

Sunday 9th March 2003

Mercury Waltham Sunday League Premier Division Match at Hazelwood Sports Ground

EDMONTON ROVERS

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BROXBOURNE RANGERS OLD BOYS

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Harrison (74 mins)

**Edmonton Rovers Line-Up (with Marks out of 10):** Darryl JOHNSON (GK) ( 7 ); Chidi IBEKWEM ( 8 ), Stuart DORWARD ( 7½ ), Paul WOOLSTON ( 8 ), Robin PRYKE ( 7 ); Derek DORWARD ( 7 ), Marco ELLERKER ( 7½ ), Steve BEASLEY ( 7 ), Chris 'Nugget' BEEDEN ( 7 ), Eric IBEKWEM ( 7 ); Steve COKELL ( 7 ) **Subs:** Peter SUTTON ( 7 ), Lexton HARRISON ( 7 ), Paul ELLERKER ( 6½ )

**Broxbourne Rangers Old Boys Line-Up:** Richard HAYWARD (GK); Andrew PEDLEY, Phil PLEDGER, John HOCKLEY, Darren MATTHEWS; Alan GREEN, Jamie MASON, Adam GARRETT, Lee ROWLEY; Dan JONES, Jim PEARSON **Sub.:** Martin ARLOW

**Referee:** Darren DEADMAN

**Weather Conditions:** Gale-Force Winds & Sunny

**Attendance:** 14

**Report:** Having been awarded three points during the week for our 6-6 draw with Rangers (in which they played an unregistered player), it could be said that this was our 7th win in a row, although one of those victories *was* against Royal Blues, who have now dropped out and had their results written off. Whatever the permutations though, we are clearly 'on form' and in a good position as a result of our current run to finish in the top three quite comfortably. After what was said on the Forum prior to this match though, John Beasley (and our other current absentees ?) may well be sitting at home thinking 'Sounds like another boring game!', especially with Broxbourne Rangers Old Boys three points adrift from everyone else at the bottom of the table. However, they turned up with a fired-up and full-strength side in an effort to avoid possible relegation and therefore gave us a really good test, especially in the First Half when they had a gale-force wind behind them in attacking the 'cowshed' end. Once again though, Manager Trevor Hughes made the right decision in fielding a 4-5-1 formation so that he could play somebody in a midfield holding role, the 'volunteer' on this occasion being skipper Steve Beasley, who came in at the last minute for his first appearance since suffering a back injury against Astral United on the 1st December. (Manager Hughes actually intended to start with Paul Ellerker in that position, but a 'few beers too many' the night before put paid to that idea !). That saw us deliberately defend deep against the wind and force Broxbourne Rangers Old Boys into numerous hopeful long-range efforts, most of which were hoofed way over the 'cowshed' roof and into the tennis courts by their right-sided midfielder Alan Green, although Darryl Johnson did have a fair bit of work to do in catching or punching away dangerous wind-assisted crosses and in diving at players' feet from over-hit through balls. At the other end though, we were also foiled by the wind on a number of occasions as the ball kept sticking under the feet of our midfielders as they ran onto flick-ons and we also had several efforts that lacked any power and were never likely to threaten keeper Richard Hayward (Shaun O'Neill's former Bishop's Stortford team-mate and undoubtedly one of the best keepers in the League). However, bearing in mind the conditions, we were delighted to come off at Half-Time with the game still goal-less and having denied Broxbourne Rangers Old Boys any real clear-cut chances and there was no 'panic' because of their lowly position in the League. Ironically though, the wind then seemed to die down quite considerably as soon as the Second Half began, but that actually suited us and we went on to dominate the rest of the match and play some of the best football we had produced all season. Not suprisingly though, keeper Hayward gradually started making a number of vital saves as the game went on, while at the other end Darryl Johnson was a virtual spectator with our back four all having excellent games, especially converted forward Chidi Ibekwem in the right-back position and Paul Woolston at Centre-Half, 'Wooly' having now completely eradicated the 'Hertford Hoof' from his game thanks to Trevor Hughes's 'coaching' !? With 20 minutes left to go it was then a case of bringing on two out of the three quality substitutes we were able to name (such is the strength of our squad this season), with Peter Sutton & Lexton Harrison coming on for Derek Dorward & Eric Ibekwem as we switched to a 4-4-2 formation (Yes Junior, it really happened !). That saw us get on top even more and we managed to score an excellent winner in the 74th minute when Lexton fired in a spectacular first-time shot from Marco Ellerker's lay-off which flew past keeper Hayward almost before he could move, although maybe the loud 'crashing' sound of an unfastened metal security door being blown into the changing rooms entrance for the umpteenth time in the match put him off ?! We then could have increased our lead in the last 15 minutes or so as Broxbourne Rangers Old Boys tried to push forward in looking for an equaliser, but such was our control of the game that they failed to muster a single shot at goal in the Second Half (on or off target) and the one corner they gained (in the last minute) should have been a goal kick to us ! Although we had to settle for just a one-goal victory in the end, which may not look all that impressive on paper, the general consensus amongst our players afterwards was that it was our best performance of the season so far...and maybe just as importantly, a really entertaining game to watch !