

Sunday 31st August 2008

Pre-Season Friendly Match at the Ashton Playing Fields, Woodford Bridge

WOODHURST	2	EDMONTON ROVERS	7	HT 0-4
Owusu (73, 86 mins.)		Martin (23 mins.), McGovern (29 mins.), Cummins (38, 66 mins.), Ahmed (41 mins.), S.Dorward (61 (Pen.), 69 mins.)		

WOODHURST'S LINE-UP: Tom GRAY (GK); Jenssen CLIFFORD, Alex ALEXANDER, Godwin AMOAKA, Martin ROBINSON; Kevin BLACOE, Brian Jack O'REILLY, Nigel JORDON; Eric IBEKWEM; Chidi IBEKWEM, Stephan WILLIS **Subs.:** Kofi OWUSU (On at Half-Time), Murray FORTAG (On in Second Half)

EDMONTON ROVERS LINE-UP (with Marks out of 10): Tony KING (GK for first 14 minutes, then outfield) (7); Stuart DORWARD (7), Scott JENKINS (7), Josh DUBERRY (7); Jamie MARTIN (7), Paul AMICO (7), Rob BROWN (7), Foyso! AHMED (7); Greg CUMMINS (7); Conor McGOVERN (7), James WHITTICK (6) (Centre-forward for first 14 minutes, then GK due to injury) **Subs.:** None !

Referee: Owen CLARKE

Weather Conditions: Misty and Humid

Attendance: 8

Report (by Laurence Hughes):

As with the previous week's Friendly, this game was arranged due to the opposition Manager being an ex-Rovers player, in this case [Chidi Ibekwem](#), while Chidi's younger brother Eric (another former Rovers player) was also in their line-up. Once again though, they would have had real problems recognising any of our players, even though they both only left us three seasons ago. That was because stalwarts Darryl Johnson, Paul Woolston,



Tony Speller, Simon Jackson and Derek Dorward were amongst some 27 players who were actually unavailable for this match, although at least skipper Stuart Dorward and dual Player-Of-The-Year Conor McGovern were both playing.

With Woodhurst in the Premier Division of the [Essex Sunday Corinthian League](#) and apparently having had some good results in their five Pre-Season Friendlies so far, including a 2-1 win against Jubilee, we were a bit worried when we turned up with just a bare eleven including no proper goalkeeper, but thanks to Referee Owen Clarke arriving 30 minutes late for some reason, Manager Trevor Hughes had plenty of time to instruct our five new players on the vagaries of zonal marking and our 'unusual' 3-4-1-2 formation...while I even had time to take some mugshots for the [Player Profiles Page](#) !

With prospective new signings Adam & Alex Kemp failing to turn up and Darryl Johnson and Danny Hagan both dropping out through illness the night before, it meant a lot of last-minute changes had to be made to the line-up with the usual story of players having to play out of position, none more so than Tony King, who ended up in goal (again). We were also missing all four of our first-choice defenders in Alan Barnard (Hamstring Injury), Terry Moore (Playing Golf), Martin Loveday (Ankle Injury) & Paul Woolston (Babysitting), so Stuart Dorward and Scott Jenkins therefore had to play at the back again when they would much rather play as attacking midfielders, while Josh Duberry (Cousin of Reading's Michael and formerly of now-defunct Edmonton Sunday League Premier Division winners [Turf Moor](#)) made his debut as a central defender instead of as a left-back (or left wing-back).

