

**Sunday 19th January 2003**

Mercury Waltham Sunday League Premier Division Match at Flamstead End Playing Fields, Cheshunt

<b>BROXBOURNE RANGERS</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>EDMONTON ROVERS</b>	<b>1</b>	HT 0-0
Newmarch (76, 89 mins.)		Cokell (69 mins.)		

**Broxbourne Rangers Line-Up:** Richard NORTON (GK); John CHILDS, Danny WALSH, Danny REED; Gary LITTLECHILD, Stuart RINGE, Sean GOODWIN, Scott BANKS; Scott O'DONAGHUE; Andrew REED, Ben NEWMARCH **Subs.:** John BONUS, Ben SAXON

**Edmonton Rovers Line-Up (with Marks out of 10):** Stavros ELIA (GK) ( 6½ ); Robin PRYKE ( 7½ ), Paul WOOLSTON ( 7 ), Tony SPELLER ( 7½ ), Lee OSBORN ( 6 ); Derek DORWARD ( 7 ), Chris 'Nugget' BEEDEN ( 7 ), Paul ELLERKER ( 8 ), Marco ELLERKER ( 7 ), John BEASLEY ( 7 ); Conor McGOVERN ( 6½ ) **Subs.:** Chidi IBEKWEM ( 6½ ), Eric IBEKWEM ( 6½ ), Steve COKELL ( 6½ )

**Referee:** David HOCKNEY **Weather Conditions:** Constant Light Rain **Attendance:** 22

**Report:** When it 'chucked it down' yet again the night before this match it looked like we were heading for another frustrating postponement, but fortunately we were not playing on a Council-owned pitch this time...and especially at Hazelwood where St. Mary's had *their* Home game called off this time (while every pitch at Enfield Playing Fields was somehow deemed playable !). However, with Broxbourne Rangers having enough brooms available to sweep away the numerous massive puddles that had formed overnight, Referee David Hockney was therefore able to allow our game to go ahead and it was definitely the right decision as the ball didn't hold up in the mud at all, despite the constant light rain that continued to fall throughout the match.

With Stuart Dorward away in Australia and Steve Beasley out injured with a bad back, Manager Trevor Hughes was tempted to experiment with a 3-5-2 formation because of a lack of defenders but in the end he opted to put Lee Osborn in at Left-Back and go for a 4-5-1 with last season's Top Scorer Steve Cokell left 'on the bench' despite his return to fitness after a long-term groin injury. Of course there was a worry regarding the fitness of virtually all of our players anyway after such a long spell of inactivity and with most of Broxbourne Rangers' players having kept themselves fit by playing in Saturday football we could easily have been over-run. However, Manager Hughes actually made the right tactical decision (for a change...according to most of our players !?) by putting Paul Ellerker in a midfield holding role, while the return of Robin Pryke in defence after a four-month absence with a shin injury also made us look much more solid at the back and we restricted Broxbourne Rangers to just one clear-cut chance in the First Half when forward Ben Newmarch fired wide after finding himself clean through from a hopeful through ball after just two minutes. Unfortunately though, we failed to test their 'keeper Richard Norton at all in the First Half despite having the better possession as we overhit too many through balls and crosses from promising positions, but having conceded 14 goals in our last three matches we were delighted to come off with a 0-0 scoreline at Half-Time. However, we were really shaken during the Half-Time interval when our skipper for the day Paul Woolston suddenly slumped to the floor suffering from blurred vision, dizziness and sickness...even *before* he had taken a sip from one of the 'Deephams Sewage Works'-filled water bottles from the Cool Box !, everyone therefore assuming he had suffered some sort of concussion at some stage during the First Half. That saw him having to be replaced by Chidi Ibekwem for the start of the Second Half with Robin Pryke therefore moving to Centre-Back and taking the Captain's armband to allow Chidi to fill in at Right-Back again, but while 'Wooly' was being ferried to Hospital by spectator Steve Beasley (for a diagnosis which later turned out to be a Virus), we continued to defend really well with Stavros Elia even starting to redeem himself in goal after his poor performance in his only other appearance for us so far this season (when we lost 4-0 Away to Upshire Coach & Horses on the opening day of the season).

We then gradually started to get in a few reasonable efforts at goal ourselves, despite losing Chris 'Nugget' Beeden in the 59th minute because of 'breathing difficulties', but when Steve Cokell was brought on for Derek Dorward in the 69th minute it certainly proved to be an inspired substitution by Manager Hughes as Cokell gave us the lead just seconds later with his first touch of the ball as his close-range shot from an acute angle flew over keeper Norton thanks to a slight deflection off defender John Childs. (Thanks to video evidence, this is a vastly amended description of the goal compared to Manager Hughes's original notes !!)

Suddenly it looked as if we could quite feasibly 'hang on' for a shock win, despite Broxbourne Rangers fielding what appeared to be a full-strength line-up, but then in the 76th minute Stavros Elia undid all his good work in the match so far by getting a bit over-confident in coming way off his line to try and catch a long throw-in but then 'losing his footing' (allegedly ?), leaving Ben Newmarch with a glancing near-post header into a briefly unguarded net...Paul Ellerker's valiant attempt to clear the ball off the line coming just too late.

Although conceding that goal was a real disappointment, we were happy with a 1-1 draw at that stage after the loss of Paul Woolston & Chris 'Nugget' Beeden but Steve Cokell then missed a good chance to regain the lead for us by firing wide of the far post when 'clean through' while several other players also squandered reasonable opportunities as the game really opened up in the last 10 minutes due to a predictable tiredness from players of both sides. However, just as 'Wooly' had suffered a last-minute defeat having gone to Hospital on a *previous* occasion when we had been in control of a game (at Home to Upshire Coach & Horses last season when Tony Speller had a 'nightmare'), exactly the same thing happened again here when in the 89th minute Lee Osborn took too long making up his mind where to pass the ball and got caught in possession on the Halfway Line, leaving us outnumbered at the back and resulting in Broxbourne Rangers' Ben Newmarch sliding in at the far post to really punish us and clinch the three points with a 2-1 victory.

Obviously it was a really disappointing way to lose and it was probably made even worse when a number of Broxbourne Rangers players and officials admitted afterwards that we were the better side and that they were lucky to win. However, at least we actually managed to play a match...and that was definitely more enjoyable than having to do 'household chores' again !?