

Sunday 2nd March 2003

Mercury Waltham Sunday League Premier Division Match at Montagu Recreation Ground, Edmonton, N9

RANGERS	1	EDMONTON ROVERS	3	HT 0-2
Smith (46 mins.)		C.Beeden (10 mins.), M.Ellerker (28 mins.), D.Dorward (65 mins.)		

Rangers Line-Up: Hugh COLL (GK); Carlo FIORENTINI, Gareth Mc,GIRR, Eddie PIGGOTT, Conor Mc,GIRR; Lee DRAPER, Derek HENRY, Darren TICEHURST, Kevin Mc,INTOSH, Carlos SMITH, Jason ROBERTS (Late)

Subs.: None

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

Referee: Neal MORRIS

Weather Conditions: Dry & Sunny

Attendance: 11

Report: Since we drew 6-6 with them in a 'crazy' match at Hazelwood back in January, Rangers had *also* continued a long unbeaten run, so both sides therefore came into this fixture with an identical record of having won four and drawn one of their last five matches. We were therefore a bit concerned when no less than four players pulled out either on the Saturday evening or at the last minute on Sunday morning, with two others also thinking about it when they actually arrived at the venue ! Three of the players in question were Steve Beasley, Paul Woolston & Tony Speller, who were all suffering either from injuries, food poisoning or alcohol poisoning...or in Speller's case, a mixture of all three ! Amazingly though, Speller & Wooly somehow managed to drag themselves out onto the pitch, but Steve Beasley felt 'too weak' to do so because of a combination of a dodgy curry the night before and not having played for three months because of a back injury, so he was content to just watch from the touchline with 'Club Linesman for the day' Scott Robertson on hand to be named as a substitute if required...which he wasn't ! Meanwhile, sweeper Stuart Dorward had also decided to pull out of the game at 9.30 a.m....with England at 66-0 after 9 Overs against Australia !, but when that scoreline suddenly became something like 71-5 after 15 Overs ? by 10.00 a.m., everyone was half-expecting Manager Trevor Hughes to receive a sudden call on his mobile from Stuart to say that his 'bad back' (i.e. his 'official' excuse !) had now miraculously improved enough for him to be able to play ! However, that didn't happen, so it must have been genuine, as was John Beasley's excuse (failing to recover from an ankle injury suffered the week before) and Paul Ellerker's apology earlier in the week for deciding to go up to Newcastle for the Weekend. The most annoying absence though was undoubtedly that of keeper Stavros Elia, who had been told by Manager Trevor Hughes a week ago that Darryl Johnson would be working and therefore unavailable for this match, yet there was no sign of Stavros again, despite him promising to turn up. That meant Assistant Secretary Russell Beeden had to play as a stand-in goalkeeper for the third time this season, while Robin Pryke (at Left-Back), Chidi Ibekwem (at Right-Back) and Steve Cokell (Left Midfield) all had to play out of position in order for us to field a decent starting eleven. Fortunately, with all these last-minute changes having to be made, Manager Trevor Hughes had made the right decision in preferring to watch Rovers rather than Arsenal v. Charlton (a 12.00. mid-day kick-off !)...the theory being that Arsenal v. Charlton would be a predictable scoreline (i.e. an easy win for Arsenal !?) whereas Rangers v. Rovers certainly would NOT be (bearing in mind the 6-6 draw back in January !). Manager Hughes therefore ignored repeated requests to change the formation to a 4-4-2 (or even to the 'suicidal' 3-5-2 that we came unstuck with the *last* time we played Rangers) and decided to stick with the 'defensively sound' 4-5-1 formation which had seen us concede only three goals in our last four matches, although with Rangers also turning up with a weakened side (and only 10 men to start with) there may not have been too much need to think about tactics anyway. Indeed we got on top straight away with Chris 'Nugget' Beeden putting us ahead after only 10 minutes when he finished off a slick move involving himself, Robin Pryke, Marco Ellerker & Steve Cokell with an emphatic drive from 12 yards which gave Rangers' stand-in keeper Hugh Coll no chance. Although we didn't test keeper Coll as much as we should have done, we still went on to dominate the First Half in terms of possession as Rangers' players couldn't seem to motivate themselves until their 11th man (Jason Roberts) turned up towards the end of the half, by which time Marco Ellerker had already put us 2-0 up with a header from Chris 'Nugget' Beeden's free-kick. Russell Beeden though, ended up being a virtual spectator for the first 45 minutes and almost the first thing he had to do in the match was pick the ball out of his net just 90 seconds into the Second Half as Rangers predictably came out 'fired up after the break' (as they had in our previous encounter) with dangerman Carlos Smith blasting in a loose ball in the 6 yard box following a long (and quite rightly disputed !) throw-in to pull it back to 2-1. However, that was when Trevor Hughes's decision to stick with a 4-5-1 formation in the Second Half really paid dividends, as despite Tony Speller having to go off and be replaced by attacking midfielder Peter Sutton with Marco Ellerker having to fill in at sweeper, we defended superbly for the rest of the Second Half and only allowed Rangers two clear-cut chances (instead of about 50 in the Second Half in the previous match !?), one of which was headed off the line by Eric Ibekwem and the other being well saved by Russell Beeden diving at a forward's feet. Obviously, playing such tactics meant it was another 'boring' game to watch (and play in ?) as with Lexton Harrison on his own up front we hardly created any clear-cut chances at all in the Second Half except for one which we made the most of in the 65th minute when Lexton managed to escape his four markers for once and get in a low cross which Derek Dorward ran in to convert from close range to give us a 3-1 victory and our 5th win in a row.