

Epsom and Ewell FC get marching orders from Sandhurst

18 December 2024



Epsom and Ewell FC 1-2 Sandhurst Town. Combined Counties League - Premier Division South. Tuesday 17th December 2024.

Following our defeat at Chipstead in November I advised that we regularly seemed to struggle to produce a good performance against any of the teams below us in the League. Although that trend was bucked with a good win at Alton, we were back to our old ways as a starting eleven that was unchanged from our Vase victory over Burnham failed to keep their intensity up and slipped away in the second half to a 2-1 defeat at home to Sandhurst Town, allowing them to claim a League double over us and leapfrog us in the table too.

We were a little slow out of the blocks and Mark Holley produced a good early run that ended with a shot that was sliced wide. However, we began to get back into the match and Conrad Essilfie-Conduah sent a header over the bar from an Adam Green free kick, although our man was offside in any case. Our next chance came from a great crossfield pass from Will Kendall that was perfect for Sean-Michael Anderson, but his strike on target was closed down immediately by a defender.

We started to push our visitors back a little more from this point and took the lead in the 19th minute, when a Green corner was missed by the Sandhurst keeper Harry White and then appeared to strike the thigh of Elliott Miles, rebounding into the net from a couple of yards out. It was at first suspected that our defender Anthony Nazareth had got a touch, and he certainly celebrated as though he had done, but it was later confirmed by a couple of sources that this would go down as our fifth own goal of the season, which was a shame really, as a goal just before Christmas from Nazareth would certainly have been appropriate!

Ethan Nelson-Roberts was next to try his luck from 18 yards, but his powerful strike was just over the bar. Then suddenly, it nearly all went pear shaped as a pinpoint crossfield pass from our opponents put Shane Qolori through on goal, only for Dan O'Donovan to make a superb save with an outstretched leg to keep them out. They also struck another warning shot just over our crossbar in injury time after a good move. We went in with a lead, but by no means a secure one.

And so it proved early in the second half. With Sandhurst kicking towards the Tolworth end, Qolori had an opportunity. It looked at first as though his team mate had got in the way, but he retained the ball, and then drew a couple of defenders before drilling the ball low into O'Donovan's left hand corner from fairly close range in the 52nd minute to level the scores.

We had a brief shout for a penalty when Kionte Gillfillian-Waul just reached the ball ahead of a defender and nodded the ball past him before going to ground, but in all honesty, I felt that there wasn't quite enough there to award the spot kick and the referee felt the same way.

The match began to meander and we were no longer as dominant as we had been in the first half. Then we started to make errors. Firstly, Nazareth miskicked a clearance just a matter of yards out and the visiting striker saw his shot well blocked by O'Donovan with Nazareth himself able to recover to make a block from the next shot. Our defender was then clattered into by one of the opposition and although he recovered a little after treatment, he limped off a few minutes later and was replaced by Callum Wilson.

We then picked up another injury after Niall Stillwell was caught by a high foot that earned Morgan Elliot a yellow card, and again, he would limp off a few minutes later for debutant Tobi Falodi from Guildford City to take his place. We then had our best chance of the half after Gillfillian-Waul sent in a long throw that was flicked on by Craig Dundas for Green to strike, although White did well to parry the strike away to safety. Another opportunity followed after Green had split the defence with a pass to Kendall, but although he was through on goal, the defender chasing him probably did enough to force him into an earlier shot than he would have liked and he put the ball wide from only twelve yards out.

The visitors could have been 3-1 down in that time, but they weren't, and began to grow in confidence as the game reached its closing stages. They had a great chance in the 88th minute when a ball through on goal looked harmless enough until O'Donovan sliced his clearance on the bobbly surface, leaving Frazier Osunkaya with a good opportunity from an angle, but the contact wasn't the greatest and our keeper was able to reach the ball just before it crossed the line. We failed to heed the fairly large warning though and just a minute later Holley finished the game in a similar way to how he started it; with a good run from left to right, although this time he produced a much more accurate strike that O'Donovan could only palm into the goal from twelve yards.

Ultimately, this proved to be the winning goal and although I don't believe we deserved to lose over the ninety minutes, we hadn't really worked hard enough to win it either and if I'm honest, we probably should have done from the position we were in. It would be easy to say that this wasn't a very important League match, and it's true that we've had many more pivotal fixtures this season. However, this was another flat performance, particularly in the second half and will become a concern if repeated too often.

Epsom & Ewell: Dan O'Donovan, Niall Stillwell, Kionte Gillfillian-Waul, Adam Green (c), Nicolas Bostan, Anthony Nazareth, Ali Fofahan, Conrad Essilfie-Conduah, Will Kendall, Jason Bloor, Ethan Nelson-Roberts

Subs: Callum Wilson for Nazareth (65), Luke Miller for Anderson (68), Tobi Falodi for Stillwell (83)

Report Source: www.eefconline.co.uk

League victory takes Epsom & Ewell up 3 places

18 December 2024



Cobham 1-2 Epsom and Ewell. Combined Counties League - Premier Division South. Saturday 16th November 2024

Momentum is a funny thing! At times this season, we have found ways to lose matches that we ought to have taken points from, yet on Saturday we managed to take three points from high flying Cobham on their own ground, when we probably didn't deserve them. However, last week's Vase win has given the players some confidence and this may have been the difference in our 2-1 win.

This second win in a row, and our first in the League for eight matches dating back to September was achieved despite a continual rotation of our squad in recent weeks, with three more players making their debuts in this contest. Callum Wilson came in for Toby Young at the back, while Conrad Essilfie-Conduah came in for Craig Dundas who had an afternoon spent mostly on the bench. Will Kendall came in for Oblitey and looked much more his old self in this one, scoring the winner with one of the worst free kicks you'll witness!

We took the field at the Reg Madgwick Stadium in our yellow kit and kicked towards the main entrance end, which we didn't do that often in our season as tenants here, so I assume we lost the toss. Either way though we made a fast start and Kendall fed Luke Miller, only to see our tricky winger's shot on target well blocked by a defender, before Adam Green also saw his shot blocked and cleared in the opening ten minutes. We were doing most of the attacking, although our hosts forced Dan O'Donovan into a good low save soon after, with the follow-up shot blocked by Anthony Nazareth, playing against his old club.

We continued to press and an Ali Fofahan cross was just reached by Ryan MacLean in front of his keeper and the ball was cleared. Our boys were looking the more dangerous of the two sides at this stage and approaching the half hour a Fofahan corner was met by a glancing header from Kendall that hit the post and went away, with only our man ending up tangled in the net instead.

Elijah Simpson then got through, winning a one on one with Nazareth, but O'Donovan was out to smother the opportunity quickly. It also transpired that our defender had only been beaten to the ball as he had been injured a few minutes previously and his replacement at the back was Nicolas Bostan, who had joined us from Hampton & Richmond Borough in the last 24 hours.

However, by the time of that substitution we were already ahead, as another Fofahan corner required an intervention from Conrad Knight, who tipped the ball over his crossbar but from the next set piece, Fofahan sent the ball over to Ethan Nelson-Roberts on the left wing, and he cut inside onto his right foot before drilling the ball straight between the legs of MacLean and completely wrongfooting Knight as it flew into the bottom corner of the Cobham net from about twelve yards in the 39th minute.

Unfortunately, we held the lead for just five minutes before Cobham drew level with a good run down the right and delivery to the near post, where Derick Hayford was able to head the ball powerfully into the net from a few yards out via the crossbar. It was a proper centre-forward's header and they always seem to look more spectacular when they go in off the frame of the goal!

We went in at the break level, but within 55 seconds of the second half played Kendall was sitting on the bench as a result of something he said. The hosts clearly saw this as an opportunity and began to push us back. We had a lucky escape when Patrick Murray struck the ball wide from close range and had to make some timely defensive blocks, but Kendall came back on after serving his ten minutes and at that point I thought we would take control again.

But it didn't really work out that way. Cobham remained the more dominant of the two teams and at this stage it looked like a matter of when, not if they would take the lead. Wilson made a couple of great blocks and the game started to get broken up. That wasn't helped by O'Donovan needing a couple of sessions of treatment for an injury that had earned Charlie Alexiou a yellow card earlier. There would clearly be a fair amount of injury time required! Before that though the home side continued to press and a ball in from the right bounced straight into the path of a Cobham player who smashed the ball at goal, only for O'Donovan to make an astounding save to deflect the ball over the crossbar from close range.

Blessing Hombessa, late of Knaphill, joined the fray as a substitute ahead of Miller, but his first contribution was to lose the ball in midfield, leading to a Cobham counter attack that earned a corner. Fortunately though it came to nothing and his second contribution was far better as his pass put Kendall through with just MacLean to beat, and the defender



brought him down on the edge of the penalty area, earning a card of his own. As Adam Green lined up to take the set piece in the 85th minute, Will Kendall ran in and smashed the ball straight at the wall instead, at what you might like to call “upper groin height”! Nine times out of ten this free kick would be blocked by the wall, but on this occasion it parted like the Red Sea and Knight was once again left with no chance as the ball flew into the net.

There were nine minutes of injury time, during which Cobham pushed for an equaliser, but their attacks came to nothing. Kionte Gillfillian-Waul picked up an injury in the closing stages and was replaced by Jack Torbett, who became the third player to join us from Langley, but apart from one close range effort that went just over our bar it wasn't a particularly nervy ending and the final whistle confirmed that the points were heading to Epsom. For those who love a stat, this win was our first ever League win on this day at the ninth attempt in the last hundred years!

This victory also lifted us up three places in the League and helps to reinforce most people's belief that we are too good to go down. However, despite our performance, we had been struggling to pick up the points, so these were most welcome even if we have played better before this season and lost. We now visit Chipstead in pursuit of what would be our first ever League “double” against them. They go into our meeting having lost 7-0 at AFC Whyteleafe, but I'm sure that was just one of those days. Let's hope we can keep our momentum going against the Chips as our tour of former landlords continues on Tuesday.

Epsom & Ewell: Dan O'Donovan, Niall Stillwell, Kionte Gillfillian-Waul, Adam Green (c), Anthony Nazareth, Callum Wilson, Luke Miller, Conrad Essilfie-Conduah, Will Kendall, Ali Fofahan, Ethan Nelson-Roberts

Subs: Nicolas Bostan for Nazareth (40), Blessing Hombessa for Miller (74), Craig Dundas for Fofahan (83), Jack Torbett for Gillfillian-Waul (93)

Report Source: www.eefconline.co.uk

Epsom and Ewell FC progress in FA Vase

18 December 2024



Epsom and Ewell 2-0 North Greenford United. Isuzu F.A. Vase - Second Round. Saturday 9th November 2024.

It's official! This is now definitely a Vase run! We may have had a bye in the opening round, but since then, Seaford Town, Berks County and now North Greenford United have been defeated to give our boys a place in the last 64 for the first time since we hosted St Neots Town in 2010/11 as we defeated our opponents by two goals to nil at the KGF on Saturday.

North Greenford reached the Quarter-Finals of this competition last year; narrowly losing by the only goal against eventual winners Romford, and went into this match in second place in the North Division of the Combined Counties League, presumably hoping to go a step or two further this time. However, whilst on paper, we may not have been expected to win this tie, particularly after our recent form, we rode an early storm before taking the lead and extended it in the second half, by which time the visitors, for all their energy and effort, seemed to have run out of ideas against a well organised Salts team. In fact, for those who were present seven days previously for our 3-0 home defeat to Sheerwater, this match followed almost exactly the opposite pattern, with only a world class save at the end preventing us from recording a 3-0 scoreline of our own!

The first piece of good news came with the news that our Captain Adam Green had seen his red card at Carshalton Athletic overturned at an F.A. hearing, along with the four match suspension that went with it.

Having Green available was a massive bonus as he has grown in stature this season, while we also welcomed back Dan O'Donovan and Niall Stillwell after serving their suspensions incurred against Abbey Rangers, although we did have a few players cup tied. We also welcomed Surrey football royalty as S.C.F.A. President Ray Lewis was joined by League Chairman and newly elected F.A. Council member Chris Conlon. I am pleased to report that they had an enjoyable and entertaining contest to watch!

Against an away side playing with three at the back, we made a couple of early forays down the flanks with Ali Fofahan and Luke Miller but soon found ourselves on the defensive as a succession of corners were earned at the other end. This was then followed by an unnecessary seventh minute challenge from Green way out on the touchline that was at best exuberant; at worst, very clumsy! The referee made the easy decision to award the yellow card and our Captain would be on a tightrope for the remainder of the match.

