

EDMONTON ROVERS	1	LARSENS	3	HT 0-1
D.Dorward (77 mins.)		Williamson (15, 58, 69 mins.)		

EDMONTON ROVERS LINE-UP (with Marks out of 10): Tony KING (GK) (8); Terry MOORE (8½), Alan BARNARD (7½), Tony SPELLER (8); Gary COKELL (On from the 11th minute) (7½), Stuart BYHURST (7½), Stuart DORWARD (7½), Tem ADIL (7½), Steve COKELL (*Off injured after 17 minutes*) (6); Derek DORWARD (7½), Conor McGOVERN (7½) **Subs.:** None

LARSENS' LINE-UP: Angelo BISCEGLIA (GK); Richard HODGE, Jason BURCHES, Dean WRIGHT, Jason DOWNER; Gareth WILLIAMS, Terry IRETON, Lee SONTAG, Daniel LAWRENCE; Russell WILLIAMSON, Lee CODLIN **Subs.:** Ray AKONTOH, Asa BURCHES, Gary KILLINGTON

Referee: Simon FLETCHER **Weather Conditions:** Sunny & Warm ! **Attendance:** 27

Factual Report (by Laurence Hughes):

After fielding almost a full-strength side and producing a good performance in a run-of-the-mill League match the week before, it was sod's law that come the League Senior Cup Quarter-Final (and our only remaining chance of honours



this season), virtually everybody was unavailable...or struggling with niggling injuries if they did attempt to play. Those missing from the previous week were the now suspended Danny Hagan, his central midfield partner Clark Williams, who had been diagnosed during the week as having arthritis in his foot which requires an operation...which presumably explained the feeble 'Laurence Hughes-style' challenges he had been putting in recently ?, Paul Woolston (On his alternate Sunday babysitting duty), Vernon 'Kizza' Nxumalo (Working) and goalkeeper/central defender Martin Loveday (Also working). With Loveday absent and first-choice keeper Darryl Johnson now declaring himself unavailable for the rest of the season during due to a long-term shoulder injury, we were relying on another 'proper' keeper in Ozel Ozerman being available...and he was up until Saturday afternoon when he suddenly decided he wasn't (for reasons unknown). That really left us in the lurch thanks to 'Kizza' dropping out late on Saturday night, thereby leaving us down to just 10 men on the morning of the match (including no goalkeeper). With Nick Vertigans abroad (again) and all other registered players either working or out with season-ending injuries, the only possibility to ensure we fielded eleven players was veteran defensive midfielder Gary Cokell, who had not played at all so far this season, mainly due to work and family commitments and the fact that he had 'no boots' ! A text was therefore sent as we kicked off, which indicated that if he could get out of babysitting duties he would come along and help us out.

With Larsens having won 17 out of their 18 League and Cup matches played so far this season and fielding a number of current and former players from Ryman League Division One side Waltham Abbey in their line-up, we were obviously fearful of another 10-0 mauling like the one we

suffered back in December against St. Mary's, especially as we had eleven men for that game and a much stronger side out than we had for this one. We also had to put outfield player Tony King in goal again, and as he had let in 'one or two silly ones' in that St. Mary's defeat in his only other appearance in goal, we half-expected more of the same. However, we had deliberately 'mucked about' in that St. Mary's game because we had no defenders available, but this time we had three regular and 'proper' defenders available in Terry Moore, Alan Barnard and Tony Speller, which enabled us to start with a 3-5-1 formation with the instructions from Manager Trevor Hughes to keep things tight, slow the game down and try and frustrate our in-form opponents. Typically though, skipper Stuart Dorward couldn't resist 'bombing forward' from midfield straight away, but by doing so he almost gave us a shock lead after just two minutes but Larsens keeper Angelo Bisceglia made a brilliant point-blank save to tip away Dorward's fiercely-struck close-range half-volley. Not surprisingly though, Larsens soon started creating some chances against our 10 men, with the outside of the post being hit and with a few scrambles in the area going our way. However, after five minutes, Gary Cokell suddenly appeared (with a pair of boots from somewhere), so that saw us deliberately slow the game down while he went in to get changed, with Terry Moore taking nearly three minutes to retrieve the ball and take a throw-in on one occasion, much to Larsens' annoyance.

Ironically though, as soon as we had eleven men on the pitch (in a 3-5-2 formation with both Cokell brothers playing the wide roles and Derek Dorward now up front), Larsens took the lead just three minutes later as a quick break from our corner-kick saw Larsens' Waltham Abbey First Team regular Lee Sontag leave four of our players trailing in his wake as he put Terry Ireton through for a shot which Tony King saved well, but former Southend United forward [Russell Williamson](#) scored from the rebound amidst several appeals for offside from our players. With us not having any substitutes or spectators (as usual) though, Manager Trevor Hughes had to run the line...and with his ever-expanding waistline, he was in no fit state to keep up with play. It also didn't help that our stand-in goalkeeper was wearing a yellow jersey...the same colour as Larsens' shirts. What was wrong with the blue one or the grey one in our kit bag ?!

