EPSOM & EWELL TIMES
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A goal conceded for every year not played

7 January 2024



Epsom & Ewell FC 0-5 Camberley Town. Combined Counties League – Premier Division. Saturday 6th January.

Our first meeting with Camberley Town for five years ended in a dispiriting home defeat by five clear goals, which marked our worst defeat of the season so far. Historians won't be particularly surprised as we hadn't won on this day in history since 1934, but this was surprisingly poor, bearing in mind our stellar second half showing just seven days previously.

Despite many other matches being called off and the knowledge that our game would definitely be on, a hugely disappointing crowd counted as 62, even though the official figure was advised as a rather ambitious 92, witnessed a very disappointing performance against a Camberley Town team that belied their League position and looked likely to score whenever they went forward, while we registered just two shots on target, with the visiting keeper Stuart Norman only having one serious save to make, and that came in second half injury time!

We made three changes from last week's win over Tooting & Mitcham United. Steve Springett was on dad duty and was unable to take the field, while Nick Wilson and Reece Tierney returned to the line up after being unavailable and injured respectively. They came in for the injured Ollie Thompson and also Nick Inwugwu who had to make do with a place on the bench, while Lewis Pearch came in up front.

On a day when there were some very erratic officiating calls that left players confused and sometimes frustrated at times, it is important to point out that this match wasn't close enough to be affected by them, even though we looked quite good for the opening ten minutes!

Unfortunately, the first time the visitors went into our half, their striker was brought down clumsily on the edge of the penalty area and Regan Hitch delivered a free kick casually into the bottom far corner with our keeper Harvey Keogh either slow to get down to it, or unsighted. This goal came in the tenth minute and the lead was extended just two minutes later as a right wing cross was met with an unmarked looping header from Mason Taylor that gave Keogh no chance from twelve yards.

Things nearly got worse in the 14th minute when another break on the right from Stan Jones ended with a shot past Keogh that crossed the line, but hit the diagonal stanchion supporting the post and came back out. We had a spell of incidents like this a few years back at Chipstead, but fortunately, in each case the officials had awarded the goal to us. This time there was to be no such decision in Camberley's favour, much to the amazement of a number of their players and the score remained at 2-0.

Maybe it was to be our day after all. That bit of fortune should really have motivated us to fight back, but Epsom just weren't at the races and a third goal followed in the 26th minute. Maybe appropriately it was Jones who was the scorer after being "denied" twelve minutes earlier, although his shot appeared to be scuffed and Keogh, expecting a more powerful shot, went down before the ball got there and it crept into the net.

We desperately needed a way back into this match in quick time and Luke Miller produced a pinpoint cross for Pearch, but he headed the ball over the bar from just six yards. What we didn't realise at the time was that this would prove to be our best chance of the match and the visitors were soon back on the attack with Keogh being well placed to make a good save from a close range header. As we went into the third minute of injury time Tommy Williams played a decent one-two with a teammate, but the shot with his weaker left foot was easily fielded by Norman.

Could we turn this around in the second half, as we had done just seven days previously? Well, frankly, no! We had only been playing for a few minutes when an injury to Ayran Kugathas necessitated his replacement. We did put together a decent move, starting with Jaan Stanley who found Miller who then set up Rory Edwards, whose shot went across goal, but was just out of reach of the incoming Ethan Nelson-Roberts. Keogh was forced into another good save but in the 70th minute a good run from Jones ended with a shot across goal where Brandon Vangrove was there to touch the ball in from close range for the fourth Camberley goal. Things were looking really serious now and we made a triple substitution, but Keogh still had to make another close range save to prevent the score going higher.

We had a half chance with quarter of an hour remaining when substitute Thompson Adeyemi had a try from just outside the penalty area, only to see the ball hit the full face of the cross bar and rebound to safety, but in the 79th minute a corner was headed in by the unmarked Tom Wensley at close range and we were 5-0 down. Keogh had to make another couple of saves, with the latter of these coming out of the top drawer with a full stretch save of a shot that was heading for the top corner before Norman actually had some work to do in the 92nd minute when he tipped over a Williams shot from twenty yards with the subsequent corner being headed over by Tierney, but to be honest, a goal wouldn't have even counted as a consolation, such was the standard of this performance.

You rarely get results this one-sided unless two things happen. Firstly, we didn't play well, but secondly, Camberley did. With the hugely impressive Jones on the field, we appeared to have no real answer and remain winless against the Krooners in nine attempts dating back to 2014. To his credit our Manager Springett was brutally honest about the performance on social media after the match and it is hoped that we can fight back, although we now do not have another League match for three weeks, so there should be plenty of opportunity to try things out at training during that time.