O'Donovan was forced into a low save soon after this, and while the ball spun up off him, it was headed away from the danger area by a Salts defender. All of this in the opening nine minutes, yet in the tenth we took the lead. Ethan Nelson-Roberts cropped up on the right wing and pulled the ball back from the touchline where Miller dummied the ball cleverly, giving Fofahan space to pick his spot and sending the ball flying into the far corner of the net, about half way up, from just inside the penalty area.

The goal was a little against the run of play at that time, but the F.A. Vase is no respecter of possession stats or form, and

if I'd had a pound for every time we lost out in the Vase when we didn't deserve to, I'd have a fair sum of money, so we took the lead and ran with it! Not that we were home and dry at this stage by any means as our opponents spent much of the remainder of the first half pushing for an equaliser. O'Donovan nearly got caught out when he left his area and lost the ball out on the touchline. As he retreated, a cross was sent over him, although fortunately it didn't fall for a visiting striker and we were able to escape.

In truth, very little really fell for the opposition throughout the match as they repeatedly tried and failed to link up with their front men; the ball often running out of play. They had a free kick that was flicked on at the near post, but the chance was headed over at the far post and Toby Young also had to make a headed clearance. However, we could and probably should have extended our lead just after the half hour when Nelson-Roberts closed down a clearance from Greenford keeper Ryan Lehane with the ball squirting out to the right hand side where Carl Oblitey was able to feed Miller, but our tricky winger, usually so clinical, poked the ball wide from twelve yards out.

Green then spurned a great opportunity as he was first to reach a Fofahan free kick, but instead of the thumping header that was required, he made only the merest of touches as he dived and the ball went well wide of the goal. Green then turned provider in first half injury time with a quick delivery in from the right that Fofahan reached first and diverted on goal, although it was almost instantly cut out by Anotida Mano. Although the half went on for another seven minutes, largely due to another injury to Young who made a solid challenge, but came off worse and required Callum Wilson to replace him, we went in at the break, aware that we'd had less possession, but also aware that we had carried at least as much threat from our attacks. But could we hold on to our narrow lead in the second half?

As it turned out, the answer would be yes, and in truth, fairly comfortably as well. After an even few minutes to open the second period, we extended our lead in the 54th minute and it came with one of the best passes I've seen in ages, curling with the outside of the foot and straight into the path of Miller. I'm ashamed to say that I didn't see who made it, as I was by then following the attack, but was informed afterwards that it was Anthony Nazareth who deserved the credit. Miller took the ball in stride and drew his defender before rolling the ball perfectly through to Fofahan who was through on goal, and whilst a defender hurried him into the shot, and even got a touch to the ball some eighteen yards out, the ball still crept into the far corner of the goal to give us a 2-0 Salts.

Green then sent a teasing ball across the six yard box as we threatened a third goal, before we all then had a slight interval while Lehane was treated for cramp, which seemed odd as he hadn't really been that involved in the match! Craig Dundas tested him soon after with a low drive before we created another good chance when substitute Michele Maccari was put through and as he reached the ball ahead of the exposed Lehane, he just had the task of knocking the ball into the empty net. Only one problem though; he was over thirty yards out and his shot dribbled agonisingly beyond the far post.

The visitors continued to raise the tempo, although their football was becoming more frantic and desperate, trying to force things instead of remaining patient and their attacks broke down more frequently. Occasionally we needed to step in with fouls to break up the play and Dundas, Stillwell and Kionte Gillfillian-Waul all picked up cards, while O'Donovan had one waved in his direction for time wasting too, although he did well with a reflex save to deny a close range shot in the closing moments. Luckily we didn't exceed the five booking mark and it was only an amazing point blank save from Lehane that kept out substitute Kendall from a couple of yards after Miller had set him up with a low right wing cross. A third goal might have been harsh on the visitors, but by the end, there was no denying that we had deserved the win.

So far we have had a full house of home draws in the F.A. competitions this season (two in the Cup, three in the Vase) although the next round traditionally includes clubs all the way down to the South West, so we might well get a long journey. In fact, the last time our club had an away tie in the Third Round was in 2009/10 when we visited Wellington AFC; right on the border between Somerset and Devon! That said, who would bet against a sixth straight home F.A. competition encounter being revealed in the draw on Monday and taking place at the KGF on 7th December!

Epsom & Ewell: Dan O'Donovan, Niall Stillwell, Kionte Gillfillian-Waul, Adam Green (c), Anthony Nazareth, Toby Young, Luke Miller, Craig Dundas, Carl Oblitey, Ali Fofahan, Ethan Nelson-Roberts

Subs: Callum Wilson for Young (45+6), Michele Maccari for Nelson-Roberts (74), Will Kendall for Fofahan (85)

Report Source: www.eefconline.co.uk

Epsom & Ewell FC drowned out by Sheerwater

18 December 2024



Epsom and Ewell 0-3 Sheerwater. Combined Counties League - Premier Division South Saturday 2nd November 2024

On a very mild Saturday afternoon at the KGF Salts fans were hoping for fireworks against Sheerwater, and indeed they started off like a rocket. However, rockets have a tendency to tail off very badly, and long before the end it had fizzled out completely as a 3-0 defeat handed the Sheers their sixth straight win over our boys.



In recent weeks we have won some and lost some, while we have also drawn a great many. However, in all of the matches we remained competitive, which regrettably was not the case in this contest against a clinical visiting team. We started well enough, before the opposition scored a couple of goals and then shut us out for the remainder of the match; scoring a third goal towards the end to rub salt into the wounds. By the end we looked quite disheartened against one of the few teams that had actually been below us in the table before kick off, which is concerning ahead of our big F.A. Vase match next weekend. In fact, the second half was most definitely the worst forty-five minute period we have produced for weeks.

In front of an "official" attendance of 106, which contained around twenty non-paying spectators from our young Colts teams, we made a number of changes, many of which were enforced. In goal Faebian Witter came in for the suspended Dan O'Donovan, and if you like your stats, this marked the first time in forty years to my knowledge where a goal keeper played against us in one match, only to then turn out for us in our very next match! For those wondering, it was Andy Abel who played so well for Addlestone & Weybridge against us in a pair of Surrey Senior Cup ties, that our Manager Adrian Hill signed him up for our remaining League matches in 1983/84! Also suspended was Niall Stillwell, while Adam Green also missed out after picking up five bookings this season. Green currently faces a further suspension from next Saturday and on the evidence of this match we will miss him badly, although there may be an opening for him as a cheerleader as he was doing a good job of directing the singing for the Colts behind the goal! Finally, in the opposition line up was former Salt Joel Onu, who would join the match from the bench later.

The visitors took the field in a quite frankly vomit-inducing combination of various shades of purple! On a bobbly looking surface that looked like it needed mowing, we started well and should have taken the lead in the 11th minute when Ali Fofahan pulled the ball back from the left wing, only for Kailan North to miskick the ball just eight yards out in a central position. Fofahan's next delivery was a little too close to Fabio Suarez who punched the ball clear, but we were well on top at this stage.

However, the pattern of the match changed completely in the 17th minute when Sheerwater made their first foray into Epsom territory and won a corner, but we didn't deal with this at all well and the far post delivery was headed back across goal by Liam Avery for Harvey Valter to head in from close range, with neither of the players being marked at all. Three minutes later it was two-nil as Elliott York sent a dipping shot at goal from outside the penalty area and Witter was unable to keep it out as the ball went to his left.

From this point Sheerwater made it clear that they were going to stick with what they had. Suarez slowed the game down with the referee complicit in allowing this to happen. However, the defenders in front of him were defending heroically, throwing themselves in front of every shot we sent towards the visiting goal. The first block came from a Will Kendall free kick, which was blocked out wide to Carl Oblitey, who then sent in a great cross that Kendall rose to meet with a header that clipped the crossbar and went out for a goal kick. Moments later another attack was met by a piledriver from Toby Young, but another great defensive block was enough to divert the shot just over the bar. As half time approached North also saw his shot blocked and Fofahan saw his shot bounce down and over the bar. As we went off at half time, it was hard to believe that we hadn't scored, having had a significant majority of possession and chances.

We started the second half rapidly and almost had a goal back in the first fifteen seconds when Fofahan's low ball across goal was wildly miskicked by a defender and went through to Kendall, but our man clearly hadn't been expecting the present and snatched at the ball, slicing it wide from twelve yards. What we didn't realise after fifty minutes of creating chances, was that this one would represent our last real opportunity in the match. The visitors started to shut us out of the game, almost as if they had seen what we had got, and decided that we weren't hurting them. Anthony Nazareth picked up a yellow card for a challenge that looked more clumsy than malicious, and it was possible that he also injured himself at the time as he was replaced four minutes later. Then on the hour we saw a debut from Michele Maccari on the left wing, who replaced the out of sorts Luke Miller with Fofahan taking his place on the right. It seems that every week we have a new player, yet defensively where we have had most issues, there appear to be no changes. It would be nice for the club to provide some sort of player update for our patient supporters at some point in the near future.

One player that was back in Epsom colours was Fabio Nunes who had completed his suspension, and he nearly pulled a goal back for us with a twenty-five yard strike that took a wicked deflection off a defender, but Suarez adjusted brilliantly to stick out a hand and as the ball dribbled away, he recovered to claim the loose ball before Kendall could reach it, although our man was offside anyway.

I referred earlier to Joel Onu, who had been on our bench for a few games, but only making one appearance. The supporters only knew he had left when he appeared in the opposition line up! Clearly Onu also wanted to send a message to our Management that they had made the wrong decision in letting him go, and in the 80th minute he broke our offside trap before slotting the ball under Witter to make the score 3-0. That third goal was also enough to put the visitors above us in the League table.

As the game petered out Onu got through again and although Callum Wilson managed to recover the position, he hurt himself in the process and needed to be replaced. As Luke Taylor came on, it was interesting to note that it was the first time this season that we had used all five substitutes, although Taylor hardly got a touch before the final whistle blew.

This was also our third defeat in a row and more relevantly it was our seventh League match without a win, during which time we have played three of the teams that were below us at the time in Horley, Balham and now Sheerwater without defeating any of them. Whilst we have had good spells in all three of the recent defeats, the results speak for themselves and it's not great form to enter our big F.A. Vase match next Saturday, but at least we will have most of our suspended players back. It also transpires that the club are appealing Green's red card from the Carshalton Athletic match, which on the face of it appears a complete waste of money, as contact was made, however accidental it may have been. Maybe he will be available, maybe he won't; either way, the rest of the team will need to step up a couple of gears if we are to get out of this concerning slump.

In summary, Sheerwater weren't three goals better than us, although it could be argued that they were three goals smarter!

Epsom & Ewell: Faebian Witter, Toby Young, Ethan Nelson-Roberts (c), Kailan North, Anthony Nazareth, Callum Wilson, Luke Miller, Craig Dundas, Carl Oblitey, Will Kendall, Ali Fofahan

Subs: Kionte Gillfillian-Waul for Nazareth (56), Michele Maccari for Miller (61), Fabio Nunes for North (65), Jason Bloor for Kendall (80), Luke Taylor for Wilson (92)

Report Source: www.eefconline.co.uk

Epsom and Ewell see more red in away defeat

18 December 2024



Abbey Rangers 2-1 Epsom and Ewell FC. Combined Counties League - Premier Division South. Saturday 26th October 2024.

Eleven months ago we visited Addlestone Moor and lost 2-1 in a controversial match that contained three converted penalties. This latest visit ended with the same scoreline, although this time we had to finish the match with nine men and still nearly got a draw out of it.

Arguably this match was less controversial than that previous encounter at the Moor, despite the dismissals, which it was hard for anyone to argue with. The match programme referred to some nasty games in the past between the clubs, and that things had mellowed somewhat since then, but this one was a typically old school niggly Abbey v Epsom match; full of commitment and plenty of solid challenges that the referee did his best to keep a lid on, even towards the end when things began to get a bit fractious.

In terms of personnel we made five changes. Dan O'Donovan came in between the posts for Faebian Witter, while Niall Stillwell and Callum Wilson returned at the back in place of the injury-hit Ethan Brazier and David Romer. Further forward Luke Miller came in on the left wing, requiring Ethan Nelson-Roberts to drop back and leaving Kionte Gillfillian-Waul on the bench. Finally, it was great to see Will Kendall back in the line up after spending a lot of time abroad recently. Although not match-fit yet, his return to the squad will boost our striking options and was particularly timely as I was advised that Carl Oblitey was at a wedding, so he slotted straight in without any significant change to our formation. For Abbey Rangers, there were a couple of former Salts in the line up in keeper Shay Honey and left back Jerry Antwi, the latter of which had had a couple of spells with us in recent years.

