

Sunday 2nd November 2008

Mercury Waltham Sunday League Division One Match at Waltham Cross Playing Fields

WHITE HART	2	EDMONTON ROVERS	4	HT 1-4
Mallick (2 mins.), Charles (65 mins.)		T.Brown (7 mins.), Dorward (23, 32 mins.), King (34 mins.)		

WHITE HART'S LINE-UP: Ben SMITH (GK); Darren CROSS, Jamie COOK, Jason SEABROOK, Dave BAIRD; Jason COOPER, Tom BUSH, Matt CHARLES, Mark NICOLL; Jay RICHARDSON, Thomas MALLICK

Subs.: Glen ELEY (On for Cross in Second Half), Matt POWELL (Not Used), Ben SCHOOLING (Not Used), Darren JORDANOU (Not Used)

EDMONTON ROVERS LINE-UP (with Marks out of 10): Darryl JOHNSON (GK) (5½); Stuart DORWARD (7½), Alan BARNARD (7), Paul WOOLSTON (7); Tony KING (7); Rob BROWN (7½), Tem ADIL (7), Steve COKELL (7½); Terry BROWN (7), Daniel DALEY (7), Vernon NXUMALO (7) **Subs.:** Foyso! AHMED (On for King 68 mins.) (6), Jamie MARTIN (On for Daley 68 mins.) (6½), James WHITTICK (On for Nxumalo 68 mins.) (6½)

Referee: Chris CONNORS

Weather Conditions: Mainly Cloudy

Attendance: 20

Report (by Laurence Hughes): While I was setting up the camera for this match, a group of whom appeared to be 'Groundhoppers' came over and asked me what the fixture was. Surprisingly, when I said White Hart v. Edmonton Rovers and that it was a bottom of the table clash, they stayed and watched the whole game! Maybe it was because they had never seen a team wearing Orange Shirts and Jade Socks before, but that was us for this match with White Hart being the only other team in our Division who wear green and therefore, as the Home side, necessitating a change for us.

We had played White Hart's First Team on 12 previous occasions since they joined the League in the late-80's (shortly after us),

and invariably had close games with them, including two draws in Division One last season when both of us finished in mid-table. However, White Hart had lost five of their seven League & Cup matches so far this season, including a 5-0 defeat to newly-promoted Turnford Geese in their previous match, this being mainly as a result of them suffering from the same problems we faced three seasons ago when our First Team lost a lot of quality players through retirement and had to throw former Reserve Team players in at the deep end when they were not of Division One quality.

However, that didn't stop one of White Hart's ex-Reserve Team players, forward Tom Mallick, giving them the lead after only two minutes as he toe-poked in a harmless looking through ball after capitalising on hesitancy from keeper Darryl Johnson, who obviously should have turned up to training and benefitted from Manager Trevor Hughes's coaching rather than sitting at home watching Manuel Almunia letting long throw-ins through his legs or Heurelio Gomes punching his own defenders in the head. In fact we were lucky that White Hart were missing their best player in their usual leading scorer Ian 'Itchy' Welch, but then we were without first-choice players Conor McGovern (Working), Danny Hagan (Ankle Injury) and Terry Moore (Fractured Hand) ourselves, not to mention several others who had to drop out because of family commitments. However, we still fielded a reasonable side including plenty of players who were adept at taking free-kicks so it seems as Terry Brown showed after just 7 minutes when he equalised with a screamer into the top corner from 25 yards.

We then really got on top after that with Alan Barnard, Tony King and Tem Adil all showing the benefit of turning up to training and practising 2 or 3-touch passing in a confined space, as White Hart's pitch is very much on the small side and not easy to play on normally, although the heavy rain from the previous day and the decision by the local Council to cut the grass for a change actually made for a very decent surface to that which we have



encountered over there in the past. It would have helped if the rest of our players were able to attend training though, but instead of scoring from flowing passing moves like we normally do, this time we actually profited from set pieces for all four goals. The second came in the 23rd minute when Stuart Dorward headed in a pinpoint corner from Steve Cokell, then skipper Dorward scored again just 9 minutes later to put us 3-1 up with another header, this time after White Hart defender Jamie Cook had inadvertently flicked on Terry Brown's corner at the near post. White Hart then really fell apart after that and we added a fourth goal just two minutes later when Tony King won the right to

take aim from another 25-yard free-kick on the basis of him successfully practising them at training, and he proved Manager Hughes right by hitting another screamer into the same top corner that Terry Brown had managed. A White Hart player actually told me after that the match that they felt keeper Ben Smith was at fault for both free-kicks for not moving his feet before diving, but that looked a bit harsh to me. I don't think he had time to move!?

We eventually came off at Half-Time 4-1 up, but we could easily have scored two or three more had our front two of Daniel Daley and Vernon 'Kizza' Nxumalo been a bit more clinical and positive with their finishing. It was obvious that White Hart were therefore going to fire themselves up for the Second Half and not surprisingly our defenders had a lot more work to do after the break, especially after midfielder Matt Charles pulled a goal back

for them in the 65th minute when he was left unmarked to fire in the rebound from close range after Darryl Johnson had fumbled a harmless-looking free-kick. Thankfully, D.J. did make one or two scrambled saves after that, while we rode our luck a few times with shots going just wide, but we had a number of good chances ourselves on the break, most notably when Jamie Martin and James Whittick were brought on up front for Daley and Kizza for the last 20 minutes or so, but neither of them could beat keeper Smith, who made some good saves, although the finishing was once again unconvincing after good approach play, and that was certainly where we missed Conor McGovern.

However, it was a valuable three points in the end, even if we didn't actually move up the table due to other teams at the bottom winning, but we still have a few players looking a bit 'stiff' due to recent injuries and a lack of 11-a-side practice wearing boots on grass (as opposed to 5-a-side wearing trainers on AstroTurf), and that definitely needs to be sorted out if we are to beat some of the better teams in the Division and maybe even challenge for the title.

TREVOR HUGHES'S MANAGER'S REPORT

We picked up our first league point of the season last week and I only had to make two changes to our starting eleven with Paul Woolston and Rob Brown returning for Jim Arrowsmith and Conor McGovern. However, goalkeeper, Darryl Johnson and our three defenders looked as if they had never played together before after just two minutes as they were all slow to a through ball as White Hart's centre forward was first to the ball to put us behind. Fortunately, that proved to be a rare mistake in the first half as the benefit of the lack of numerous team changes stated to show. Terry Brown equalised after 7 minutes direct from a free kick into the top corner and two headed goals by Stuart Dorward from Steve Cokell and Terry Brown corners gave us a 3-1 lead. Daniel Daley was tripped just outside the box to give us another dangerous free kick and captain Stuart Dorward had to intervene as several players wanted to take it. Fortunately, he chose Tony King who was one of the few players who had been practising free kicks at training and the training paid off as he hit another into the top corner to give us a 4-1 lead at half time. The second half started quietly and I decided to make a triple substitution with James Whittick and Jamie Martin coming on up front and Foysol Ahmed in midfield to give us some fresh legs on a muddy pitch. Unfortunately, as they were warming up, Darryl Johnson parried a long range effort for White Hart to score on the rebound in similar fashion to Manuel Almunia which cut our lead to a scary 4-2 for all the Arsenal fans. In fact when James Whittick and Jamie Martin both missed chances to score a fifth goal memories of famous comebacks were getting even clearer in my mind. However, despite coming under a lot of pressure we defended well in the last 20 minutes and held on for a 4-2 win to move us up the table.