We also had three new players in midfield, namely Greg Cummins (who had made his debut the week before), ex-London Ajax forward Jamie Martin, and Norsemen First XI player Paul Amico, while Foyso Ahmed played a rare game as well, and in attack, 19-year-old James Whittick came in for his 11-a-side debut after scoring goals for fun

in the 7-a-side League so far this season. Unfortunately though, James pulled a hamstring in his most recent 7-a-side League game, and it was always on the cards that he would not last very long as an outfield player in this game. Manager Hughes decided to give him a chance to show what he could do alongside Conor McGovern though, but that partnership only lasted 14 minutes before James was forced to go in goal with us not having any substitutes. Tony King therefore came out to play on the left of midfield with Foyso Ahmed switching to the right and Jamie Martin going up front, and although we had been by far the better side right from the kick-off, we suddenly looked a lot more dangerous in attack. Indeed debutant Martin opened

his Rovers account with our first goal after 23 minutes after some good build-up work by King and Ahmed and Woodhurst then really crumbled after that. Conor McGovern made it 2-0 in the 29th minute with a long-range left-footed shot that skidded off the 'dewy turf' under keeper Tom Gray, while Greg Cummins, Turf Moor's top scorer for the last two seasons, opened his Rovers account in the 38th minute with a casual sidefoot into an empty net after a comical defensive mix-up. We then scored a possible Goal Of The Season Top 10 contender in the 41st minute to make it 4-0 at Half-Time when Foyso Ahmed finished off a good move with a cool finish and Woodhurst were lucky that we didn't punish them more severely as we played some excellent football despite a number of our players not having met each other before.



Chidi not surprisingly read his players the riot act at Half-Time though, as this must have been hugely embarrassing for him and Eric when one of the reasons they left us was because we did not look like winning anything (and they were right !). Woodhurst therefore came out for the Second Half a lot more committed and didn't give us as much time on the ball, but that just made it an even game as we had two very competitive players in the centre of midfield ourselves in Rob Brown and Paul Amico. However, when Amico was tripped in the area by defender Godwin Amoaka for Stuart Dorward to make it 5-0 from the penalty spot in the 61st minute, we got on top again and played

our best football of the match with Greg Cummins and Dorward both scoring another goal apiece to make it 7-0 with 21 minutes still to play, while we came close to increasing that lead on several other occasions.

Meanwhile, at the other end, James Whittick had hardly been tested at all, but Woodhurst substitute Kofi Owusu scored a couple of late goals with well-taken finishes to make the final score 7-2, these coming mainly as a result of another team using (and eventually walking away with) one of our match balls and a couple of water bottles while they were warming up for their match on our touchline. That meant our players had to keep an eye on their valuables while the game was going on with Manager Trevor Hughes acting as Club Linesman and myself looking through a viewfinder and unable to see behind me. Indeed, that's when the reluctance of our players to turn up when they know they are going to be a substitute gets really annoying, but that was the only sour point of an excellent day which finished with all these new players proving their quality and signing up for the season...thanks to Scott Jenkins conveniently bringing his white van along to act as a background for me to take their passport photos !

Roll on the League season...as long as we can find a goalkeeper for our first game !?

TREVOR HUGHES'S MANAGER'S REPORT

The squad for our final pre-season friendly was again depleted to a bare eleven and no goalkeeper. Tony King willingly 'volunteered' to put on the gloves for the first 14 minutes when James Whittick took over as he had a hamstring injury. We also had three debutants in Paul Amico, Josh Duberry and Jamie Martin. Usually we would expect to struggle with new players adjusting to our style of players but our opposition, Woodhurst, were not as strong as our previous opponents and we were fielding ten good outfield players. Jamie Martin scored his first goal for the club after good play by Tony King and Foyso Ahmed to give us the lead after 23 minutes. Further goals from Conor McGovern, Greg Cummins and Foyso Ahmed gave us a comfortable lead at half time. Woodhurst played better at the beginning of the second half until we scored again when Stuart Dorward converted a penalty. Greg and Stuart both scored their second goals as we went into a 7-0 lead with 20 minutes to go. In the absence of any substitutes to freshen things up and with several players losing concentration as another team were standing near our valuables on the touchline with Laurence filming and me running the line, we conceded two late goals for a final score of 7-2.

The good news is that all the new players signed up to strengthen the squad when others return from injury and unavailability. Just another reminder that the squad for the first league game on 14th September will be picked on merit from those who have paid their annual subs.