The tone for this match was set as early as the third minute when Stillwell put in a thumping and completely fair challenge out on the touchline, although a few minutes later he received a yellow card for a handball that would have repercussions for him later on. On the quarter hour mark Ali Fofahan, operating on the right wing to start with, skewed a cross which then became a shot, although Honey was ready and caught the ball on the goal line. Our former keeper also had to be alert to punch a near post Adam Green corner away, while at the other end O'Donovan was able to deal fairly comfortably with a long range effort.

In truth, this was the pattern of the first half, with very few real chances as both teams looked fairly secure at the back. However, it was from one of these that the hosts too the lead as a nice move ended with Finley Warren who rode a couple of challenges and drilled the ball low to O'Donovan's right from just inside the penalty area to open the scoring in the 29th minute. It nearly got worse as Jordan Ikala robbed Anthony Nazareth and ran through on goal, trying to curl the ball left footed around the advancing O'Donovan, which he was able to do from thirty yards, only to see the ball strike our post and go out for a goal kick.

In response a Miller header set up Kendall for a chance that he hooked just over the bar on the turn from twelve yards and in the final minute of the half Nelson-Roberts tried his luck from around thirty-five yards out at an angle, but Honey was alert to tip the ball over for a fruitless Epsom corner. We went in at the break trailing by that single goal, despite the match being very even to that point.

We re-started the brighter of the two teams and Miller saw his cross/shot from a narrow angle tipped over, but the game soon settled into the same pattern as the first half with both teams cancelling each other out and restricting goal scoring opportunities, but things took a turn for the worse in the 61st minute when a long ball caught O'Donovan out badly and despite being some twenty-five yards out from his goal, he chose to stop the ball from going over his head with both hands, incurring the fairly obvious red card as a result. It was impossible to argue with this decision and of course led to the next question of who would replace him? Kailan North was the man for the job and he took over the role to become our first outfield player in goal since Nick Wilson against Hailsham Town in February of 2023.

Despite the player disadvantage, the match continued to be fairly even in front of an attendance that was advised as 43 by Football Web Pages and 59 by the FA Full Time site, even though there were around 80 in attendance! Abbey clearly decided they were going to test the "new" keeper out and a few long range efforts were sent in North's direction, although he dealt with them fairly well, particularly a free kick that he kept out at the near post after Green had taken one for the team by bringing down an Abbey attacker just outside the penalty area.

We changed our formation in the 75th minute and gambled with three at the back with Nelson-Roberts in a more advanced role, but the home side began to create more opportunities. Green did really well to get in the way of a powerful strike in goal for a corner, but the subsequent set piece was pulled back to Brad Marshall who struck the ball powerfully past North at the near post from twenty yards to give the hosts a two goal lead in the 78th minute.

Conrad Essilfie-Conduah came on in relief of Craig Dundas and we won a free kick just outside the area after a foul on Green that earned Antwi a yellow card. Miller then struck the free kick around the wall, forcing Honey to make a good save, but the ball bounced up off him and struck the retreating Marshall squarely in the chest and sending the ball over the line before he could clear it to reduce the arrears in the 84th minute. Marshall had scored at both ends in the space of just six minutes!

This was the fourth own goal in our favour in the last eight matches, but our chances of forcing an equaliser were hampered when the home side broke away and Stillwell was adjudged to have brought him down. It looked from where I was standing as though he got the ball, but he also appeared to get a part of the player too and the second yellow card was inevitable once the referee had deemed the challenge as a foul. Both of our players will miss the Sheerwater League match next Saturday. For those who love their stats, this was the tenth time in our history that we had been reduced to nine men, the most recent of which came on that infamous day at Dorking Wanderers Reserves back in December 2021. These were our fifth and sixth red cards of the season already though, and maybe we need to give a little bit more thought to our discipline going forward as we are already over half way to passing our rather high club record of eleven in a season.

Ikala sent a good opportunity high and wide from a good position, while another home forward picked up a yellow card for a blatant dive and we nearly levelled it up in the seventh and final minute of injury time when a Miller free kick was deflected for a corner, from which Honey punched the ball clear at the second attempt. On another day we might well have got that equaliser too, and it is hard to argue that Abbey Rangers truly earned all three points here on the balance of play, but they managed to keep all eleven players on the pitch and for that reason alone, they deserved the points more than we did.

This was our first defeat in eight matches and whilst all four of the League contests in that sequence have been draws, it is now six Combined Counties League matches without a win. However, no real harm was done to our position as we currently sit well clear of the bottom two clubs, who both also lost this day. Sheerwater are another of the four clubs below us right now and they will be our next League opponents at the KGF on Saturday, but before then we have a Monday Surrey Senior Cup trip to Carshalton Athletic. We'll definitely need all eleven men for that contest, as we haven't beaten them since 1955!!

Epsom & Ewell: Dan O'Donovan, Niall Stillwell, Ethan Nelson-Roberts, Adam Green (c), Anthony Nazareth, Callum Wilson, Luke Miller, Craig Dundas, Will Kendall, Kailan North, Ali Fofahan

Subs: Jason Bloor for Kendall (73), Conrad Essilfie-Conduah for Dundas (80)

Report Source: www.eefconline.co.uk

Fofahan makes FA fans as Epsom & Ewell progress in Vase

18 December 2024



Epsom and Ewell FC 3-1 Berks County. Isuzu F.A. Vase - First Round. Sunday 20th October 2024

Just 6 days before the 50 year anniversary of our very first F.A. Vase match against Reigate Priory, we played our 94th match in that competition against a new opponent in Berks County FC; a club formed as recently as 2009 and playing in the North Division of our League, and we were good value for our 3-1 win at a soggy KGF. For those interested, it was our 45th win in that time.

This result improved our recent form to just one loss in our last eleven matches and it is a shame that our club don't seem to be able to keep up with this off the field. They may claim this was a healthy looking attendance of 145 which, on the face of it, might seem ok for a Vase match, but when you bear in mind that there were only two other games at this or a higher standard anywhere in the Southern half of the country, we really missed an opportunity to pull in a crowd well over the 300 mark and it's really time that questions were asked about those people who are "running" our club, who appear uncaring or more worryingly oblivious to the opportunities they keep missing, instead believing that bringing in about fifteen of the Colts and a few of their parents each week is somehow sufficient to tick the "family club" box. Throw in a number of unanswered requests on the club Twitter site relating to whether there was going to be an inspection, which

was a perfectly valid question following our postponement on Tuesday and you wonder whether our club really do care about your attendance at these matches. And in case anyone is wondering, yes, I have offered my services on many occasions.

There was only one person connected with the club who seemed to show a bit of energy and he was the chap on the tannoy system. Maybe he will even benefit the club, once he can actually get our own players names right!

The club held a minute's applause for supporter Peter Mitchell before the kick off. Whilst he may have been deserving of a minute's recognition as he was a fairly loyal supporter over the two and a half seasons he was following us, I see no reason whatsoever for any supporters or club officials to receive this fairly recent fad of a minute's applause. In my opinion, a minute's silence should be sufficient, with applause given only to former players and maybe some Managers. Having said that, our club never even bothered to hold a minute's acknowledgement of any kind for recently passed strikers Gerry O'Rourke and Ben Forey, the latter of whom even sits on our goal scoring Hall of Fame, so it will be interesting to see what happens next time one of these tributes is required at an Epsom match.

We made four changes from our recent 2-2 draw against Fleet Town. Ethan Brazier was fit again and resumed at right back in place of the absent Niall Stillwell, while David Romer came in for Callum Wilson who had suffered a small injury issue at Thursday's training session. Faebian Witter came in between the posts ahead of Dan O'Donovan, while further forward we had a debut for Kailan North who had recent spells with Colliers Wood United and Banstead Athletic. He came in for the cup-tied Jason Bloor, who had made an appearance for Langley earlier in the competition.

As the pre-match rain eased, it became apparent that the match was not starting on time. For those who were wondering why this was, as the club chose not to advise the reason, it was due to the late arrival of the visiting keeper, Harvey Rackley-Hayes. I'm not entirely sure why this delay was allowed for just one missing player, but either way we kicked off twenty minutes after the original start time in conditions that were far better than originally expected due to the virtual non-arrival in our area of Storm Ashley.

We had an early opportunity when Kionte Gillfillian-Waul sent in a good ball, but it zipped across the wet turf and Carl Oblitey couldn't quite reach it. Then in the 17th minute we probably should have taken the lead when a free kick was half cleared to Ethan Nelson-Roberts and whilst his shot was deflected for a corner, Adam Green's delivery into the danger area looked like it would be met by Anthony Nazareth, but he missed his header from close range, only for the ball to fall back to him just six yards out at an angle, from where he sent his shot over the bar.

The visitors volleyed a corner wide at the near post, but we were back on the attack soon after and a deep Fofahan cross resulted in a drop from Rackley-Hayes, but as the loose ball was drilled into the net by Nelson-Roberts, the whistle blew as the referee felt that the County keeper had been fouled. It was a soft one for sure, but in the 26th minute we went ahead anyway after a poor back pass from Will Edwards was intercepted by Fofahan and he drew the keeper before slotting the ball between his legs and into the net from just inside the penalty area.

However, within two minutes of making the breakthrough, the visitors drew level as a deep right wing cross was met at the far post with a header back across Witter from George Gould. Our keeper got a hand to the ball but couldn't keep it out.

Fofahan was giving the Berks County defenders a lot of trouble and he had a speculative effort from 25 yards that went wide, but in the 36th minute he struck the inside of Rackley-Hayes' left hand post from fifteen yards with the ball skewing across the goal and spinning out for a goal kick! Fofahan really should have scored here after he had broken through, but instead we went in at the break with the scores level.

I felt we had shaded the first half, but at 1-1, there was also the potential for a fifth straight 2-2 draw that no one would have wanted, as it would have meant that the tie would be decided on penalties instead! We then had an early scare in the second half as Brazier and Witter got in each other's way while trying to effect a clearance, but we just about got away with it and went back in front for the second time in the 55th minute after Brazier made tracks down the right, before cutting back and delivering a decent cross that Oblitey attacked. His header struck a defender but rebounded into his path and he drilled the ball low into the corner from just seven yards out, giving Rackley-Hayes no chance.

Fofahan forced a good save from a narrow angle by Rackley-Hayes before we had to reshuffle the pack after Gillfillian-Waul was replaced by Luke Miller with Fofahan moving to the left wing instead. This was our first substitution of the day, but by the end of the match all four of our starting defenders would be off the field! Romer would be one of those, but before he departed, he capped a fine performance with a run on the left wing and a low delivery in for Green to strike at goal, but Rackley-Hayes made a superb save with his right boot to keep the close range shot out.

Witter picked up a yellow card for time-wasting but in the 79th minute Gould went in high on Romer and received a straight red card for his challenge, which also caused the obligatory sixteen man scuffle! Toby Young came on in relief of Romer after his own spell out with injury and we made the game safe in the 86th minute with a great move down the right where Oblitey collected the ball and sent it square to the supporting Craig Dundas, but he cleverly dummied the ball which sold the defender completely and left Fofahan through on goal, although he still cut back to beat someone before drilling the ball low past Rackley-Hayes from 12 yards to make it 3-1 to the Salts.

There were more chances as the ten men tried to get back into the game, but we were picking them off and a clever pass put Fofahan through, although he chose to pass instead of shooting from eight yards and it came to nothing. I don't think anyone in the ground would have blamed our winger if he had tried to get his hat trick, but it was a selfless decision and he almost turned provider again in the fourth minute of injury time when his deep delivery from the left wing was headed in by Green from six yards, only for the offside flag to be raised against him.

Still, by the end of the match we were fairly comfortable winners and whilst we will see Berks County again in the League Cup in January, we now look forward to an appearance in the Second Round, or last 128, for the first time since 2017/18 when we were edged out 3-2 after extra time at Whitstable Town. The draw comes out around Monday lunchtime and

there are some very good teams left in the draw that would be nice to avoid; Jersey Bulls, AFC Whyteleafe and Fleet Town amongst them, and I haven't even mentioned the top teams in Sussex and Kent yet (including Whitstable again!). But this is a competition in which we have a prominent history, so it's just great to still be involved in it, fifty years after that very first amazing run.

