

Sunday 2nd February 2003

Mercury Waltham Sunday League Premier Division Match at Goldsdown Road

BRIMSDOWN ROVERS	1	EDMONTON ROVERS	2	HT 1-1
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Peter Ulatowski (7 mins.)

M.Ellerker (5 mins.),
D.Dorward (61 mins.)

Brimsdown Rovers Line-Up Mark ULATOWSKI (GK); Barry WARD, Aaron BULLOCK, John EXELL, Ben COTTERELL; Luke COLLINS, Danny BATES, Nicky GOODHEW, Matt MARSDEN; Peter ULATOWSKI, Billy WINGROVE **Subs.:** None

Edmonton Rovers Line-Up (with Marks out of 10): John BEASLEY (GK) (7½); Robin PRYKE (7), Paul WOOLSTON (7), Stuart DORWARD (8), Tony SPELLER (7½); Marco ELLERKER (7½), Chris 'Nugget' BEEDEN (7), Paul ELLERKER (7), Conor Mc.GOVERN (7), Derek DORWARD (7½); Steve COKELL (7½) **Subs:** Chidi IBEKWEM (6½), Peter SUTTON (6½)

Referee: Trevor IRVING

Weather Conditions: Sunny & Dry

Attendance: 31

Report: After our nightmare Second Half performance against bottom of the table Rangers the previous week...and the subsequent 'hard-hitting' inquest on the **Forum**, we needed to get our confidence back quickly and we certainly did it with *this* result, as Premier Division leaders Brimsdown were undefeated in their 10 League & Cup games played so far this season and had been scoring at an average of five goals a game !

It was a day in which almost everything went right for us for a change as we actually managed to play for the third week in a row (while virtually every other game in the League was postponed because Council groundsmen had not marked the lines out due to the heavy snowfall in midweek), the pitch suited us down to the ground as it was nice and flat with the grass cut and Brimsdown turned up with a weakened team of just a bare eleven for various reasons while *we* fielded a stronger side than in recent matches with the exception of John Beasley having to go in goal due to Stavros Elia dropping out at short notice (reason unknown !) and with Darryl Johnson seemingly having disappeared. (*We later found out he had left his mobile phone in somebody else's car, which was why we were unable to contact him*). Perhaps not surprisingly, Manager Trevor Hughes decided to make a number of alterations to the starting line-up for this match by reverting back to a 4-5-1 formation in recalling Steve Cokell into attack and Stuart Dorward at sweeper (having now returned from his three-week trip to Australia), while the previous week's wing-backs Chidi & Eric Ibekwem were named as substitutes. That saw Derek Dorward and Marco Ellerker start the game in the wide midfield positions and it was Marco who gave us an early lead when he stooped to head in Steve Cokell's cross at the far post after only five minutes. Unfortunately though, Brimsdown soon took advantage of John Beasley's inexperience as a goalkeeper when they equalised two minutes later as a free-kick was floated into our six-yard box beyond our defence, leaving Peter Ulatowski with a simple tap-in after the ball had been squared back to him. However, the game swung back in our favour in the 20th minute when Brimsdown were reduced to 10 men for the rest of the match as defender Barry Ward limped off with an injury. That saw the rest of the First Half and most of the Second Half therefore played on fairly even terms (because our form had been so poor so far this season !?) with both sides having some good chances but not really extending either keeper into any particularly outstanding saves. (Brimsdown's Mark Ulatowski was also an outfield player having to fill in).

The 61st minute though, saw a very controversial incident go in our favour when Referee Trevor Irving decided to over-rule Brimsdown's linesman who had quite understandably flagged for Derek Dorward appearing to be a yard offside from Steve Cokell's first-time lay-off, Dorward therefore being allowed to run on and beat keeper Ulatowski in a one-on-one with a good finish. That put us 2-1 up and the next 20 minutes or so then just seemed to be non-stop contentious decisions where either referee Irving or both Club Linesmen were being accused of getting things wrong and that saw the game get rather scrappy and disjointed, although we still had chances to increase our lead in that time through a Steve Cokell free-kick and a Conor Mc.Govern header, both of which flew narrowly wide with keeper Ulatowski beaten, while Mc.Govern missed a real sitter when the ball landed in a puddle just as he was about to half-volley in Marco Ellerker's headed lay-off almost on the goal-line ! However, as usual we 'ran out of gas' again in the closing stages, despite the introduction of substitutes Peter Sutton (for his debut) and Chidi Ibekwem in the 81st minute and despite them only having 10 men, Brimsdown pinned us back into defence where Stuart Dorward and stand-in keeper John Beasley in particular had to perform heroics in order for us to hold on for our first win in six matches.