

Sunday 11th April 2004 (Easter Day)

Mercury Waltham Sunday League (Premier Division) Match at Waltham Cross Playing Fields

WHITE HART	1	EDMONTON ROVERS	2	HT 0-1
Welch (47 mins)		L.Harrison (19 mins.), Jones (Own Goal) (68 mins.)		

White Hart's Line-Up: Ben SMITH (GK); Martin GARWOOD, Andy SUSSEX, Paul JONES; Darren CROSS, John GRAHAM, Spencer CROSS, Dave SCOWEN, Steve BOREHAM; Ian WELCH, Neil PURKISS **Subs.:** Nick PHILLIPS, Rod RUNNALLS, Steve NICHOLLS

Edmonton Rovers Line-Up (with Marks out of 10): Jerome HARRISON (GK) (7); Chidi IBEKWEM (7), Gary ADAMSON (7½), Paul WOOLSTON (7½), Lee OSBORN (7); Foyso! AHMED (6½), Leon Mc,KENZIE-Mc,KAY (7), Eric IBEKWEM (7½), Peter SUTTON (7); Lexton HARRISON (6½), Conor Mc,GOVERN (7) **Sub.:** Brian KAMUTEKU (6½)

Referee: Mark MORRIS

Assistant Referees: Leo DeVILBISS & Mick EDWARDS

Weather Conditions: Mainly Sunny. No wind

Attendance: 24



Report: The build-up to this match during the week was a real nightmare with players dropping out every day because of injuries or Easter family commitments ([click here](#) to view the final list !), while those who were left to play in this match could be excused for still having a bit of a hangover after our First Team's Cup Semi-Final defeat the previous Sunday and then our Reserve Team's Cup Final defeat on the Wednesday. We were therefore faced with a situation where we had to call the Reserve Team's match off (while conceding the points) and field just five First Team players from our squad of 17 in this match, while giving Foyso! Ahmed his First Team debut and the likes of Lee Osborn and Gary Adamson rare First Team appearances ! Our biggest problem was in goal though, as neither Darryl Johnson or Simon Jackson were available while our supposed 'third-choice keeper' Billy Burnham was supposed to be on the 09:32 from Liverpool Street which was due to stop at Waltham

Cross station (right outside the ground) at 09:58...only a train sped straight through the station at that time without stopping (on it's way to Stansted !?), much to the horror of our players who were there at the venue at that time as they realised Reserve Team outfield player Jerome Harrison would then have to go in goal instead !

As Burnham didn't phone anyone after that, we were assuming he was not on the train anyway as he had the 'hump' about having to play in goal and felt he should have been in the First Team's starting line-up as a central midfield player in this match (ahead of the likes of Peter Sutton, Leon Mc,Kenzie-Mc,Kay and the ever-improving Eric Ibekwem !). Once the game started though, it was clear that Burnham would have been out of his depth fitness-wise in that position as White Hart were fielding the strongest side they had put out for months...since they beat us 2-1 at Hazelwood back in November in fact, this being the last game that their ex-Southend, Crewe & Leyton Orient professional Andy Sussex had played for them ! Of course, who should appear in their line-up for this match when we are fielding a seriously-depleted side ?, but...Andy Sussex ! That was no doubt because it was White Hart's most important match of the season as they had to win this game to be sure of avoiding relegation and that saw them really steam into challenges right from the off and give us no time on the ball whatsoever on what was a very small pitch. That saw Jerome Harrison having to deal with quite a few shots and crosses early on, but most of them were straight at him and fairly easy to deal with. It was therefore slightly against the run of play when we took the lead in the 19th minute, but it was an excellent goal on the break as Lexton Harrison outpaced the White Hart defence from Lee Osborn's perfect through ball before chipping the ball past oncoming keeper Ben Smith (albeit after unintentionally over-running it !?) and then tapping it into an empty net !

The rest of the First Half was fairly even with the occasional chance at both ends, but we held onto our 1-0 lead until Half-Time. Unfortunately though, White Hart managed to equalise just two minutes after the break when Ian Welch got in a free header from a corner at the far post which crossed the line by 'two feet' (according to Assistant Referee Leo DeVilbiss), even though Eric Ibekwem just about woke up in time from doing a Kieron Dyer impersonation leaning against the goalpost to seemingly clear it away a lot closer to the line than *that* !. This goal was Manager Trevor Hughes's fault though, as he shouted out zonal marking instructions to Chidi Ibekwem just as the corner was about to be whipped into the area...and when Chidi momentarily looked round towards Trevor, Welch was then left unchallenged ! (Apparently, the reason Trevor 'never' shouts at players from the touchline in *open* play is because they then look round at him and lose the player they are supposed to be marking, so he obviously went against his principles here and we were punished for it). The game continued to be fairly even after that though, but Foyso! Ahmed was starting to find the going tough and when he was replaced by Brian Kamuteku after 64 minutes he admitted that the strength and speed of White Hart's tackling was very difficult to contend with compared to what he has been used to while playing for the Reserves in Division Four. Foyso! had played well enough though, but Brian's extra height and strength certainly made a bit of a difference and the game really

livened up after he came on with the shots at goal from both sides suddenly becoming a lot more spectacular, much to the delight of a big crowd which included two coach-loads of dishevelled-looking Asylum Seekers behind one goal...two of whom seemed to be making a 'run for it' right across the pitch while we were warming up before the match !? In fact Jerome Harrison actually started making one or two spectacular tip-over saves from fiercely-struck shots, although we were excellent defensively despite that, with Paul Woolston having one of his best games for the club and Gary Adamson being particularly impressive in the sweeper's role despite having hardly played at all for either side this season. Because we defended well then, there was always a chance that our under-strength side could still go on and win this match as we still had the likes of first-choice players Peter Sutton and Conor McGovern up front. Indeed it was McGovern's run down the left and low cross which set up what proved to be our winner in the 68th minute as White Hart defender Paul Jones blasted the ball into his own net from 6 yards in trying to prevent Lexton Harrison from scoring at the far post.

2-1 to us was probably a fair result on the balance of play in the end as White Hart seemed to get a bit rattled as the game went on with one or two of their players really losing their composure. We therefore did superbly to keep our heads and concentrate and in that respect it was a very similar performance to our 2-1 victory against Enfield Rangers Old Boys in the Roy Bailey Challenge Cup Quarter-Final.

It was therefore quite amusing down the pub afterwards when absent skipper Stuart Dorward phoned Russell Beeden for the result, but before Russell told him the score he told him the team line-ups (including Andy Sussex playing for them) and asked Stuart for a prediction ! (I have no idea what Stuart said, but I very much doubt that it was a 2-1 win to us !).