

**Sunday 9th February 2003**

Mercury Waltham Sunday League Premier Division Match at Wormley Rovers F.C. (Wormley Playing Fields)

<b>ROYAL BLUES</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>EDMONTON ROVERS</b>	<b>2</b>	HT 1-0
<i>Flood (45 mins.)</i>		<i>S.Dorward (75, 89 (Pen.) mins.)</i>		

**Royal Blues Line-Up:** Paul PEWTER (GK); Lewis DAVIS, Derick PHILLIPS, Ben DAWSON, Neil SEDGWICK; Jackson GASH, Luke SWIFT, Kevin PEART, Cecil GORDON; Troy CARTY, Mark FLOOD **Subs.:** Paul KARAYIANNI, James MOXHAM

**Edmonton Rovers Line-Up (with Marks out of 10):** Darryl JOHNSON (GK) ( 7 ); Robin PRYKE ( 6½ ), Paul WOOLSTON ( 7 ), Stuart DORWARD ( 7 ), John BEASLEY ( 7½ ); Marco ELLERKER ( 7 ), Chris 'Nugget' BEEDEN ( 6½ ), Paul ELLERKER ( 7 ), Conor McGOVERN ( 6½ ), Derek DORWARD ( 6½ ); Steve COKELL ( 7 ) **Subs:** Eric IBEKWEM ( 6 ), Peter SUTTON ( 6½ ), Lexton HARRISON ( 6 )

**Referee:** J.V.A. SMITH

**Weather Conditions:** Constant Light Rain

**Attendance:** 23

**Report:** After our excellent win against League leaders Brimsdown Rovers the week before, we came into this game full of confidence as we were fielding a strong side with only Tony Speller missing from our outfield starting line-up due to Social/Girlfriend Commitments (Presumably...as he didn't really say !). However, the absence of keeper Stavros Elia was a lot more mysterious as he failed to contact us at all to say he was unavailable again, but thankfully Darryl Johnson turned up to take his place in goal, while we were almost able to name five substitutes...it became four in the end as Steve Beasley let us down at the last minute by deciding to re-enact his famous 'hiding behind a tree while pissed' episode from about 12 years ago, Beasley being one of a number of our players who were out the night before this game 'entertaining' the Sunderland Branch of the Edmonton Rovers Supporters Club (or rather helping them to drown their sorrows after the 4-1 defeat to Spurs !?).

As we had beaten Royal Blues 7-1 at Hazelwood back in September though, most of our players clearly seemed to think that this would be an easy game and that they could therefore get away with being 'well pissed' or not having to show the same degree of urgency and commitment as they had to against Brimsdown. That meant we were very much caught out in the First Half as Royal Blues were fielding a much stronger side having now sorted themselves out after their early season problems which almost resulted in them dropping out of the League, and they certainly proved that they could be as good as anyone in the Premier Division on their day by having the better of the first 45 minutes in which they forced Darryl Johnson into 2 or 3 good saves, effectively stifled our attack and then scored an Injury Time goal to give them a 1-0 Half-Time lead as Conor McGovern was caught in possession in midfield, leading to a quick one-two and a good finish by forward Mark Flood in a one-on-one with Darryl Johnson.

Thankfully though, we didn't panic at Half-Time and a sensible discussion was held in which we realised we were suddenly up against a good side and that it just needed us to show a bit more urgency and concentration. That saw us defend much better in the Second Half and then gradually start to get on top in the last 15-20 minutes, especially after bringing on three good (Non-Pissed ?) substitutes who actually ensured we were the fitter side during that crucial period of the game...at last ! We were also helped by a shoulder injury suffered by Royal Blues keeper Paul Pewter half-way through the Second Half which saw defender Derek Phillips (one of their better outfield players) have to go in goal, but unlike the game back in September (when a similar injury *also* happened !), Royal Blues this time had two substitutes and were never down to 10 men at any stage. We were unlucky not to equalise in the 73rd minute though, when Stuart Dorward had a goal rather harshly disallowed for a supposed foul by Conor McGovern on stand-in keeper Phillips, but Dorward (despite playing at sweeper in this match) managed a legitimate equaliser just two minutes later anyway when he converted the rebound from an acute angle after keeper Phillips parried John Beasley's free-kick into his path. That saw the immediate introduction of Lexton Harrison for his first game for five months after a knee operation as we switched to a 4-4-2 in looking for a winner and it finally came in the 89th minute when John Beasley (who was playing in an unfamiliar left-back role) went on a run upfield and was brought down in the area by defender Lewis Davis for a fairly obvious penalty, which was a good way for 'Junior' to celebrate his 200th appearance and being made skipper for the day. Stuart Dorward then stepped up to unconvincingly 'trundle' the ball under keeper Phillips' dive and into the bottom corner before celebrating what turned out to be the winner in front of our dozen or so supporters who were huddled together out of the increasingly heavy rain under the canopy of the clubhouse entrance behind the goal...leaving the cameraman drenched on his own on top of a dug-out and linesman/Manager Trevor Hughes wiping the rain off his glasses yet again !

Although we may have been expecting a more convincing victory beforehand, it was important just to make sure we got the three points in the end as it moved us up two places in the table into 'mid-table security', which was what we were aiming for at the start of the season anyway.