Epsom & Ewell: Faebian Witter, Ethan Brazier, Kionte Gillfillian-Waul, Adam Green (c), David Romer, Anthony Nazareth, Ali Fofahan, Craig Dundas, Carl Oblitey, Kailan North, Ethan Nelson-Roberts

Subs: Luke Miller for Gillfillian-Waul (59), Conrad Essilfie-Conduah for Nazareth (64), Toby Young for Romer (84), Luke Taylor for Brazier (91)

Report Source: www.eefconline.co.uk

What were the odds of Epsom & Ewell's 4 x 2 + 2?

18 December 2024

Combined Counties League Premier Division South									
		P	W	D	L	F	A	GD	PTS
14	Horley Town	14	3	4	7	29	34	-5	13
15	Epsom & Ewell	13	3	4	6	19	30	-11	13
16	Camberley Town	11	3	2	6	15	22	-7	11
17	Chipstead	12	3	1	8	17	35	-18	10
18	Sheerwater	13	2	3	8	21	37	-16	9
19	Balham	12	1	3	8	14	31	-17	6
20	Spelthorne Sports	13	0	4	9	8	27	-19	4

Epsom and Ewell 2-2 Fleet Town. Combined Counties League - Premier Division South. Saturday 12th October 2024.

For the fourth time in a row our match resulted in a 2-2 draw, this time against high-flying and unbeaten Fleet Town at the KGF on Saturday. We could and maybe should have handed them their first League loss of the season, having come from behind to lead with twenty minutes remaining, but a late Dan Bone equaliser ensured that we had to share the points once again, and in all fairness, the draw was the correct result.

In front of an attendance counted as 116 (yet officially and farcically advised as 148) that included around twenty of our Colts, we made just one change from the team that had drawn 2-2 at Redhill seven days previously with Niall Stillwell coming in for his first start for the club at right back for the injured Ethan Brazier, as he had done in our draw with the leaders.

We kicked off towards the Chessington end for the first time in a number of matches and Carl Oblitey had the first chance when he tried his luck from long range but was well wide, while the visitors were a lot closer with their first attempt after a deep Tom Smith cross was headed wide at the far post by Danilo Cadete. However, they took the lead in the 11th minute after a good move on the left resulted in a low ball in that was teed up nicely for Matt Surmon to drive it into the net, with a slight deflection off a defender from the edge of the penalty area.

Last season we had to play two home matches against Fleet Town after the original contest had been abandoned for an injury, but in each case an early Fleet goal was answered rapidly with an Epsom equaliser, and this time it was no different, as we only had to wait three minutes to draw level. For the second match in a row we had another own goal in our favour, as Oblitey had tried to put a through ball for Ali Fofahan on the right, but over hit his pass. However, Fofahan retrieved the ball and sent over a dangerous low ball with his left foot. With Oblitey waiting for a tap in, Ross Stepney got there first, but only succeeded in diverting the ball into his own net off the crossbar from five yards out!

Stepney then earned a yellow card for going through Fofahan, but it's not entirely clear how Fleet didn't retake the lead in the 28th minute, when a low shot was well saved by Dan O'Donovan, but the follow up from close range from Tane Caubo somehow went back across the goal, missing the target from what appeared to be extremely close range. O'Donovan made another good low save with five minutes of normal time remaining from Luke Kandi before our keeper nearly claimed an assist when his free kick went to Jason Bloor, whose shot was on target and would have crept inside the right hand post of Finley Purcell, but was blocked by a defender and we went in at the break on level terms.

Surmon headed an early chance over the bar for Fleet within a couple of minutes of the restart and the majority of the possession was with them for a while, but on the hour we began to redress the balance and Ethan Nelson-Roberts sent in a dangerous ball that was cleared just ahead of Oblitey by Smith. Caubo headed another half chance wide for the visitors, but then somewhat against the run of play we took the lead in the 70th minute. A clever pass set Fofahan away down the right, and he cut back onto his left foot before delivering a peach of a cross to Oblitey, standing unmarked and five yards out, leaving him with the simplest of headers into the net.

David Romer came on for the injured Stillwell, which led to a little bit of defensive reshuffling, but we pushed forward again and Nelson-Roberts was denied by a superb last moment tackle, before Kionte Gillfillian-Waul produced a great run and pass across the six yard box, which was just missed by a defender. It appeared that Oblitey, standing beyond him, had expected the defender to reach it and didn't quite react in time; the ball scraping off the underside of his boot from a few yards out.

A third goal then would surely have finished off Fleet Town and their unbeaten record, but good teams find a way back and although their substitute, the prolific Dan Bone, sent a header just wide, he made amends with a low shot from the edge of the area that was just out of reach for O'Donovan in the 84th minute. It's not clear to me whether Bone was on the bench for tactical reasons, or whether he was coming back from injury, but he always gives us problems and it was

fortunate for us that he didn't play the full ninety minutes.

We had one last chance in the final minute of normal time when a Fofahan free kick was headed wide by Oblitey who had done well to lose his man, but just couldn't keep the header on target, and after seven minutes of injury time the final whistle confirmed our fourth straight "Desmond".

For those who are unaware, our third 2-2 draw against Redhill last week was the first time in club history that we had even had three of these in a row, so to see a fourth consecutive one is quite bizarre. The simple facts are that we have only one loss in ten matches now, but whilst the Redhill result was a good one, particularly from 2-0 down, I don't believe I'm the only person that thinks the other three of those matches really ought to have been wins.

It's not a major criticism though. Although we are currently in 15th place now with thirteen points from the same number of games, we remain seven points clear of the two relegation positions and are in much better form than the clubs down there, who are presently Balham and Spelthorne Sports. Don't be fooled by the FA Full Time site or even the very useful Football Web Pages site though, it is two clubs and not one that will go down this season. Right now though, it definitely won't be us.

With our League position fairly secure for now, we can turn our attention and focus to a pair of cup matches now, and against the same club as Berks County visit for the League Cup tie on Tuesday and the F.A. Vase tie the following Sunday. On current form, we will be favourites to progress through these ties, but also will need to hold on to a lead when we have it, as a draw in either or both of those matches will send us to the lottery of a penalty shoot out. Additionally, we have fought back from going behind five times in the last four matches, so it would be nice to see us start a little better in the matches to come.

Epsom & Ewell: Dan O'Donovan, Niall Stillwell, Kionte Gillfillian-Waul, Adam Green (c), Callum Wilson, Anthony Nazareth, Ali Fofahan, Craig Dundas, Carl Oblitey, Jason Bloor, Ethan Nelson-Roberts

Subs: David Romer for Stillwell (71), Conrad Essilfie-Conduah for Bloor (75)

Epsom & Ewell FC draw with leaders

18 December 2024



Redhill 2-2 Epsom and Ewell. Combined Counties League - Premier Division South. Saturday 5th October 2024.

I wrote last week that matches against Redhill and Fleet Town would give us a better idea of where our likely final position would be, and against the league leading Lobsters we recovered from a slow start and a two goal deficit to send a message to the League that we are perfectly capable of holding our own in this division, as we drew 2-2 at Kiln Brow on Saturday afternoon; only the second time this season that they have dropped points.

The sharp eyed amongst you may have noticed that this was our third consecutive 2-2 draw and wondered whether this has happened before, and the answer is NEVER! This week was the eighth time in our history we had recorded a pair of 2-2 draws; the last time in 2010, but this third consecutive "Desmond" was the first time in club history that this had happened.

We made three changes from the draw against Balham on Wednesday. Callum Wilson returned to the squad after some time out injured, ahead of the absent David Romer, while Ali Fofahan came in on the right wing ahead of Luke Miller who was at a wedding and Jason Bloor made his first start for our club in place of Fabio Nunes who was on the bench, possibly in preparation for his upcoming three match suspension. However, best laid plans don't always work out and a pair of injury enforced substitutions ensured that both Nunes and Niall Stillwell were both on the field by the end of the first half.

For the opposition, former Salts Adam Grant and Tommy Smith were in the starting line up, with Gavin Quintyne joining the action in the second half, although another in Jaevon Dyer was injured. The connections weren't restricted to the playing field though, as former Coach and Caretaker Manager Matt Chapman was in the Redhill dugout, along with our former Assistant Manager Jordan Clark, now in charge at Kiln Brow. The hosts were four points clear at the top going into this match, with only Cobham taking points from them to this stage and they kicked off in front of a very decent crowd of 264, which was boosted by a number of children that were invited along, providing an example for our club how to do things like that properly.

The hosts got off to a fast start and a near post corner in the first minute was flicked just over our cross bar, before a raking ball out to the left three minutes later was followed by a great cross, although the Redhill striker wasn't quite able to get enough purchase on the ball. It would have been a superb goal if it had gone in.

Unfortunately, we didn't have to wait long before the ball was in our net as in the ninth minute Kionte Gillfillian-Waul was robbed (mugged?) around the half way line by former Salt Adam Grant, who then set Nathan Hogan off down the right. Wilson almost got across to cut the ball out, but only got half a boot on it and Hogan continued his run and he cut in and smashed the ball past Dan O'Donovan from an angle. Some say a keeper shouldn't be beaten at his near post, but to be fair, this was a very powerful strike and I'm not sure any keeper could have reacted quickly enough as the ball flew into

the roof of the net.

Gillfillian-Waul had taken a blow to the head after Grant's robust challenge and required treatment before walking off, clearly dazed and Nunes was thrown on down the left with Ethan Nelson-Roberts dropping to left back. Soon after this O'Donovan was on the deck after he had come out to head the ball clear, only to be clattered after this. There were to be a number of stoppages in this match for treatment and it was clear that Redhill were going to try and outmuscle us. They even struck a free kick directly against a retreating Carl Oblitey before trying to get him booked, which was a little classless and fortunately the referee wasn't interested in such games.

We hadn't created much to this point and Redhill were certainly worth their lead at this stage, but we had our first real opportunity in the 34th minute when a free kick in was met by a Craig Dundas header and as the hosts failed to clear, Wilson knocked it goalwards and it required the intervention of a defender to hook it clear before it crossed the line. For those wondering, it was about a foot away, but did have the momentum to go in, so it was an important clearance.

Regrettably we were unable to build on that chance as our opponents extended their lead just three minutes later with a right wing cross to the far post that was met with a downward header. It wasn't the greatest or most powerful of contacts, yet it still squirmed past O'Donovan who may not have had much chance with the first goal, but will certainly be annoyed with this one.

At 2-0 down this was an important test of our resilience. We really needed something back before the half time break and that's exactly what happened, and from an unlikely source too. In the 43rd minute we won a free kick out wide on the right. Adam Green usually takes most of our set pieces, but appears to have reduced his workload in that area and Fofahan sent the delivery in, but before it could reach one of our players the Redhill Captain Eoin Fraser jumped higher and diverted the ball superbly past Luke Roberts in the Lobsters net from about eight yards out.

We were to play an extra five and a half minutes of injury time but plenty would still happen before the break. Wilson picked up a booking for a foul before Fraser took one for his team by bringing down Bloor as he threatened to break through. In the third minute of injury time we were forced into another replacement as Stillwell came on at right back in place of Brazier who has struggled at times this season with his hamstring and after feeling it was tight, had to make way. Finally, we had the unusual sight of another former Salt in Tommy Smith, cropping up on the right wing to send a decent cross over, although the header wasn't on target, and after O'Donovan had comfortably gathered Ethan Ford's low shot the players finally went for their half time break.

Our boys came out with a little more belief and we had an early chance in the 50th minute when Oblitey saw his shot blocked with the loose ball being struck only just over the bar by Wilson from the edge of the area. Redhill's lead looked vulnerable and a great ball over the top of the defender from Stillwell set Fofahan through on goal before he was brought down by Joe Dyett. Or so everyone else in the ground thought. The referee was clearly awaiting an indication from the Assistant, but it never came and as Fofahan lay crumpled on the ground there was a lot of protestation, particularly from Bloor who was treading a very fine line on the sin-bin rule. It's possible the referee gave him a little more leniency because he too thought that his colleague had got it wrong!

Bloor then told the Assistant to concentrate just ahead of our next free kick, which was ironic as our man was then pulled up for a foul! However, the pressure continued and as we pressed, Oblitey collected the ball and guided it over the advancing Roberts from ten yards to level the match up at 2-2 in the 58th minute.

The hosts looked rather wobbly at this stage and Nunes then got away on the left wing and his delivery found Fofahan just five yards out, but Roberts spread himself to make a superb block of his strike, and he was up quickly to repel the follow up from Green before Bloor's attempt was blocked by a defender. Somehow Redhill survived this and Roberts continued his one man defiance by heading clear from outside of his area before being well positioned to save another strike from Fofahan. Both Bloor and Nunes picked up yellow cards as our threat began to wane and in the final minutes the hosts finished the stronger of the two sides as they made a belated attempt to claim a winner that they didn't deserve. Stillwell cleared from a dangerous position and then Anthony Nazareth produced a great tackle to dispossess a Redhill forward as they pushed, but without success.