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Either way, we need to improve or this relegation battle will remain a concern for far longer than it really should do.

Epsom & Ewell: Harvey Keogh (c), Tommy Williams, Ayran Kugathas, Rory Edwards, Reece Tierney, Nick Wilson, Luke Miller, Tijani Eshilokun, Lewis Pearch, Jaan Stanley, Ethan Nelson-Roberts

Subs: Nick Inwugwu for Kugathas (50), Thompson Adeyemi for Stanley (65), Ade Batula for Pearch (77), Tino Carpene for Miller (77), Jerry Antwi for Nelson-Roberts (77)

Horley make mincemeat of Epsom and Ewell

7 January 2024

Horley Town 4-0 Epsom & Ewell FC. Combined Counties League – Premier Division. Saturday 23rd December 2023.

Exactly six years to the day since we last visited Horley Town, we made a visit that will not live long in the memory unless you are a Horley fan as we crashed 4-0 in our latest League fixture.

Horley produced a nice touch for this contest by sending some of the children around the ground to offer everyone mince pies, but regrettably that was all we would get from them in this match, as they finished much the stronger of the two teams after a fairly even first half hour. In comparison, we were extremely generous and many gifts were presented by our team!

Our line up contained our Captain Harvey Keogh, who had returned from a trip away, while Tommy Williams came back into the starting eleven, pushing Ethan Nelson-Roberts further forward. Tijani Eshilokun, Luke Miller and Tino Carpene also started, while Thomson Adeyemi surprisingly dropped to the bench and Sirak Negassi and George Owusu were not available. Finally, Ollie Thompson was back on the bench after what looked like being a longer term injury last weekend, although he advised that he wasn't going to be risked. For Horley there were two former Salts as Josh Alder and their Captain Louis Chin lined up against us.

Although possession was fairly even in the opening exchanges, we never really managed to get a shot of any power or accuracy at goal, while for Horley, Sam Harper broke through, but Keogh spread himself well to block the ball with his feet. An Alder right wing cross just eluded the incoming strikers, while Keogh then required treatment after he and a home player both went up with high feet and our man came off worse. Fortunately he was able to continue after receiving treatment.

The game changed in the 33rd minute when Miller picked up a yellow card, somewhat harshly, I thought. However, his response to this in applauding the decision earned him an unnecessary visit to the sin bin. Our club are well aware when a referee has an assessor present, but I wonder whether our Management are advised of this fact, as you always know that these sort of things are more likely to be actioned on by an official who is being assessed.

Within a minute we were forced into a substitution after Reece Tierney picked up an injury and Thompson came on for an appearance he wasn't expecting to make. Horley stepped up the pressure and Nick Inwugwu made a good clearance from a dangerous ball in. Then Alder's shot on goal was blocked for a corner, from which Jake Roberts then fired the ball into the roof of the net for the opening goal in the 37th minute.

We were back to ten men soon after, but Horley were up and running now and a right wing cross was headed just wide of our goal before our defence parted in the 48th minute and Joshua Rapson delicately chipped the ball over the exposed Keogh to put the home side two nil up at the break.

We had a couple of half chances early in the second half, but Nelson-Roberts was flagged offside when Miller appeared to be fouled in the area, and then a Steve Springett free kick required George Hyde in the Horley goal to make his first real intervention of the day by punching the ball clear, but these were small crumbs unfortunately and in the 57th minute we conceded a third goal in awful circumstances when Harper eased past Inwugwu and squared the ball for Cameron Gyeabour to finish off from close range.

Bad became worse just seven minutes later when Hyde's long goal kick put Alder through and with no defenders nearby, Keogh had to come out, leaving the former Salt to chip the ball over him into the net from twenty yards, despite a covering defender being on the line by this time.

In response Springett sent a free kick high and wide from 25 yards and substitute Adeyemi also sent a shot wide, but I didn't recognise a single shot on target from our boys in this match and there was even time for Hyde to venture behind the goal to share a drink with some of the home fans! The final chances fell to the home team and they had a fair shout for a penalty turned down, before Hyde nearly secured a second assist when his long ball found Rapson on the left and his shot was well blocked by Keogh, although the ball went up in the air and should have really been finished off by an incoming player, but fortunately he missed his kick! We were then reduced to ten men in the 93rd minute after Nelson-Roberts picked up a visit to the sin-bin himself. He has been one of our best players this season, but obviously you can't influence the match when you are on the sidelines and we need to start learning this lesson. Mercifully the whistle saved us from further punishment and we retired, defeated by four clear goals.