We didn't let our heads go down though, even when we found out that Steve Cokell had broken a bone in his foot in taking the corner that led to that goal and we were now down to 10 men again for the rest of the match. It was then obvious that we were not going to win the game, but we were determined not to lose by a big margin and not make ourselves a laughing stock for the 'umpteenth' time this season (after previous debacles against Abbey Youth Old Boys Reserves...whom Larsens beat 13-1 in the next round !, Chase Side Old Boys, Eureka, Northmet (Riverside) and St. Mary's). In fact we created a couple of other good chances which forced Larsens keeper Bisceglia into action (or should have done !), while at the other end, some crunching challenges from Terry Moore and composed defending from Alan Barnard and Tony



Speller kept Larsens at bay. In coming off at Half-Time only 1-0 down, we were rightly proud of ourselves, and we kept up the good work early in the Second Half until Larsens made it 2-0 in the 58th minute

with another controversial 'offside' goal according to our players, as Russell Williamson scored his second of the game with an easy tap-in after Lee Sontag and his fellow midfielder Gareth

Williams had both easily outpaced our midfield.

However, Larsens had already hit the 'woodwork' five times, so we couldn't really complain about the scoreline, and a third goal in the 69th minute was rather inevitable with Williamson completing his hat-trick from the rebound after Lee Codlin had run onto an attempted headed backpass from the otherwise impressive Gary Cokell and forced Tony King into another good save. Indeed the likes of Stuart Byhurst, Tem Adil and Tony Speller had also played really well, despite not having featured too much in recent matches, and it certainly proved that we have good enough players in our squad, although not surprisingly they were really struggling with their fitness towards the end.

However, we managed to pull a goal back in the 77th minute when Derek Dorward took advantage of a comical defensive mix-up between Richard Hodge and substitute Asa Burches to finish in a one-on-one with the keeper in his usual composed style, and with Larsens' three substitutes clearly being inferior to those who they took off, our 10 men actually seemed to panic them a bit in the last 10 minutes with keeper Bisceglia having to make another couple of decent saves as the Dorward brothers and Conor McGovern managed to find quite a few gaps in their defence. In a game played in an excellent spirit, that saw their 31-year-old left-back Jason 'Nobby' Downer actually 'confess' to 37-year-old Del that he was 'getting too old' to keep up with him, so maybe our level of fitness isn't so bad after all ?

We certainly had everybody competing right up until the end, none more so than Tony King, who made some excellent saves in diving bravely at the feet of onrushing forwards, and in fact he stated afterwards that he had actually enjoyed playing in goal this time ! Although our players were all pleased with the team performance though, it is still very frustrating that here was yet another opportunity to maybe go on and reach a Cup Final being ruined by players having other priorities, something which is now being compounded by serious season-ending injuries.

*More new players will now have to be sought for our remaining eleven League matches, as two or more 'non-fulfillments' of fixtures due to a lack of players can see us being thrown out of the League...and that really **would** be disastrous.*

TREVOR HUGHES'S MANAGER'S REPORT

Our recent good form in the league was always going to be tested in a Cup Quarter Final against Larsens who had won 18 of their last 19 games. Our squad was already down to 12 when goalkeeper Ozel Ozerman and forward Vernon Nxumalo both sent text messages on Saturday night to declare their unavailability. Tony King 'volunteered' to go in goal to prove that the practice he got in our 10-0 defeat against St Mary's was all worthwhile. This left us with only 10 men to start but we should have taken the lead in the first minute when Stuart Dorward was denied by a fine save. Gary Cokell arrived after 10 minutes to allow Derek Dorward to go up front and we won a corner. Unfortunately, Steve Cokell somehow managed to break a bone in his foot in taking the kick and the ball was cleared leading directly to a goal for Larsens on the break. We were now 1-0 down and back to 10 men but a mixture of excellent defending, particularly by man of the match, Terry Moore, and some bad finishing by Larsens kept the scoreline the same until half time. Indeed, we even created our own chances and could have gone in level. It was much of the same in the second half as Larsens hit the bar at least 4 times including an effort by our own Tony Speller! We did concede another breakaway goal as we played a dodgy offside trap near the half way line and then a third goal when Gary Cokell's back header went straight to an unmarked forward. Nevertheless, we played some excellent football ourselves and created a number of chances with Derek Dorward scoring after a defensive mistake by Larsens. A second goal would have given us hope of another thrilling comeback but it was not to be.