Overall, we were well worth at least a point and it looked to me as though we just gave our opponents a bit too much respect to start with. Maybe we do need to start better, as this was the fourth time in eight days that we had gone behind, all in the first half. We have still only scored two League goals in the opening forty-five minutes all season, and one of those was the own goal in this match! However, we didn't lose any of the recent games where we trailed and now have just one defeat in our last nine matches. Another difficult challenge awaits us when Fleet Town visit on Saturday, but another good result will set us up for the League Cup and F.A. Vase ties at home to Berks County. Yes we are playing them at home in both cups!

The final word today goes to the Redhill programme. As a programme editor for thirteen seasons with nearly a dozen top ten finishes in the National awards, I think I'm qualified enough to comment that this was undoubtedly the best I have seen at this level all season, and it is an example to all that a few random photos and "static" pages moved into different places each week do not make for interesting reading, as you need actual articles to go with them, and at just £2 it is far better value than the others I've seen this season. If Redhill go up this season I'll miss their programme, although on this performance it appears to me as though Redhill still have much work to do, regardless of their current League position.

Epsom & Ewell: Dan O'Donovan, Ethan Brazier, Kionte Gillfillian-Waul, Adam Green (c), Callum Wilson, Anthony Nazareth, Ali Fofahan, Craig Dundas, Carl Oblitey, Jason Bloor, Ethan Nelson-Roberts

Subs: Fabio Nunes for Gillfillian-Waul (10), Niall Stillwell for Brazier (45+3)

Report Source: www.eefconline.co.uk

Spirit and chaos in equal measure

18 December 2024



Balham 2-2 Epsom and Ewell FC. Combined Counties League - Premier Division South. Wednesday 2nd October 2024.

We secured a 2-2 draw against lowly placed Balham on Wednesday evening after coming from behind twice with a pair of goals from Captain Adam Green. This result was more notable when you realise that we played with ten men from the 27th minute.

Our club somewhat naively advertised this match as “thrilling” even before it took place, in some rather strange, almost desperate attempt to get supporters to come and watch, but they were coming anyway and 81 were present, many of which had made the journey over to Tooting & Mitcham United’s Imperial Fields, where Balham currently ground share, to watch this contest on a pitch that had dealt comfortably with all the recent rain and a match just twenty four hours previously.

However, this match was definitely not “thrilling”. It was intriguing and even eventful at times with plenty of cards issued to both teams, but it was also bitty, stop-start, niggly and lacking in quality as a clearly low on confidence “home” team were given the one man advantage and took the lead twice, but couldn’t hold on in either case, and over the ninety minutes, I felt that we were the better team and would have won this match, had we retained a full complement of players.

This match was our second consecutive away League match played at the same venue, following our win over Tooting & Mitcham United three weeks previously, which was only the ninth time that this has happened in club history, and the first since 1998. We only made one change with David Romer keeping his place after he had come on for Reece Tierney midway through the second half of Saturday’s match against Horley Town. Tierney was on the bench but would not be involved in this contest.

An early Green free kick was punched away by John Ross in the Balham goal before our opponents sent an early volley over our crossbar that they probably should have scored. However, on the quarter hour mark we did the same after Ethan Nelson-Roberts set up Anthony Nazareth but he blazed over from just ten yards with just the keeper to beat.

The game took a serious turn in the 27th minute when Fabian Nunes won a free kick in the middle of the park, but despite having won this he inexplicably chose to kick out at his opponent in front of the referee, who had no choice but to issue the red card. This will keep him out for the next three matches from next Monday, meaning he will be ineligible for both the League Cup tie and our F.A. Vase tie in addition to the League match against Fleet Town on Saturday week.

Eventually the free kick was taken and although Nelson-Roberts was somewhat harshly pulled up for a foul, it’s still worth reporting as his header produced a world class save from Ross, who somehow guided the downward header back up and over the bar despite being on the ground. A truly incredible save, even if the goal wouldn’t have counted. Ross wouldn’t have known that at the time.

Inevitably, Balham were then spurred on by the present of the extra man and a long range strike from an angle by Idir Kermoud was tipped away from the top corner by Dan O’Donovan. The corner was half cleared, only for Carl Oblitey to concede a foul out wide and from this in the 36th minute, the delivery to the near post was headed powerfully past our keeper by Maxwell Emmery from just ten yards out to give them the lead.

Things looked grim at this point. Balham had only one League win all season and that had come way back on opening day 10th August against the other team in the bottom two in Spelthorne Sports. Fortunately, and maybe crucially, we were back on terms soon after. There was a coming together between Rayjon Moore for Balham and our own Ethan Brazier, both of whom picked up yellow cards, but from the long O’Donovan free kick, Oblitey headed the ball on and a defender missed his clearance, leaving Green through and he slotted the ball with his weaker left foot beyond the exposed Ross into the far corner from just eight yards out in the 39th minute.

Romer held a player back and picked up a yellow card just before the break and we nearly started the second half with a bang as Luke Miller broke through with just thirty seconds on the clock, but from 18 yards out he guided his shot about a foot wide of the Balham keeper’s left hand post. Balham then seized on this to grab the lead once again in the 52nd minute and whilst Moore was the scorer, this goal came about mostly as a result of a superb free kick from the Balham Captain Luke Hedges, who curled the ball towards the top corner from twenty yards, striking the underside of the crossbar and leaving Moore the simplest of jobs to tap the ball across the line from a few feet out with O’Donovan still on the ground. Some marking would have been nice, but it’s the old adage of following the ball in, because you never know if the ball will come back to you!

Again though, the home side weren’t able to hold on for long and just ten minutes after conceding, we were level. Nelson-Roberts did well, while positioned out on the right wing for a change and his pinpoint cross was headed in from close range by Green who outjumped his defender and gave Ross no chance.

The remaining half an hour contained very little to write about, although Hedges picked up a pair of yellow cards in quick

succession to reduce Balham to ten men in the final minute of normal time. Ross made another fine save to keep our substitute Jason Bloor out with an outstretched leg in the closing minutes after another substitute Ali Fofahan had set him up, and in the final seconds of the match an O'Donovan free kick from the half way line was met by the head of Green just six yards out but unchallenged, although Ross was down well to prevent our Captain claiming a hat trick.

And maybe we would have deserved the win too. Make no mistake, if Balham continue at this rate, they will go down. An indication of their ambition came after the final whistle when Ross commented to some supporters standing near to us that "at least we didn't lose". I'm not sure how they expect to escape the drop if they are unable to take three points from one of the teams in the bottom half, when they are at home, leading twice and with a player advantage!

From our perspective, we showed plenty of work rate and the draw moved us up to twelfth place, which equals the best position we have been in the League since the opening day of last season. We have now lost just one match in our last eight and this was also the first point we had ever gained against Balham who had beaten us in all four previous meetings. However, discipline needs to be improved amid a flurry of cards late in the match, that if I counted correctly, will leave both clubs on a charge of failing to control their players, with the obligatory heavy Surrey FA fine. For sure the referee appeared to lose a some control of the game, but the players weren't helping him and the game became quite attritional.

Sometimes "attritional" is a good thing. Our players certainly needed to battle across every inch of the field, having lost the man so early and we showed lots of spirit in fighting back to equalise twice. However, in that final half hour the football suffered as a result at a time when I felt Balham were there for the taking. Our next two encounters against the high-flying Redhill and Fleet Town will give us a better idea of where our final position in the table will be, but based on this match, and whilst more points are obviously required still, there are currently no dangers of relegation for our boys, even if it was only a point claimed on the night.

Epsom & Ewell: Dan O'Donovan, Ethan Brazier, Kionte Gillfillian-Waul, Adam Green (c), David Romer, Anthony Nazareth, Luke Miller, Craig Dundas, Carl Oblitey, Fabio Nunes, Ethan Nelson-Roberts

Subs: Ali Fofahan for Oblitey (82), Jason Bloor for Nelson-Roberts (86)

Report Source: www.eefconline.co.uk

Drawing conclusions in Epsom and Ewell v Horley tie

18 December 2024



Epsom and Ewell FC 2-2 Horley Town. Combined Counties League - Premier Division South. Saturday 28th September 2024.

An entertaining contest took place at King George's Field on Saturday and although the visitors took a share of the points from this 2-2 draw with a late equaliser, it would have been harsh on them if they had lost, as both teams played their part in a fully committed and competitive encounter.

An official attendance of 94 was advised for this match, even though only 77 were counted half way through the first half, but maybe an inflation of the crowd was inevitable this week, following the poor number of attendees for the midweek win over Hilltop. Either way, our team went into this match in good form, having won five of our last six matches and bearing this in mind, the figure remains a disappointing one.

We made three changes to our line up after the win over Hilltop with Anthony Nazareth coming in for his first start in place of the injured Toby Young, while further forward Fabio Nunes came back in ahead of Luke Taylor. The final change was with Dan O'Donovan back in goal ahead of Faebian Witter, who was destined to be on the bench until he injured himself in the warm up. He was then replaced in the line up just before the kick off by young defender David Romer. He was joined there by fit again Ali Fofahan, following his injury at Tooting & Mitcham United and also Jason Bloor who had scored on his debut before missing the last couple of matches due to a holiday.

The visitors were first to fashion an opportunity when a right wing cross was met with a far post volley, but the ball struck a defender and was cleared. Horley dragged a free kick wide from a good position, but in the ninth minute we created a good chance of our own as Carl Oblitey, showing no effects of the hamstring twinge he suffered four days previously, beat two men and as he drew other defenders towards him, he sent the pass to the right where Luke Miller was in a large amount of space. Our tricky winger would usually bury this chance, but on this occasion he lashed it straight at George Hyde in the Horley goal from just inside the penalty area and he parried the ball to safety.

Then just a minute later a visiting defender sliced the ball straight into Oblitey's path, but he also sent his shot too close to Hyde, who blocked the ball up in the air and was alert to get up quickly and claw the ball away as it threatened to cross the goal line.

We were now well and truly in this match, yet surprisingly we then went behind in the 18th minute and it might well have been avoidable. Nazareth cut his head in a collision and had to leave the field to await the arrival of a clean shirt, which for some reason was still back in the changing room and he was still off the field when a right wing delivery was met by a close range header from former Salt Lewis Pearch that gave O'Donovan no chance.

Another cross was just headed wide by Mason Seagroatt as the visitors threatened to get a second goal and they then sent a low volley just wide of O'Donovan's right hand post. The frustrating thing about this last chance was that we had chosen to attack before losing the ball, yet by kicking the ball out of play, we would have been up to eleven men again. Instead, Nazareth was left standing there on the sideline and waiting to come back on, so to have conceded at this stage would have been a really serious error. Finally after nearly seven minutes off the field, our bandaged up defender finally returned to the field of play. It was all a bit Sunday League!

But with eleven men again we threatened to level things up when Oblitey sent Miller through in the left hand channel, from where his powerful shot just clipped a defender, sending the ball onto the crossbar and out for a corner. Then from the Adam Green corner, the ball skipped straight through everyone before hitting Ethan Nelson-Roberts at the far post only a couple of yards out, and as the ball rebounded back off him and into the danger area, Nazareth skied the ball from just eight yards out.

Horley were also making chances and a good ball down the right sat up nicely for Pearch to strike a volley towards goal, which O'Donovan just plucked out of the air. Then we had a bit of an issue after Nazareth was accused of stepping on a player. Obviously, we were a long way from the action, and he may well have caught him, but the referee either decided that it was accidental, or maybe he didn't get a great view of it, so no further action was taken. From the subsequent free kick O'Donovan got his hands to the ball but couldn't hold on and required a defensive clearance before we could relax. We nearly equalised right on the half when a deep Nelson-Roberts cross was met by a volley from Miller, but it was from a narrow angle and the ball zipped across the six yard area and out for a goal kick.

A goal down at the break, and with the knowledge that we had missed some really good chances and still hadn't managed to score in the opening half of any of our ten League matches this season, it was important that we didn't concede again, but it nearly happened in the 50th minute when Pearch set up another former Salt in Warren Colman, but the shot at goal had the sting taken out of it by the covering Ethan Brazier and the ball dribbled tamely through to O'Donovan.

