

Sunday 6th April 2003

Mercury Waltham Sunday League Roy Bailey Challenge Cup, Fourth Round Match at the Holtwhites Hill Sports & Social Club, Enfield

HINTON RANGERS **4** **EDMONTON ROVERS** **2** HT 2-1

Hunt (12 mins.),
S.Beasley (Own Goal) (32 mins.),
Casali (50, 87 mins)

Harrison (33 mins.),
D.Dorward (66 mins.)

Hinton Rangers Line-Up: Gary CAFFELL; Paul CLARKE, Terry BLISS, Steve Mc,HUGH, Scott DEAMER; Kevin HUNT, Lee GILDERSLEVE, Glen MAYBURY, Hassan TASAN; Carlo CASALI, Danny OUGHTON **Subs.:** Lee MITCHELL, Mamuka LOMIDZE

Edmonton Rovers Line-Up (with Marks out of 10): Darryl JOHNSON (GK) (7); Tony SPELLER (6), Robin PRYKE (7), Stuart DORWARD (6), John BEASLEY (7½); Marco ELLERKER (7), Chris 'Nugget' BEEDEN (6½), Steve BEASLEY (6½), Peter SUTTON (7), Derek DORWARD (7); Lexton HARRISON (6½) **Sub.:** Paul REBAIRO (6)

Referee: Darren DEADMAN

Weather Conditions: Cold & Cloudy

Attendance: 26

Report: Our long winning run was finally (and somewhat predictably) put to an end by our in-form Division One opponents, who had only lost three matches all season (one of them an 'unlucky' 2-1 defeat to Brimsdown Rovers in which they were 'by far' the better side) while they had also reached the Final of the Herts. F.A. Sunday Intermediate Cup...which they eventually won. With ex-Cheshunt & Ware forward Lee Mitchell and Georgian Under-19 International Mamuka Lomidze only named as substitutes, Hinton Rangers were obviously fielding a very strong side, so we couldn't really afford to be without the likes of five regulars in Chidi & Eric Ibekwem, Paul Woolston, Steve Cokell & Paul Ellerker, all of whom had various Family or Social Commitments, while others we could have called up in normal circumstances such as Conor McGovern, George Bromfield, Russell Beeden, Lee Osborn & Scott Robertson were also unavailable because of injuries or even *more* Social/Family Commitments.

Despite other things taking priority ahead of this match for most of *those* players though, the eleven and 'two halves' (i.e. prospective Reserve Team players Paul Rebaïro and his fellow substitute, Gary Odell) who were willing to turn out for *this* match seemed 'well keen' before the kick-off as they were all sitting down in the changing room already when the Management Committee arrived at 10.00.a.m....presumably some sort of 'wind-up' going on there, or maybe because it was freezing cold outside and the plush surroundings of the Holtwhites Hill Sports & Social Club looked so inviting, they couldn't wait to get in there ?

Once everyone was out on the pitch though, we realised that we didn't have a bad starting line-up at all, even though John Beasley had to be called up from his study leave to play as a makeshift defender again, and the first ten minutes or so were fairly even until Tony Speller's misdirected headed clearance went straight to Hinton midfielder Kevin Hunt, who cleverly adjusted himself to send a waist-high volley flying past the unsuspecting Darryl Johnson from close range, Speller's original claim that it hit Hunt on the knee and 'fluked' it's way in being proved completely false by video evidence ! However, we shrugged off that setback and played really well for the next 20 minutes, forcing Hinton keeper Gary Caffell into a number of excellent saves, but then in the 32nd minute Stuart Dorward, who was already suffering from a 'bad back', a 'sore neck' and a pulled hamstring, suddenly caught his ankle in one of the many sand-filled 'ridges' that littered the pitch and had to be carried off with a serious-looking injury which could well keep him out for the rest of the season. That saw a badly overweight and unfit Paul Rebaïro having to come on for his first competitive match of the season (although he *has* somehow been playing in the Enfield Alliance on Saturdays), and that necessitated three players having to change positions to accommodate him in a midfield holding role where he could just sit there and not run about too much...except for when he predictably clattered into the back of Carlo Casali (our former defender from the late-90's) with a silly challenge which should have seen him booked, although referee Deadman somehow didn't even give a free-kick ! However, just as we were sorting out who was playing where, Hinton Rangers forward Danny Oughton re-started play by hurling in a rocket-like long throw towards the near post and just as their linesman was for some reason telling me 'we never score from these', Steve Beasley promptly headed the ball straight into his own net to put them 2-0 up...so their linesman was *right in one way*, as we scored their goal from a long throw for them !

Obviously, with all that happening in the space of a minute, our heads could have really gone down, but thankfully Lexton Harrison pulled a goal back just 14 seconds after the re-start when he fired home from close range after Peter Sutton had been foiled by another good save by keeper Caffell (*See Picture Left*), but we couldn't find an equaliser before half-time and we therefore had to try just upping a gear in the Second Half.

Unfortunately though, Hinton Rangers proved to be the fitter side in the Second Half, although they were again extremely fortunate to go into a 3-1 lead in the 50th minute when a scramble in our penalty area following Darryl Johnson's first difficult save of the match saw the ball cannon back off the onrushing Carlo Casali's shins and trickle over the line with Johnson stranded. We therefore had to change to a 4-4-2 formation not long after that by putting Peter Sutton up front with Lexton Harrison, but of course that just resulted in Hinton Rangers having a number of chances on the break as our defence started badly missing Stuart Dorward & Paul Woolston (amongst others) against this sort of quality attacking opposition, particularly with scorelines of 17-1, 9-1, 8-1 and a couple of 6-0's all having been notched up by Hinton so far this season. Darryl Johnson therefore had to start making a number of useful saves to keep us in the match, and when Derek Dorward pulled it back to 3-2 against the run of play in the 66th minute with a similar goal to our first, Hinton suddenly looked a bit vulnerable. However, just when we needed three quality substitutes to bring on in order to change the course of the match (as we have been doing all season), this time we only had a badly frozen Gary Odell available (because I underestimated the severity of the weather and 'forgot' to bring the 'all-in-one substitutes suits'), and he had to be saved anyway in case the game went into Extra-Time. However, we didn't really look like equalising as Lexton Harrison was being well-marked and therefore unable to use his pace and it was all rather predictable when Carlo Casali scored his second of the match in the 87th minute to kill the game off as he caught us badly square at the back to round Darryl Johnson and tap into an empty net after sweeper Tony Speller and midfield holding player Paul Rebaïro had both decided to go up on a run at the same time.

Not that there were any groans of despair from our players on the Final Whistle...in fact some of them even cheered ?, because they didn't fancy playing a Quarter-Final and Semi-Final in midweek and had therefore more or less been going through the motions in this match with the Premier Division Title now their main priority, this of course being the attitude of some of those who were unavailable beforehand as it was 'a chance to get in the Wife/Girlfriend's good books 'without missing anything too important'. Ironically, the only club member who was 'gutted' that we had lost was a certain Chairman, Secretary & Cameraman, who had been getting extremely 'pissed off' with filming Cup Finals for virtually every *other* team in the League during the past 13 years except for our own, while the Hinton Rangers Secretary on the other hand was actually frustrated that his team had gone all out to win the match because it has now given them a severe fixture backlog !

At least he rated us as a better side than Brimsdown Rovers though, despite us being nowhere near at full-strength, so we can take a bit of confidence from that.