

**Sunday 16th March 2003**

Mercury Waltham Sunday League Roy Bailey Challenge Cup, Third Round Match at Town Mead, Waltham Abbey

**ASTRAL UNITED** **1** **EDMONTON ROVERS** **3** HT 0-0

Humphrey (Pen.) (85 mins.)

Cokell (72, 83 mins.),  
D.Dorward (82 mins.)

**Astral United's Line-Up:** Richard BARNES (GK); Darren LATHAM, Shondell HOLMES, James VIRGO, Lee SIMMONDS; Glenn BARRETT, Darren LEE, Stuart BACON, Justin DEAN; Scott HUMPHREY, Matt BACON **Subs.:** Adam BECKWITH, Warren HAWKES

**Edmonton Rovers Line-Up (with Marks out of 10):** Darryl JOHNSON (GK) ( 7 ); Chidi IBEKWEM ( 6½ ), Robin PRYKE ( 7 ), Stuart DORWARD ( 7 ), Steve BEASLEY ( 7 ); Derek DORWARD ( 7½ ), Chris 'Nugget' BEEDEN ( 7 ), Paul ELLERKER ( 6½ ), Peter SUTTON ( 6½ ), Eric IBEKWEM ( 6½ ); Steve COKELL ( 7½ ) **Subs:** Marco ELLERKER ( 6½ ), Lexton HARRISON ( 6 ), Russell BEEDEN ( 6 )

**Referee:** Kevin HUGHES

**Weather Conditions:** Dry & Sunny

**Attendance:** 14

**Report:** Having produced our worst performance of the season so far in losing 4-0 to Division One strugglers Astral United in the League Senior Cup back in December, we were glad that the League decided to continue with the Roy Bailey Challenge Cup competition this season despite the backlog of fixtures, as having been drawn against Astral again, it gave us the chance to gain revenge and put the record straight. However, we were a bit concerned before the kick-off that our current long winning run might come to an end with the likes of Paul Woolston, Tony Speller, John Beasley & Conor McGovern all missing and with Marco Ellerker having family commitments that meant he had to turn up late and only be named as a substitute and indeed when the match got under way on what was a small, hard & bumpy pitch full of 'holes' (as dug by foxes overnight ?), we struggled to get our passing going early on as a fired-up Astral side challenged for every ball and made it really difficult for us. In fact Astral had put an end to a recent poor run of form by beating a supposedly 'full-strength' Galley Hall side 3-0 the week before after having a 'clear-the-air' team meeting to sort themselves out, so there was never much chance of us winning this game 'comfortably' and as in most of our recent matches we had to concentrate on defending properly first and foremost in the First Half with our 4-5-1 system, especially to nullify the threat of danagerman Justin Dean, who had given our defence a torrid time back in December with his pace in running from midfield. However, Chidi Ibekwem & Derek Dorward (who were both much-criticised for their defensive work against him last time) did a much better job on this occasion, albeit with the help of Paul Ellerker in a midfield holding role, Stuart Dorward in playing the sweeper's role properly and Robin Pryke in celebrating his 100th appearance for the club by playing a Captain's role and that saw Astral only have a succession of long-range shots and half-chances with Darryl Johnson not being forced into any really difficult saves. Unfortunately though, we didn't have too many chances ourselves in the First Half and because of the bobbly pitch and the fierce pace of the game, controlling the ball properly became difficult for both sides and it ended up constantly going out of play for long periods...which was made worse by the fact that a vicious-looking dog owned by an Astral player/supporter (as a mascot ?) kept trying to join in the play whenever anyone tried to take a throw-in and therefore delayed things even more !

Gradually during the Second Half though, we began to get more on top and create some clear-cut chances despite some rather 'over-enthusiastic' challenges by some of Astral's players and Peter Sutton in particular could have put us ahead on two or three occasions before he was withdrawn in the 69th minute along with Eric Ibekwem as Manager Trevor Hughes decided to bring on Lexton Harrison and Marco Ellerker in switching to a 4-4-2 formation. As in the previous week's match against Broxbourne Rangers Old Boys, that finally saw us make a breakthrough just three minutes later when Derek Dorward hammered a spectacular shot against the underside of the crossbar and Steve Cokell drilled in the rebound as Astral's defenders appealed in vain for a non-existent offside. That resulted in Astral's players starting to berate referee Kevin Hughes (a Police Officer !) almost non-stop and lose their discipline for the rest of the match and we therefore took advantage with 'Del' putting us 2-0 up in the 82nd minute with a clinical near-post finish from Chidi Ibekwem's excellent cross and then Steve Cokell adding his second and our third just a minute later with another well-taken goal after suddenly finding himself in a one-on-one with Astral's stand-in keeper Richard Barnes. We then had to bring on the semi-retired Russell Beeden in the midfield holding role for the last seven minutes though as Paul Ellerker filled in at Right-Back for the injured Chidi Ibekwem, but it was Marco Ellerker who gave Astral a lifeline in the 85th minute when he gave away a penalty with a push in the back...this being converted impressively by Astral skipper Scott Humphrey (Apparently that is the correct spelling of his name and not Humphries as everyone has been calling him for about the last 10 years ?).

Although Darryl Johnson had to make his only difficult save of the match just before that after a scramble in the area, Astral never looked like pulling back the deficit though and their frustration was made complete in Injury Time when Justin Dean was sent off for his second bookable offence of dissent. Maybe that came about because we had simply been too good for them on this occasion and it was a thoroughly deserved victory in the end.