Sunday 15th December 2002					
London F.A. Sunday Intermediate Cup Third Round Match at the Northumberland Park Sports Centre (Astroturf), Tottenham, N17					
EDMONTON ROVERS	**1**	**ARIS**	**6**		HT 1-1
Woolston (29 mins)		*Elishi (40, 56, 66 mins),* *Egbinola (78, 84, 85 mins)*			

Edmonton Rovers Line-Up (with Marks out of 10): Darryl JOHNSON (GK) (7); Chidi IBEKWEM (6½), Stuart DORWARD (6½), Paul WOOLSTON (6½), Tony SPELLER (6½); Eric IBEKWEM (6½), Derek DORWARD (6½), Marco ELLERKER (7), John BEASLEY (6½); Conor Mc,GOVERN (6½), Steve COKELL (6½) ***Subs:*** George BROMFIELD (6), Treasure 'Tex' MacCARTHY (6), Paul ELLERKER (6)

Aris's Line-Up: Lee HALLIGAN (GK); Stavros KYPRIANIDES, Steve CINOTTI, Mario KYPRIANOU, Malcolm FISHER; Esser SEZEK, Mark CHRISTODOULOU, Theo THEODOROMOU, Sam ELISHI; Phil ANIM, Anthony EGBINOLA ***Subs:*** Baret PETROSSIAN, Mike SOFONIS, Peter LOIZOU

Referee: Mark PATTERSON (Finchley)	***Weather Conditions:*** Constant Rain & Cold	***Attendance:*** 25

Report: Although the scoreline suggests otherwise, we actually made the right decision to finally play this match on Astroturf as yet another non-stop downpour lasting from 7.00.p.m. the previous evening saw all matches in the Borough of Enfield called off yet again (including Hazelwood of course). In the long term it will probably become more important that we actually managed to play a rare game rather than dwelling on the fact that we crashed out of a competition we had high hopes of winning following our excellent performance in the previous round way back on the 13th October...which just happened to be the last time we *won* a match ! That was because our fitness and teamwork had deteriorated badly during a spell of playing just once a month on average, as was proved in our previous match against Astral United, and it seemed that the longer we went on without playing a match the more difficult our season would become in all competitions. However, despite the absence of Manager Trevor Hughes (on holiday in Gran Canaria) and regular players Shaun O'Neill ('Other commitments'), Steve Beasley (Back Injury), Chris 'Nugget' Beeden (Not risking his dodgy knee on Astroturf), Lee Osborn ('Entertaining clients' before the Spurs v. Arsenal match !) and Robin Pryke (Long-term leg injury), we produced a really encouraging performance for the majority of this match only to be undone by a flurry of quick goals at the end when everybody understandably became physically (and mentally ?) tired.

Although Aris were claiming before the match that they were in poor form and missing a number of regulars themselves, they actually fielded a very strong and comparatively 'super-fit' side, presumably because the 'three foreigners' rule that restricts them in the Cypriot Sunday League does not apply in the London F.A. Sunday Intermediate Cup. That saw most of their players (apparently ?) having to ask their No.15 what his name was before the match kicked off, but despite that they soon clicked into gear with right-back Stavros Kyprianides rattling Darryl Johnson's crossbar after only 50 seconds with a 35-yard dipping shot ! In fact Johnson then had to make a really good save just five minutes later to stop us going behind early on but we sorted ourselves out fairly quickly and defended superbly for most of the First Half, restricting Aris to very few clear-cut chances after that. However, we failed to create anything ourselves until the 29th minute but we managed to take the lead from what was our first chance of the match when Derek Dorward tested Aris keeper Halligan with a low shot from an acute angle and Paul Woolston was on hand to tap in the rebound (having stayed up in attack following a set-piece). Just as it looked as if we might go in at Half-Time 1-0 up though, the problem of having to play a forward in defence re-surfaced again when stand-in right-back Chidi Ibekwem was caught out by a clever through ball and Aris's useful 'left-winger' Sam Elishi got in behind him to finish expertly. (Presumably he had read our website report of how Astral United's Justin Dean had tormented Chidi in our last match !?).

In general though, our fears about players injuring themselves on Astroturf were unfounded at that stage as the surface was identical in pace and bounce to what we are used to at Bullsmoor and in the Summer 7-a-side League at Southgate Hockey Centre rather than the more dangerous 'sticky' Astroturf that we used to play Trojans on at Picketts Lock every Pre-Season. That saw us come out positively for the start of the Second Half and we even started to get on top until everything suddenly went disastrously wrong when Darryl Johnson allowed a hopeful long high ball to slip through his fingers in the 56th minute to present Elishi with a simple tap-in into an empty net for his and Aris's second !

Fortunately though, our heads didn't go down completely at that stage and Johnson actually then started to redeem himself with some excellent saves thereafter, although he couldn't do anything about Aris going into a 3-1 lead in the 66th minute when Elishi completed his hat-trick with ease after Chidi Ibekwem failed to realise his fellow defenders had pushed out for an obvious offside and therefore 'played him on'. However, the moment when the match really slipped away from us came just five minutes later when Chidi got up into attack (where he obviously looked far more comfortable) to deliver a deep cross to the far post which saw the ball hit a defender on the back and go over the line by about a foot before keeper Halligan clawed it back into play...the Aris 'linesman' (one of their substitutes) refusing to flag for a goal of course ! Unfortunately though, having played so well and beyond expectations up until then, that incident seemed to be the signal for us to completely lose our shape and panic and with various players either starting to hobble off with slight injuries (Conor Mc,Govern & Tony Speller), ask for paracetamols to be put in the Medical Kit (Paul Woolston) or just 'run out of gas' (virtually everyone else !) in the last 10 minutes, we then conceded three more goals in the space of seven minutes, all to their No.15 Anthony Egbinola, mainly as a result of sweeper Stuart Dorward deciding to stay up in attack and our other three defenders all playing a suicidal offside trap because they were too 'knackered' to run and chase back. In fact our four or five bedraggled & drenched supporters on the touchline (including Steve Beasley, Chris Beeden & Scott Robertson) were so 'disgusted ?' by our collapse at this stage that they left when the fourth goal went in and went down the pub, while our embarrassment was made even worse when the crowd suddenly swelled to around 300 thanks to the arrival of numerous vehicles using the Sports Centre Car Park for the Spurs v. Arsenal match. Thankfully though, Referee Mark Patterson was so concerned about getting his car 'boxed in' by their arrival that he blew the Final Whistle five minutes early to save us from a 10-1 defeat !?

Aris later went on to win the trophy, beating Boca Hill 3-2 in the Final !