The visitors continued to seek a second and a loose header from Reece Tierney forced Nazareth to try and reach the second ball, which he failed to do; colliding with a Horley striker and picking up a yellow card for his troubles. Fortunately, Aaron Moody's free kick from twenty yards was straightforward for O'Donovan.

After this wobbly start to the second half we began to get a foothold in the contest and Oblitey set up Miller for a low shot, although Hyde made a decent save. Then Romer came on for his debut in place of Tierney. It was odd to see the new boy taking the field as the first substitute, seeing as he hadn't even been in the sixteen man squad originally, so I have to assume that Tierney had suffered an injury.

He didn't have much defending to do for a while as we continued to press. Nunes saw his shot take a slight deflection before Hyde was able to palm it beyond the far post on the hour and from the corner Nunes then saw his low shot blocked, but not held by Hyde, although he was up quickly to block the close range effort from Nelson-Roberts just wide. Finally, from the second corner, the ball reached Miller at the far post and his pinpoint cross back into the danger area was met by Oblitey eight yards out with a thumping header that flew into the net in the 61st minute for our equaliser.

We were well on top at this stage and Nelson-Roberts did really well on the left to turn his man and run in, sending an early delivery for the incoming Oblitey, but he had more time than he realised and snatched at the ball, slicing it wide from eighteen yards. Then Nunes saw his shot blocked by Hyde's legs and although it sat up kindly for Green, his header didn't have enough power on it to beat Hyde.

We continued to attack and Miller received a great pass from midfield, only for his cross to be just ahead of Oblitey. Miller was then caught by a defender after his delivery but the referee decided that it wasn't worth a penalty, even though our man was adamant that he had been fouled. Fortunately, it wouldn't make much difference as Bloor had come on in the 71st minute and within 120 seconds he made the breakthrough for his second goal in his second match. It was a nice move, coming from a throw on that Green flicked on, and Oblitey cleverly dummied, which gave Bloor a bit of space and he drilled the ball in at the near post from the edge of the area with Hyde unsighted to give us the lead.

Craig Dundas was next to test Hyde, and although the shot was well saved, Miller then blazed the loose ball high and wide from fairly close in. As time began to tick down though, Horley started to make some chances. Brazier picked up a yellow card for a foul that led to a bit of handbags between the players. One delivery whizzed across our six yard box, before an 85th minute Matt Rapson cross to the far post was met by a looping header from Seagroatt that O'Donovan couldn't reach and Horley were level at 2-2.

Both teams had one good chance in the closing minutes. Horley sent a ball in from the left that was just ahead of their incoming striker, while substitute Fofahan was put through on goal, but Hyde was out quickly to block the shot. Overall though, a draw was a fair result, and whilst the visiting keeper Hyde was the busier of the two keepers, our lack of clinicality meant that we hadn't done enough to deserve the win and we now face a trip to Tooting & Mitcham United on Wednesday where we will face Balham in our next attempt to get three points.

The final word goes to the referee Mr Sotimirin. I have not always been a fan of some of his performances, going all the way back to 2008, but he let the game flow nicely and although the players occasionally threatened to take advantage of his leniency at times, his handling ensured that this was one of the most entertaining matches of the season so far and credit is due for this.

Epsom & Ewell: Dan O'Donovan, Ethan Brazier, Kionte Gillfillian-Waul, Adam Green (c), Reece Tierney, Anthony Nazareth, Luke Miller, Craig Dundas, Carl Oblitey, Fabio Nunes, Ethan Nelson-Roberts

Subs: David Romer for Tierney (59), Jason Bloor for Nunes (71), Ali Fofahan for Oblitey (88)

Report Source: www.eefconline.co.uk

Epsom top the hill 4 - 1

18 December 2024

Epsom and Ewell 4-1 Hilltop. Combined Counties League Cup - First Round. Tuesday 24th September 2024.

Two goals, two assists and a position on the Hall of Fame for being one of our fifty top goal scorers in club history! Not a bad day's work for Luke Miller, who scored his thirty-fifth and thirty-sixth goals for the Salts, whilst also providing the deliveries for our first two goals, scored by Ethan Nelson-Roberts as we swept aside the challenge from Hilltop FC by four goals to one in the First Round of the Combined Counties League Cup at the KGF on Tuesday night. Hilltop are a club of mostly Somalian origin and currently play in the North Division of our League where they, like us had registered exactly a point per game, so a close contest was expected.

The scoreline might indicate that this was a comfortable win, but it was a slightly flattering one as possession was fairly even over the ninety minutes, although we were far more dangerous in front of goal where the visitors looked a little wobbly, and we appeared far more solid at the back. In fact, we are starting to look like quite a good team right now and even the early loss of Carl Oblitey to a hamstring injury didn't derail our attacking threat in this match.

We made three changes to our starting line-up following our mostly comfortable victory over Seaford Town on Saturday with Reece Tierney replacing the injured Stefan Aiwone and getting his first start since suffering a head injury against Jersey Bulls, whilst Luke Taylor also came in further forward for Fabian Nunes who is still working his way back from injury and was on the bench. Also watching from the sidelines was Dan O'Donovan as Faebian Witter was given a rare outing between the posts.

The visitors started brightly and passed the ball around nicely. Early indications were that this might be a long night, especially when Oblitey limped off, although he was replaced mostly as a precaution, with a more important League fixture coming up on Saturday. We conceded one of many free kicks around the edge of the area, but Witter was alert to reach the strike from Abukar Mohammed on the 15 minute mark.

And a minute later we were ahead. A pass out to Miller resulted in a dangerous low delivery that just eluded two of our players coming in, but was met just beyond the far post by Nelson-Roberts, who was too strong for his full back and slotted the ball past Hansel Coelho at his near post from about four yards out. Witter made another low save but we extended our lead in the 31st minute when Miller provided another deep delivery and Nelson-Roberts got ahead of his man to head the ball downwards and up into the net, just inside the post from around five yards out.

Tierney was alert to block a shot from the visitors but in the 35th minute we conceded in rather odd circumstances. It was hard to see exactly what happened, but it looked as though Witter came out wide to clear a ball and struck it against a team mate, leaving the easiest of finishes for Tahir Showkat to roll the loose ball into the empty net.

We responded well to the goal though. Substitute Sean Anderson made a good run, forcing Coelho into a save from a narrow angle, and although the ball fell nicely for Adam Green, his shot from eighteen yards went across the goal and out for a goal kick. However, in the 45th minute Green was largely responsible for our third goal as he put Coelho under severe pressure and his clearance went straight to Miller on the edge of the penalty area, and he guided the ball straight back past the keeper into the far corner of the goal to give us a 3-1 lead at the interval.

This goal placed Miller into the club Hall of Fame. For those who are unaware of this at: www.eefconline.co.uk it shows the top fifty players in club history in terms of appearances, goals and clean sheets. Miller thus joined a pair of players on 35 goals in our former Player/Coach Sid Faggetter who scored his goals in just forty matches in the 1950/51 season and former Captain and appearance record holder Graham Morris who scored them over 658 appearances from 1990-2004!

Seven minutes into the second half he had surpassed both of these players with his second of the night and again Green was the provider as he robbed a defender and set Miller up in stride, from where he ran in and clipped the ball across Coelho into the bottom corner.

With almost half of the match remaining, it might come as a surprise that this goal was the last of the match, although there were more chances for both sides. Nunes had been on the field for seconds when he had a shot blocked by a defender, while Witter was able to pick a shot out that was heading for the top corner. Another free kick from Mohammed forced Witter into his best save of the night, getting down low to push the ball away and then being ready to make a second save from an angle as the ball came back in. Our keeper needed a little help from a defender after failing to hold the next free kick from Benet Hashani, before a left wing cross from the visitors bounced off the top of our crossbar and away.

We then wasted a corner, which led to a rapid counter from Hilltop, but Witter was able to make another good low save to keep the score at 4-1. At the other end Coelho nearly dropped a shot from Nunes over the goal line after parrying it up in the air, but was able to recover without serious alarm and the only other concern came when substitute Niall Stillwell sent a header forward on the left where Coelho got to the ball to clear just ahead of Nelson-Roberts, who felt the full force of his challenge and limped off in the 88th minute. Electing not to put O'Donovan into the outfield, we had used our other four substitutes and so finished the remainder of the match with ten men.

The visitors, as you might expect with the player advantage, held the balance of the possession in those final minutes and another substitute Anthony Nazareth had to head the ball off the goal line after Witter had punched the ball against an

opponent which had then looped up, while Ethan Brazier picked up a late yellow card for two fouls in quick succession. Nunes had the final word with a swerving strike from thirty yards, but Coelho kept the ball out and the final whistle confirmed our progress to the last 32 of the competition, which is scheduled to take place around the middle of October.

This was our fifth win in six matches and it was just a shame that only 40 spectators were in attendance; our smallest home crowd since February 2020 when we were playing our home matches at the remote High Road ground in Chipstead. I was provided with various excuses for the small number, ranging from Sky TV (when isn't there a match on Sky?) and that they had been refused permission by the League to reduce the entry cost, but I don't buy this at all. The League has a minimum entry rule, but we already charge well over that amount and could easily have reduced it at any time without requiring permission.

Quite simply, there is always an excuse or something being "spun" at our club, and there remains no sincere attempt by anyone in an official position to get more of our own supporters in. There are a number of things they could do, and engaging with the ones they currently have would be a start; something they have failed to do over the last three years. A few random pictures of player huddles on Instagram might get a few "likes", while a few Colts coming along on a few Saturdays might boost the numbers artificially, but neither help our short term plight. Three long-serving supporters were present at this match, who have in recent years all been on the Club Committee and were keen to help, yet were forced off because they held some different opinions to those who do not want to hear them. This remains a huge mistake by those currently running the club, who seem to think that they are not answerable to supporters. Whilst a new ground, if it ever occurred, would undoubtedly bring in new support for a while, you have to ask how the club would retain them for more than a few months once the novelty has worn off.

We host Horley Town on Saturday in an important League match; a club that have engaged with their local community in recent months and had two attendances well over 500 at the end of last season because they visited and invited all their local school children in with their parents. Whilst it is slightly more difficult for our club to do this as we can't recoup anything for the bar and catering, a crowd of this number would make a huge difference. Horley's attendances have been similar to ours in recent seasons, so there is no reason why we couldn't adopt a similar idea, and right now they would see a good team in decent form, which always helps!

Epsom & Ewell: Faebian Witter, Ethan Brazier, Kionte Gillfillian-Waul, Adam Green (c), Reece Tierney, Toby Young, Luke Miller, Craig Dundas, Carl Oblitey, Luke Taylor, Ethan Nelson-Roberts

Subs: Sean Anderson for Oblitey (13), Fabian Nunes for Taylor (54), Anthony Nazareth for Young (69), Niall Stillwell for Dundas (81)

Report Source: www.eefconline.co.uk

Late Seaford rally too late to knock Epsom out

18 December 2024



Epsom and Ewell FC 3-2 Seaford Town FC. Combined Counties League - Premier Division South. Saturday 21st September 2024.

Although ultimately irrelevant, two Seaford Town goals in the 86th and 88th minutes would be the memory of this match that most supporters will have taken as they headed home, which was a pity as this was the most dominant performance I had seen from an Epsom and Ewell team since we returned to Step Five in 2023. We won this F.A. Vase contest by three goals to two in the end, although 5-0 wouldn't have been a score line that the visitors could complain about. When considering that they brought a supporters coach to this match, and that we had around a dozen children in the ground as mascots, together with a number of parents, the attendance of 78 on a hot sunny afternoon was an extremely disappointing one for such a prestigious match.

Two changes were made to our starting eleven after Tuesday's defeat to high-flying Knaphill, with Ethan Nelson-Roberts and fit again Fabio Nunes coming in for Luke Taylor and the absent Sean Anderson. Jason Bloor put in a fine appearance from the bench in that match and may have started here, had he not been on holiday! Taylor dropped to the bench where he was alongside a pair of debutants in Niall Stillwell and Anthony Nazareth. Stillwell spent much of last season at Guildford City, where he stood out despite their disappointing season. He is also my boy's P.E. teacher! Nazareth played for us briefly in pre-season but has now joined after spending time at Cobham. Both would make their debuts later in the match.

We went into this match in fairly good form with three wins from our last four matches, but Seaford Town were top of the Southern Combination Division One and were expected to put up a decent fight, even if their main priority is probably a run at promotion. We also carried a strange statistic into this encounter, as we had not scored in the first half of the twelve competitive matches we had played so far, which equalled a record set way back in 1982, starting with our famous F.A. Trophy match at home to Altrincham and concluding with a 2-1 win at St Albans City in our thirteenth match. What we would give to be playing those sort of teams again!

