linesman (due to me deciding to cash in on our misfortune by filming the match instead...to sell numerous copies to Uniques' players no doubt ?), and no prospect whatsoever of any registered players turning up during the game to come on as an 11th player, especially in freezing weather conditions including a raw wind and constant 'drizzly sleet'. In fact John Beasley did turn up to watch once the game had kicked off, but he was injured anyway !

Unfortunately (and predictably), the blanket of snow which had paralysed most of the Country didn't reach Enfield Playing Fields, as the flakes that were falling at 9.30.a.m. (prompting numerous concerned text messages from our players) failed to settle and soon turned to drizzle, thereby leaving Pitch 16 perfectly playable when Pitch 15 (Enfield Royals v. Mc,Kenzie Rangers) had a massive puddle in the goalmouth and had to be called off...as were most pitches in the Borough of Broxbourne which were covered in snow ! (Just our luck as to where and who we happened to be playing then, as a postponement would have been the best result we would have had all season !).

As for the 12 players unavailable, a large number were due to long-term injuries, but the late

cry-off of Vernon 'Kizza' Nxumalo (because of a 'pulled muscle in his foot !?') was a bit annoying as he had texted Manager Trevor Hughes to let him know, without reading the website to find out that Trevor was actually on holiday, while Danny Hagan, Danny Green and Scott Jenkins had all gone away on Easter Tours with their Saturday clubs (Crouch End Vampires and Norsemen) as they assumed we did not play League matches on Easter Day.

Having only lost 2-0 to second-placed Enfield Royals in mid-February with only nine men though, the fact that we were playing a supposedly inferior side with one more than that gave us a bit of hope that we could maybe nick a draw at least from this match, and indeed the first 25 minutes of the game certainly suggested that as the play was fairly even with chances at both ends...Daniel Daley missing the best of ours by firing straight at keeper Neofit's legs when clean through on goal.

Unfortunately for us though, Uniques were fielding more or less a full-strength side, while unlike the Enfield Royals match, we were lacking too many experienced players this time. In fact we were only fielding three players over the age of 30 when it is normally eleven ! That saw Uniques take the lead after about 26 minutes when two players found themselves clean through on goal following a deflection off Martin Loveday, but Ozel Ozerman came hurtling off his line to wipe out one of them for what would have been an obvious penalty and sending-off had the ball not run through for Arraine Fisher to tap into an empty net.

Not surprisingly we then conceded a second goal just six minutes later when a good ball was played into the area as we pushed out after defending a corner, leaving Devon Lewis with a simple finish on the goal-line. We actually then had a good spell just before half-time with a stiff breeze behind us and the 'slope' in our favour, but several half-chances came to nothing,



mainly due to an understandable lack of teamwork in the final third. One or two heads were down at Half-Time but thankfully there was no arguing (at that stage !) and we played as well as we could for most of the Second Half, but again without really looking like scoring. Inevitably though, a

number of players started going down with injuries as the Second Half wore on with Tony Speller really struggling with a bad gash on his knee (which Referee Russell Howes surprisingly didn't ask to be cleaned up, although at least we had a medical kit on the touchline even though we had no personnel to administer it). We then had Tem Adil unable to run due to a hamstring injury, Tony King take a heavy knock to his ankle, and Ozel Ozerman doing his back in trying to jump up high enough to tip Tarik Hassan's 'sliced cross' over the bar in the 68th minute. Unfortunately it sailed into the net over his head (as usual) and we were now 3-0 down, and after that it was just a question of whether Uniques would reach double figures or not in the remaining 22 minutes with us effectively down to six and two halves. On top of that, we also had Daniel Daley starting to get extremely 'pissed off', as he had been battling away on his own up front (in a 3-4-1-1 formation) the whole game and not really getting anywhere against Uniques' experienced defender Kevin Antoine, who was reading him like a book in his propensity to receive the ball, turn and run at him without varying his game at all. Likewise, Kris Spyrou, despite showing a good level of fitness, was still too lightweight to get past much bigger, taller and stronger defenders, and once again it was like being transported back to the early 1980's for me, as I used to have exactly the same problem playing in his position in those days when I was the same age. For Kris, weight training (at University ?) should be the answer. Me...I just gave up and started filming matches instead !

It took Uniques until the 82nd minute to score a fourth goal though, when Ozel Ozerman seemed to dive low to his right too early for a long range shot by Tyrone Palmer, with the ball bouncing slowly over Oz's outstretched arms and trundling into the net as he laid horizontal on the floor ! He had no chance with Uniques 5th goal three minutes later though, when their 5 foot tall left-back Andy Sivi scored with a spectacular diving header, but as usual, Oz made up for any faults

he may have been guilty of for some of the goals by making three brilliant saves from the same attack in the last minute, and he certainly wasn't our worst player on the day.

In the end, a 5-0 defeat was actually a bit harsh on us as we didn't really deserve to lose by that big a margin, but it was clear from this match that we are not going to win against **any** team in Division One if we have too many key players such as Stuart Dorward, Conor McGovern, Terry Moore, Danny Hagan, Steve Cokell, Paul Woolston & others all missing at the same time.

Manager Trevor Hughes then phoned from his house in Cyprus to ask how we got on, and his first words were that he was lying beside his swimming pool in temperatures of 25°C watching 'Grand Slam Sunday' on Sky and what was the weather like back home !

At least he will be back in time for our next match, but with even more injury problems resulting from this game and only six players definitely available at the moment, our current record of only two wins in our last 13 matches is obviously going to become only two wins in our last 14 matches (probably as a result of the first of three forthcoming 'non-fulfilments' in our road to oblivion unless some of our other registered players who are supposedly no longer interested do us a favour to help keep the club alive ?).