

**Sunday 22nd December 2002**

Friendly Match at Presdales, Ware

**ROADHOUSE** **4** **EDMONTON ROVERS** **8** HT 0-5

Coughlan (56 mins.),  
C.Hack (61, 72 mins.),  
Miles (76 mins.)

D.Dorward (4, 48 mins.),  
Odell (8 mins.),  
E.Ibekwem (23 mins),  
C.Beeden (38, 40 mins.),  
M.Ellerker (54 mins.),  
Bromfield (80 mins.)

**Roadhouse's Line-Up:** Mike GARDNER (GK); James MALIN, Nick CAVE, Terry MYRING, Pete FAIREY; Paul HACK, Gary CASEY, Chris HACK, Steve COUGHLAN; Anthony MILES **Subs:** None (Only had 10 men)

**Edmonton Rovers Line-Up (with Marks out of 10):** Russell BEEDEN (GK) (6½); Chidi IBEKWEM (7), Stuart DORWARD (7), Paul WOOLSTON (7), Lee OSBORN (7); Derek DORWARD (7½), Chris 'Nugget' BEEDEN (7), Marco ELLERKER (7), Eric IBEKWEM (7); Gary ODELL (6½), George BROMFIELD (6½) **Sub.:** Paul ELLERKER (GK !)  
(5)

**Referee:** Barry GROSSMITH

**Weather Conditions:** Cloudy but Dry

**Attendance:** 7

**Report:** When we were told we would not be playing a League game on this date as all other teams in the Premier Division wanted the week off because of 'Xmas Celebrations' we were originally very frustrated, but with Hazelwood Sports Ground (and virtually every other pitch in the League) being deemed unplayable yet again due to another Saturday night downpour, we made the right decision for the second week running...this time by refusing to sit at home doing nothing and arranging a Friendly instead at a venue which never seems to suffer from waterlogged pitches !

Although the pitch *was* a bit 'boggy' through the middle, it was perfectly playable...as were all the *other* four pitches over there, yet amazingly none of them were being used and it was a bit of a surreal atmosphere without the usual packed car park and the Burger Bar with it's lengthy queues, while more dogs seemed to be watching our game than spectators ! That was because our opponents Roadhouse turned up with only 10 men (including Secretary Mike Gardner as a stand-in goalkeeper) while we ourselves only just scraped up 11½, the 'half' being Paul Ellerker, who by being unable to even stand up or talk properly after an all-night party and then not having any sleep, put forward his entry for the 'Most Pissed Player at a Rovers Match' alongside such notables as Julien Nurse (with his manic 'referee's a plonker' comments on the touchline at Home to Enfield Royals in February 1989), Paul 'Mother' Horan (Away to Battersea Colts in December 1990...Trying to fly and shouting 'Weeeee !?'), Steve Beasley (at Enfield Playing Fields against Bullsmoor Celtic in October 1991 when he hid behind a tree) and Stuart Dorward (Away to Percival in March 1997 when he fell over trying to control the ball from the kick-off).

Thankfully though, Manager Trevor Hughes returned from his holiday in Gran Canaria just about in time to sort things out by naming Ellerker as a substitute and re-arranging the side to cope with the absence of seven first-choice players. However, at least we fielded more or less a full-strength midfield including Derek Dorward, who was made Captain for the day to celebrate his 200th Appearance for the club and it was 'Del' who gave us the lead after only four minutes with a first-time low shot from Eric Ibekwem's left-wing cross, this actually being his 100th goal for the club...hence the rather over-enthusiastic celebrations for such a low-key game. Gary Odell then made it 2-0 with a close-range finish after only eight minutes in what was only his second appearance of the season after 'health problems ?' and then three further easy goals followed later in the half from Eric Ibekwem and Chris 'Nugget' Beeden (2) as mid-table Division Five side Roadhouse found it increasingly difficult to cope with the passing ability of our midfielders.

With a 5-0 lead at Half-Time then, we therefore decided to bring Paul Ellerker on as a 23rd-choice goalkeeper for the Second Half so that 4th choice Russell Beeden could 'talk tactics' with Trevor Hughes on the touchline, our defence could have something to aim for in not letting Roadhouse get a shot in (and therefore score a certain goal), and more importantly to provide some good 'laughs' for the video 'out-takes' and the 'Clip Of The Week'. However, everything continued to run smoothly and Derek Dorward and Marco Ellerker had soon put us 7-0 up by the 54th minute with 'taking the piss' finishes where the ball was walked into the net with stand-in keeper Gardner floundering in the mud...but then the game turned rather dramatically as Roadhouse decided to switch from a 4-4-1 formation to a 3-5-1 (because our forwards George Bromfield and Gary Odell were not causing them any problems...according to Roadhouse Player-Manager Nick Cave, who was not the Australian punk/indie/goth/grunge singer of the same name...much to Russell Beeden & Derek Dorward's disappointment no doubt ?!). That saw Paul Ellerker not surprisingly let a harmless-looking free-kick from midfielder Steve Coughlan squirm through his legs to make it 7-1 in the 56th minute, but even our first-choice keeper Shaun O'Neill would have had no chance with either of Roadhouse's 2nd and 3rd goals...both of which were 'shinned' into the roof of the net by Chris Hack when he appeared to be aiming for the bottom corner !? By that time we had gone to pieces though, much the same as we had in our previous two matches half-way through the Second Half as our midfield players suddenly became 'knackered' and stopped chasing back, this of course leading to numerous on-pitch arguments and a fourth goal for Roadhouse in the 76th minute when their lone forward Anthony Miles was allowed to run on and convert a Coughlan cross unopposed as we stupidly tried to rely on a 69-year-old referee keeping up with play enough to award an offside decision in our favour without there being any linesmen ! That made it 7-4 and to their credit, Roadhouse were now looking a completely different side and suddenly seemed to be twice as fit as our players even though they only had 10 men. However, George Bromfield managed to kill off their comeback when he made it 8-4 with a good finish on the break in the 80th minute, but the game rather fizzled out after that and with referee Grossmith seemingly playing 44 minutes each way instead of 45 we arrived back at On Broadway a minute earlier than planned for our 'Club Xmas All-Day Drinking Session'...at which very few club members turned up of course !

At least we played a match for the second week running though whereas all our rivals (including our next competitive opponents Astral United) were now starting to suffer from the continuous postponements that had wrecked our season so far. Hopefully then, our luck will change in the New Year and we will eventually be 'super-fit' after all this practice !?