

Sunday 22nd September 2002

Mercury Waltham Sunday League Premier Division Match at Hazelwood Sports Ground

EDMONTON ROVERS	7	ROYAL BLUES	1	HT 2-0
Mc, Govern (10 mins), Bromfield (19, 77 mins.), M. Ellerker (57, 66 mins), C. Beeden (61 mins), Harrison (86 mins)		Peart (50 mins),		

Edmonton Rovers Line-Up (with Marks out of 10): Darryl JOHNSON (GK) (6); Lee OSBORN (6½), Robin PRYKE (7), Stuart DORWARD (7), Steve BEASLEY (6); Paul ELLERKER (7), Chris 'Nugget' BEEDEN (7½), Marco ELLERKER (7½), John BEASLEY (6½); George BROMFIELD (8), Conor Mc,GOVERN (7½) **Subs:** Chidi IBEKWEM (6), Lexton HARRISON (6½), Derek DORWARD (6)

Royal Blues Line-Up: Darren AYLOTT (GK); Daniel MOXHAM, Martin ARLOW, Paul PEWTER, Andrew MOXHAM; Scott BURSEY, Luke SWIFT, Paul KARAIANNI, Kevin PEART; Mark FLOOD, Jackson GASH **Sub.:** Neil SEDGEWICK

Referee: Jeff TILL

Weather Conditions: Mainly Cloudy

Attendance: 25

Report: We very nearly had a fixture called off for the second week in a row when our original referee for this game, Peter Jago, phoned the League (at 8.00.a.m. on the morning of the match) to say he had a bad cold and would therefore be unavailable...this being the second week in succession he had let us down just hours before the game ! Fortunately though, a replacement referee in Jeff Till was found at the 'last minute', but he didn't seem very happy about being dragged away from various family/social commitments at such short notice and he could easily have postponed the game because of the inadequacies of a 'pissed ?' groundsman who had marked out two centre-circles and four penalty area semi-circles on the pitch ! Thankfully though, Mr. Till allowed the game to go ahead and after an unnecessary two-minute hold up early on to get all our five match balls pumped up as hard as a rock (for reasons best known to himself), he gradually calmed down as the game went on and was in a much better mood at the end when he praised us for our sportsmanship and general standard of play.

Royal Blues though, made it rather easy for us in what was our first-ever meeting with them after both being in the League for over 13 years, as...no doubt a bit demoralised after their 4-0 defeat to Brimsdown Rovers the week before...they turned up with only 10 men to *start* the match with and then suffered two bad self-inflicted injuries which saw them reduced to 9 for a time, although their numbers fluctuated all throughout the match and they did actually have 11 for most of the Second Half, albeit with one of their injured outfield players in goal ! That was just as well, as we were nowhere near full-strength ourselves as we had Tony Speller & Steve Cokell still out injured and Paul Woolston moving house, while goalkeeper Stavros Elia missed the chance to redeem himself after his nightmare against Upshire Coach & Horses by preferring to go and watch his wife Alison play in a Brass Band Festival in Devon, this being one of the more unusual excuses we have ever had for missing a Rovers match !

It was good to see various other wives & girlfriends coming to watch this match though (to look at Lexton Harrison's 'six pack' rather than their own husband's/boyfriend's 'beer guts' ?!), and there was also a good turn-out of club members on the touchline who were not in Manager Trevor Hughes's squad of 16.

The decision to field a 4-4-2 formation for the first time in 'ages' clearly worked though, as our forward pairing of Conor Mc, Govern and George Bromfield gave us a 2-0 Half-Time lead with Mc, Govern heading in Paul Ellerker's corner after being left unmarked and Bromfield producing a good finish 9 minutes later after running onto John Beasley's through ball. However, we didn't look too clever defensively at times and Scott Bursey missed a couple of clear cut chances for Royal Blues in the First Half (which came about because Steve Beasley had spent the night sleeping in the shed !?) before our third-choice keeper Darryl Johnson (who was playing a rare game) showed his lack of match practice by allowing Royal Blues' midfielder Kevin Peart to beat him in the air from a long throw five minutes into the Second Half which pulled it back to 2-1. However, the introduction of substitute Chidi Ibeqwem at right-back for the injured Lee Osborn two minutes later saw us really taking control of the game, although it was Marco Ellerker (as usual) who really made the difference as he suddenly 'upped a gear' in the 57th minute to send a 'screamer' into the top corner to put us 3-1 up. In fact we then scored another two Goal of the Season contenders in quick succession with Chris 'Nugget' Beeden and Marco Ellerker (again) firing in spectacular efforts which, although Royal Blues by now had an injured outfield player in goal, would still have beaten a perfectly fit 'keeper.

Having gone into an unassailable 5-1 lead, Trevor Hughes then brought on Lexton Harrison and Derek Dorward for Conor Mc, Govern and Chris Beeden and that saw us continue to create chances with George Bromfield rounding the keeper to score his second and our sixth, while Harrison also weighed in with an easy close-range finish to make it seven after being set up by Man-Of-The-Match Bromfield.

On being promoted to the Premier Division at the end of last season, a number of our players were worried that we might struggle and end up facing a relegation battle, but this game clearly showed that some teams in the Premier Division (as I suspected) do have trouble fielding eleven men most weeks and because of that there is no reason why we cannot finish in the Top Five.