We nearly consigned that stat to the history books as early as the fourth minute as Nunes set up Carl Oblitey for a good

strike from close range, but he sent the ball flying into the car park at the Tolworth end. Adam Green then struck a tapped free kick from Nunes wide from twenty yards. The next chance came when Oblitey did well on the right and his delivery was met by a brave low dive from Nelson-Roberts whose header went just wide.

We were completely dominant at this stage and a Green corner was met by a header from Stefan Aiwone that keeper Wester Young did well to keep out before Nunes sent the loose ball wide from only a few yards out. Young is advancing in years now but was part of the strong Molesey line up that used to play us around fifteen years ago before moving to East Sussex and playing for Hailsham Town against us in recent seasons. Young punched away another good delivery from Green before Oblitey finally got the ball past him from Nelson-Roberts' low left wing delivery, only to see the Assistant's flag raised against him.

Nelson-Roberts then hit the crossbar from twenty yards out with a curling strike from out wide and Oblitey then cushioned a header back for Green to strike at goal, but Young parried the ball away to safety. We were half an hour into the match before the visitors even had a half chance when a deep cross had Dan O'Donovan scrambling and he just clawed the ball away just when it looked like it might drop over him, although was relieved to see the incoming striker send the loose ball way over the bar from not that far out.

Aiwone couldn't get his header on target from a Green corner and Luke Miller was sending in some dangerous deliveries, but it was becoming apparent that we were approaching the half time mark with another blank. Just as I was preparing my half time tweet to the masses, I had to re-write it as Miller's ball in was sliced into the far top corner of his own net by the Seaford Captain Ryan Knight from about eight yards in the 47th minute and there was no time to restart the first half. Technically, we did still set a new club record in terms of 619 minutes without scoring in the first half, even if we didn't quite register that thirteenth consecutive half time duck!

But 1-0 was the least we deserved, and it arguably could have been much more. We had to change things around almost immediately after the restart when Aiwone hurt his knee and had to be replaced by Nazareth in the 48th minute. It didn't stop the flow of traffic though and we extended our lead in the 52nd minute with a superb defence splitting pass from Green that Miller ran onto in the right wing channel. He drew the keeper and struck at goal, only to find a defender had just extended a foot to block the shot, but it fell kindly for him and with Young committed to blocking the previous effort, our tricky winger had the simple job of sliding the ball at an angle into the empty net from eight yards. Miller has now scored thirty-four goals for our club and is one away from joining the club Hall of Fame which shows the top fifty goal scorers in our history and contains some names that regular supporters will know well, like Jamie Byatt, Kyle Hough, Robbie Burns, Daryl Cooper-Smith and Dale Marvell, not to mention the top man himself Tommy Tuite. It is quite an elite group!

Toby Young had a chance from a corner, but the ball hit his back as he jumped and the ball just looped over the bar, before Green saw his strong shot cleared for a corner. Craig Dundas then sent his header wide from that Miller corner as we continued to boss the game completely.

We had a scare in the 62nd minute when O'Donovan, who was probably a bit bored by his lack of action to this point, started to make a number of incursions outside his penalty area and from one of these, his headed clearance just went up in the air behind him and Young had to react quickly to head the ball clear of our goal under pressure from a visiting striker.

But this was an isolated foray into our half and we scored a third goal in the 65th minute when a deep Green corner was reached at full stretch by Nelson-Roberts at the far post. His shot struck the foot of Young's left hand post, but rebounded kindly across goal, where Nazareth reacted first to poke the ball over the line from a couple of yards out.

Frustration boiled over for the visitors and Lewis Hallett picked up a yellow card for going straight through the back of Oblitey, although our centre-forward then picked up a card of his own just a few minutes later, although it wasn't clear what for, and even Oblitey seemed perplexed by the decision. Nazareth then sent a header wide as we continued to do most of the work.

However, in the 86th minute the visitors received a lifeline when a long ball out of defence was reached by Josh Wright ahead of O'Donovan who had come a long way out of his goal, leaving their man with the simple job of putting the ball into the empty net. Although it might look as though O'Donovan was at fault here, it is important to question why he felt the need to come so far out of his goal so often in this match. It's worth noting that Dundas had by this time left the field and we just didn't seem to be so organised after that point. Two minutes later, a right wing cross was turned in unmarked at the far post by Matt Holland to make the score 3-2.

We still had chances as a couple of substitutes got involved. Taylor sent a header back across Young, only to see the ball drop inches beyond the Seaford crossbar, while Felipe De Lima was booked for an unconvincing fall just outside the penalty area that the referee correctly saw as simulation. In fact, De Lima was probably a little lucky to stay on the field as he clattered into a visiting player in the 96th minute and could easily have picked up a second yellow card. Although the whistle blew as the Seaford player landed, fortunately it was to signify full time!

So it's now four wins in five matches for our boys and we remain in good form ahead of our League Cup First Round tie at home to Hilltop on Tuesday. It's also good to report that discipline was much better, following the issues from last Tuesday and now we have to focus a little better on concentration for the full ninety minutes, or it may cost us next time. Overall though, this was a strong performance against a team that I thought would push us far more than they did and obviously credit goes to our boys for restricting them as well as we did.

Monday's F.A. Vase First Round draw will be released around lunchtime and, as always, we'll have full details available within minutes of the draw being released on Twitter / X at @EEFConline and soon after that at the Epsom and Ewell FC Archive website at: www.eefconline.co.uk That match will take place on Saturday 19th October, unless we are drawn at home, in which case it will probably be the Friday evening as our landlords are at home that day in a League match. That means our next Vase match will take place just one week before the fifty year anniversary of our first ever F.A. Vase

match in 1974/75, which ended with an appearance at Wembley Stadium in the first ever Final. Wouldn't it be nice to have a Vase run to match that!

Epsom & Ewell: Dan O'Donovan, Ethan Brazier, Kionte Gillfillian-Waul, Adam Green (c), Toby Young, Stefan Aiwone, Luke Miller, Craig Dundas, Carl Oblitey, Fabio Nunes, Ethan Nelson-Roberts

Subs: Anthony Nazareth for Aiwone (48), Felipe De Lima for Nunes (63), Niall Stillwell for Young (76), Luke Taylor for Dundas (83)

Report Source: www.eefconline.co.uk

A hat-trick of wins for Epsom and Ewell FC

18 December 2024



Tooting & Mitcham United 0-2 Epsom and Ewell FC. Combined Counties League - Premier Division South. Saturday 14th September 2024.

After a horrible start to the season with five straight League defeats, it appears that we have now turned the tide as we recorded our third win in a row, all of which have come without conceding a single goal. This 2-0 win at Tooting & Mitcham United's Imperial Fields was arguably the best all round performance under Warren Burton's reign, as we nullified any home threat in the opening half an hour before going on to take control of the remaining sixty minutes and leaving the mostly home crowd of 177 severely subdued by the final whistle.

As always, there are some good stats we can pull out of this fine victory. This was the first win for our club on this day since a 6-0 home London League win over Carshalton Athletic in 1938, and it was also our first ever away win on 14th September in our history. Additionally, this was our fourth visit to play Tooting & Mitcham United since they left Sandy Lane and they have yet to beat us there. Finally, the last time we recorded three straight League wins without conceding was in January 2020.

We made two changes to the line up from Saturday's late win at Camberley Town with Callum Wilson being replaced by Stefan Aiwone and Luke Taylor replacing the injured Axel Kodjo. For the home side, under the Management of former Salt Jamie Byatt and Club Captain Alex Penfold, we came up against two other former Salts in the starting line-up in Mario Quiassaca and Toby McKimm.

The opening exchanges were slightly in favour of the home side, but consisted mainly of long range efforts clearing our crossbar. Toby Young blocked an early strike that looked like it was on target, but by and large our keeper Dan O'Donovan had very little to do between the posts. We may have been nullifying the home attacks, but weren't creating too much of our own to start with, but that all changed just after the half hour mark when Ali Fofahan did well down the left before pulling the ball back to Carl Oblitey whose powerful shot from twelve yards was kept out well by McKimm. This heralded the start of a good spell for us and Adam Green cleverly set up Luke Miller down the left, where his pull back to Oblitey was also struck on target, although he was denied by McKimm again.

A Green corner bounced off the top of the Tooting & Mitcham crossbar and away, and whilst the home side forced some corners too, ours looked more dangerous. McKimm dropped a deep delivery at the feet of Aiwone, but was able to collect the loose ball before our man had realised what was happening just behind him. Then Ethan Brazier got away on the overlap and his right wing cross was met by the head of Oblitey who saw the ball tipped over the bar by McKimm. I don't think the header was going in, but it could have gone anywhere if it had struck the bar, which it looked like it might, so it was an important intervention by the home keeper. Our opponents fashioned a couple of dangerous moves just before the break, but Kionte Gillfillian-Waul was there in time to clear a ball in from the left before it would have been tapped in at the far post. Then a short corner and delivery to the near post was headed just wide of O'Donovan's right hand post, but it would have been harsh had we gone in trailing at half time, which ended goalless.

We had completed the opening forty-five minutes in the ascendancy, even though our failure to score in the first half has now been extended to eleven matches; one short of our club record set in 1981/82. Still, the players had only been back on the field for just ninety seconds when we broke through. Fofahan sent an aimless looking throw towards Oblitey, who was well marked, but he out-jumped two defenders to head the ball back to Green. He then gave the ball back to Fofahan out on the touchline, from where he ran at goal, beating a man on the way and then drilling a low shot just inside McKimm's right hand post from the edge of the area in the 47th minute.

O'Donovan had to make a fairly comfortable save from distance, but we were soon back on the attack and in the 57th minute we extended our lead after one of our corners wasn't properly cleared and the ball pinged around in the penalty area before striking Fofahan and looping up kindly for Oblitey to nod the loose ball past McKimm from just four yards to claim the goal his performance deserved and to give us a decisive two goal cushion.

Although the scoring was finished for the day, we continued to press. On the hour Miller put Green through on the left, but McKimm was out quickly to block his shot on goal with Taylor firing the rebound wide from just inside the area. Then

Green picked up what looked like a harsh yellow card, although it might have been for persistent fouls. From their subsequent free kick, a deep delivery was headed back into the path of a striker, but from twelve yards he scuffed his shot and the grateful O'Donovan was able to make the straightforward save.

We should have scored a third goal after Gillfillian-Waul and Fofahan combined well on the left, with the delivery being side-footed wide by Green from only eight yards before Fofahan intercepted a pass moments later and set up Oblitey who laid the ball into the path of Miller whose powerful shot was directed straight at McKimm, who blocked it up and away.

The game started to get a little niggly and a couple of yellow cards were waved in the direction of frustrated home players for lunges and their day was summed up around ten minutes from time with a shot on goal that was so high it cleared the stand roof. If you've been to Imperial Fields, you'll realise how high that is!

I've referred before to there being very few substitutions in recent matches, and again we went for over 80 minutes with the starting eleven, but we made a couple in the closing minutes with both scorers being taken off in order and being replaced by Ethan Nelson-Roberts and Sean Anderson respectively. Nelson-Roberts then sent over a left wing cross, but his delivery was just ahead of Miller and he couldn't keep the shot on target. In the final minute of injury time Anderson sent over a good deep cross and Miller's header was inches away, nestling in the side netting.

It didn't matter though and after five minutes of injury time the whistle blew to confirm a very strong performance from our team. There was more good news today as our former Manager Adrian Hill was present at the game and was able to confirm at the age of 79 that his health is a lot better than it was a couple of years ago. He looked much stronger after going through some difficult days, as indeed did our team!

Epsom & Ewell: Dan O'Donovan, Ethan Brazier, Kionte Gillfillian-Waul, Adam Green (c), Toby Young, Stefan Aiwone, Luke Miller, Craig Dundas, Carl Oblitey, Luke Taylor, Ali Fofahan

Subs: Ethan Nelson-Roberts for Fofahan (84), Sean Anderson for Oblitey (87)

Report Source: www.eefconline.co.uk

91st minute strike wins for Epsom and Ewell FC

18 December 2024



Camberley Town 0-1 Epsom and Ewell FC. Combined Counties League - Premier Division South. Saturday 7th September 2024

In my preview for this match, I wrote that on this day in history we had played a club record of 21 matches without a draw, but that sequence came under serious threat at Krooner Park where we required a 91st minute winner from Ali Fofahan to break the stalemate and clinch all three points with the only goal against Camberley Town.

On a personal note, this was my thirty-fourth visit to Camberley Town's ground, and the 66th time I had watched these two teams do battle. These clubs have now met each other on 95 occasions, which by some distance makes the Krooners our most regular opponent. However, it has been a long time since we had been this superior against them, as the last dozen or so results hadn't been great, with exception of a 2-1 win here last February. More relevantly, this win was our second in a row and also our second clean sheet in a row, which we had not achieved in the League since October of 2022.

Warren Burton made just one change from the eleven that defeated Chipstead on Saturday with Fofahan returning to the starting line up on the left hand side of midfield after being absent on Tuesday. Stefan Aiwone made way, although he was unavailable for this match, so it isn't clear whether he was injured, or indeed, whether he'd have made way for Fofahan had he actually been here! Kionte Gillfillian-Waul moved from the left wing to left back with Toby Young moving into the centre of defence as we unsurprisingly retained the same formation that had looked so solid against Chipstead.

The opening exchanges were fairly even as we kicked off heading up the Krooner Park slope. The hosts had a first chance as early as the eighth minute when Stan Jones ran onto a ball over the top of our defence, only for Gillfillian-Waul to get across and block his shot. Then Camberley's Captain Regan Hitch got on the end of a Luis Hamblin free kick at the far post, but his header was easy enough for Dan O'Donovan to field without undue alarm. O'Donovan was looking confident after recording his first clean sheet for the club four days previously and was often out to claim the ball with minimal fuss.

Our first real opportunity came just after the twenty minute mark when Adam Green's free kick was headed out by the first man to Axel Kodjo whose strike was not far wide of Ben Grummitt's left hand post from twenty yards. This heralded the start of some good Epsom pressure and Gillfillian-Waul and Fofahan produced some good interplay, ending in a shot from the latter that was blocked by a defender, with Green's follow-up being deflected wide. From the corner Green received the ball back and his shot from an angle was on target, only for another defender to get in the way.

Green appeared to be pulled back in the area, but the referee wasn't interested, although Luke Miller was then fouled in a similar way just outside the area, which was given in our favour. However, Green's free kick cleared the crossbar by about

a yard. During this time though Kodjo picked up an injury and had to limp off, being replaced by Luke Taylor.

Grummitt punched clear a Salts corner which then led to a Camberley break, but Gillfillian-Waul did well to recover the situation before it got too serious. Our new signing has looked most impressive in recent weeks, particularly in the first half of matches, and it is almost easy to forget that Ethan Nelson-Roberts has been missing for these last three games. We also looked dangerous on the right wing with fit again Ethan Brazier linking well with Miller who sent a ball right into the danger area, where Taylor and Carl Oblitey were inches away from turning it into the empty net, although the Assistant's flag was up for offside anyway.

Craig Dundas picked up a yellow card for kicking the ball away and we had one final scare in injury time when O'Donovan came out of his area to clear and instead of putting it in row Z, he struck it against Hamblin and was most fortunate to see the ball rebound off him and out for a goal kick. Moments later, he showed he had learned his lesson as he sent the ball flying way over the Krooner Park clubhouse as the referee blew the half time whistle!

This was our tenth match of the season and it is important to note that we haven't scored in the first half of any of these matches! For those who love a stat, this is now our joint second longest run in club history, matched in 1972/73 and 1992/93 and only exceeded in 1981/82 when we went for twelve matches without scoring in the opening forty-five minutes. Strange really, as we had arguably the strongest team in modern times at that point, and matches against reigning non-League Champions Altrincham and Quadruple winners that season, Leytonstone and Ilford were both part of this twelve match run.

Going down the hill in the second half Louis Lindsay picked up a yellow card for a similar offence to that of Dundas in the first half, although Dundas then did it again moments later and despite the protests from the home team, he was fortunate indeed not to pick up what would have been one of the softest dismissals of his career. However, the game gradually began to tilt in our favour and although Fofahan and Hitch picked up yellow cards for the dictionary definition of "handbags" we were creating most of the pressure, but with one issue; we weren't actually causing Grummit any trouble in his goal. In fact the hosts probably should have taken the lead in the 68th minute when a left wing cross was flicked on to Hamblin at the far post, but he got it all wrong, spooning the ball over our bar from close range. Maybe emboldened by our escape, we were back on the attack soon after and Taylor made a good overlap on the right, although Oblitey was unable to get his header on target from Taylor's delivery.

The temperature of the game went up a few degrees in the 74th minute as a long ball down the right found Miller and his ball across goal was turned into the net from twelve yards by Fofahan, but celebrations were then muted by the raising of the offside flag. There were a few Epsom supporters in different places who thought the decision was a wrong one, but none were level with the incident, which the Assistant quite clearly was. However, a cringe worthy episode then followed as both our Vice-Chairman and Chairman, who were also out of line, both literally and metaphorically, were both clearly heard giving a lot of grief to the Assistant about his decision, followed by that feeble plaintive shout we've heard before of "we've got the video", almost as if they thought the referee would turn around and say, "you know what, thanks for this, you're right, I'll just allow the goal!" Memo to our people who really should know better, it won't happen, stop embarrassing yourselves and set a better example!

Fortunately, the incident didn't stop our momentum as we were in full flow by now although another contentious incident followed when Grummitt punched clear after a collision with his own player, only for the free kick to be awarded against us! Still we attacked and Oblitey sent his header from a Miller cross wide. O'Donovan had to be alert to come out of his area to head a break off, literally, with his head before Camberley sent a header wide at our far post. It would be their last opportunity and in the first minute of injury time Miller's low ball in struck Oblitey and fell kindly for Fofahan to stick the ball away at Grummitt's near post from eight yards out to register his first goal for our club and clinch the points.

Maybe the goal had a touch of fortune about it, but it was a deserved winner and we now sit in sixteenth position, level with the recently vanquished Chipstead, who only sit above us on goals scored. I'm still a bit puzzled about our lack of substitutions at present, with just three made in three matches, but the early season form that left us at the foot of the table has now been netted off with these two wins and to use a football analogy, we are back in the game. Saturday's trip to Tooting & Mitcham United; a team that haven't beaten us at home since they were playing at Sandy Lane, are on paper, a better team than Camberley Town and will provide a better idea of how good we are currently, but for now we are outside the relegation positions for the first time this season, which is pleasing to report!

Epsom & Ewell: Dan O'Donovan, Ethan Brazier, Kionte Gillfillian-Waul, Adam Green (c), Toby Young, Callum Wilson, Luke Miller, Craig Dundas, Carl Oblitey, Axel Kodjo, Ali Fofahan

Subs: Luke Taylor for Kodjo (29)

Report Source: www.eefconline.co.uk

Chips finally up for local football team

18 December 2024

Epsom and Ewell 2-0 Chipstead. Combined Counties League - Premier Division South. Tuesday 3rd September 2024

It wasn't pretty. In fact, at times it was quite attritional, but it was also a deserved first three points of the season as we defeated our former landlords Chipstead by two goals to nil at the KGF. It was also a first clean sheet in the League since 16th December as we found a way to get ahead and then showed good game management to see the match out, confirming our superiority with a late second goal.

For our boys, Toby Young came back into the starting eleven after suspension and he was joined by Craig Dundas who

had been rested on Saturday. Ali Fofahan and Sean Anderson were both missing, requiring Kionte Gillfillian-Wual and Axel Kodjo to play further forward than they had against AFC Whyteleafe. Ethan Brazier kept his place on the right, meaning that Young played on the left of a back four with Callum Wilson and Stefan Aiwone partnering up in central defence.

Chipstead came into the match on the back of a win at Horley Town, although that had been only their second win of the season. This meant that this game took on extra importance as our opponents became one of the teams just above us that we needed to close the gap on, having already gone into this match four points adrift of safety at this admittedly early stage of the season. For such a big match it was a shame that only 51 people were counted as being in attendance, marking our lowest home crowd since our move here. Please do not believe the club's wildly inflated "official" attendance figure of 83. It was nowhere near that and it is really sad that they have to resort to these sort of things. Just because something is quoted by our club as "official" doesn't mean it is accurate.

The opening exchanges were mostly in favour of the visitors who made early inroads, particularly down their right wing where Young looked uncomfortable to start with playing in a less familiar position. Dan O'Donovan was called into an early save, although we had our own attack moments later with Adam Green firing just over the bar with a powerful shot that pinged off the corrugated roof at the Tolworth end of the ground and actually burst the football!

Green was involved again in the 13th minute with a free kick that Carl Oblitey headed just wide of the post and Kodjo was also not far away from 20 yards out. As we began to gain a real foothold in the match Oblitey headed wide from a Green corner before a Brazier delivery was met by a downward header from Kodjo that bounced up kindly for Sam Carman in the visitors goal to handle. Green was having one of his best games for us and saw his shot deflected wide for a corner that we were unable to take advantage of, despite Carman flapping at the ball and falling over. However, we hadn't really tested their keeper too much until Gillfillian-Wual was set up by a clever pass from Oblitey and he ran in at goal in the 39th minute, shooting from an angle, but Carman was equal to it. Another delivery from Gillfillian-Wual zipped across the Chipstead six yard area as the seconds ticked down and we went in at the break looking quite good, but without having made the break through. In fact, this was the ninth match in a row where we have failed to score in the first half!

Of course, regular readers will be aware that we have had similar situations frequently this season, failing to take advantage of them or making a crucial error at the wrong time, but this time we started the second half strongly. Young saw his header from a deep Green free kick saved by Carman at his far post, and we looked more confident. In fact, I was just about to say to supporters around me that we looked like we might score shortly, when we did exactly that in the 51st minute; a low left wing ball in from Gillfillian-Wual required Carman to stretch to reach it, but he couldn't hold on and Oblitey reacted quickly to force the loose ball over the prostrate keeper and into the roof of the net from four yards out. This was the first time we have led in a League match all season!

The visitors stepped up their efforts for a while and we found ourselves pushed back as Chipstead tried to force an equaliser. A long shot deflected kindly for O'Donovan but we had the biggest scare of the match on the hour when our keeper was unable to hold on to a fairly routine shot and the ball bobbed away from him in a similar manner to how our goal came about. However, Michael Dixon snatched at the shot from just twelve yards and fired it straight back at O'Donovan who redeemed for his error by gratefully reclaiming the ball.

This was a major let off, and maybe you would now be reading about a different ending had they levelled up the score at that point, but the miss knocked any momentum they were trying to build and there was very little of note to concern the home supporters as we began to see the game out in a fairly comfortable manner. Slowing the game down well and breaking up play almost seemed like second nature to our players, as if we did this sort of thing regularly. With ten minutes left Callum Wilson went down with cramp. I'm not sure about you, but isn't it surprising how players rarely, if ever, go down with cramp when their team are losing!

Either way, it was great to be in that sort of position after weeks of being behind in the closing stages. Wilson picked up a yellow card for a foul out on the touchline, but in the 91st minute Green's corner was flicked on by a defender to the far post where Young was waiting to volley the ball into the top corner of the net powerfully from eight yards out to confirm the destination of the points. But could we keep that first clean sheet in the League? Only just, as it turned out, as the visitors broke through in the 94th minute and rounded O'Donovan, but somehow the shot went wide of our post.

This was a determined performance from our boys in a match we really needed the points from. Some might think that describing this win as attritional isn't very fair, but actually it is a compliment. We looked much tougher to beat in this match than in recent contests and were able to see the game out in a confident manner, which is ultimately all that really matters in our current position. We now need to take this performance into our trip to Camberley on Saturday and start to build some momentum in an attempt to get away from the foot of the table. We took one step towards this last night as we leapfrogged Spelthorne Sports.

I have two further observations from this match. Firstly, we made no substitutions until the 96th minute when Luke Taylor came on for his first minutes of the new season, having only made one sub in our previous match against AFC Whyteleafe too. Although this happens from time to time, it is unusual, particularly in this era of multiple substitutions and it might indicate a lack of depth on the bench. We'll see how that develops. Secondly, it is interesting that we won our first league match in the 2023/24 season under Steve Springett with four at the back, after playing the first seven matches (all lost) with three at the back, and although this wasn't the first time this season that we have played "a four" the preferred formation appeared to involve three at the back. Maybe that will change now! In the meantime though, it was a very welcome and necessary three points.

Epsom & Ewell: Dan O'Donovan, Ethan Brazier, Toby Young, Adam Green (c), Callum Wilson, Stefan Aiwone, Luke Miller, Craig Dundas, Carl Oblitey, Axel Kodjo, Kionte Gillfillian-Wual

Subs: Luke Taylor for Dundas (96)

Report Source: www.eefconline.co.uk