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There were many concerning aspects about this particular afternoon, but I shall concentrate on the three most important ones. Firstly, the way we defended, particularly in the second half. Secondly, we have now gone 301 minutes of normal time since we scored a goal. Finally, for the first time in a while results around us did not go well, particularly with Colliers Wood United winning at Tooting & Mitcham United. We face the latter in our next contest and it's fair to say that this now becomes a very important League match for our club.

Epsom & Ewell: Harvey Keogh (c), Tommy Williams, Nick Inwugwu, Steve Springett, Reece Tierney, Nick Wilson, Luke Miller, Tijani Eshilokun, Tino Carpene, Rory Edwards, Ethan Nelson-Roberts

Subs: Ollie Thompson for Tierney (34), Thompson Adeyemi for Carpene (56), Jaan Stanley for Miller (76), Ade Batula for Springett (76)

Report Source: www.eefconline.co.uk

Wish their paths had not crossed?

7 January 2024

Epsom & Ewell FC 0-2 Tadley Calleva*. Combined Counties League – Premier Division Tuesday 19th December 2023.

On a rather chilly Tuesday evening at the Madgwick in front of less than 70 hardy souls, Tadley Calleva made the long journey over to Surrey and returned with the points after defeating us fairly comfortably by two goals to nil.

Anyone who just looks at the results would have seen Tadley's heavy defeat at the weekend, but anyone who actually studies them in detail would have seen that it came against Farnham Town and written it off as an anomaly. Far more relevantly, their three matches prior to that had been won and there was little doubt that they would collect the points here as they controlled the first half, scored twice and then kept us at arm's length for the majority of the second period, despite an improvement from our boys.

Toby Colwell kept his place in goal, but Ollie Thompson was unable to go following his injury at Colliers Wood United that will keep him out over the Christmas period at least. In his place came Steve Springett while Ethan Nelson-Roberts also returned which enabled Nick Inwugwu to switch over to right back, releasing Rory Edwards to play back in midfield again. Further forward Jaan Stanley and Tijani Eshilokun were unavailable, so Sirak Negassi and George Owusu came in for starts with Luke Miller dropping to the bench and Nick Wilson retaining the Captain's armband he had been holding since Thompson's injury.

We nearly had a shocking start as the visitors swept downfield and Alex Miller struck our post with a curling shot inside the first ten seconds. A regular supporter near me advised the time as six seconds, which, if it had gone in would have represented the earliest goal ever scored in an Epsom match as far as records could prove. We escaped this time, but apart from a Negassi shot that was well blocked by a defender, we created little in the first half and were often confronted with the sight of watching the match at distance as much of the opening "forty-five" was played in our half. Colwell made a couple of good saves midway through it, with the second of these right out of the top drawer to deny Sheldon Wright.

We made a little progress in the 33rd minute when Thompson Adeyemi fed Negassi who beat two men, but shot weakly at Craig Atkinson in the Tadley goal from a good position. However, we were back on the defensive soon after and the visitors opened their account in the 35th minute with a deep corner that was met at the far post with a downward header by Brad Neal. Although one of our defenders cleared the ball away, it had already crossed the line. Bad became worse when a second followed just four minutes later with a low drive from Ousman Darboe which nestled in the far corner from the edge of the penalty area.

We could have no complaints about the score to this point, although it was disappointing that we had created so little, particularly after drawing a blank at Colliers Wood in the previous match. The second half looked like it might follow a similar pattern as Colwell was forced into another good low save just after the restart, but things got better and we nearly pulled a goal back in the 57th minute when a deep corner found Ade Batula who controlled the ball and shot at goal, only for the ball to be blocked on the line by a defender with the grateful Atkinson falling onto the ball before we could get that vital touch.

On the hour we saw the return of Tommy Williams after he had completed his four match suspension, although it was originally meant to be in relief of Reece Tierney whose number came up, only for a quick change of mind by our Management team after they had spotted that Nelson-Roberts had just picked up an injury and he was the man who came off instead.

Batula was asking a few questions with his pace and he was brought down in the corner for a free kick just a couple of yards in from the touchline, but the Springett delivery was headed over the bar by Adeyemi. Then Batula broke through the offside trap and bore down on goal, although his shot was a good height for Atkinson who parried the strike on goal. The visitors had a couple of strikes from distance, both of which only just missed our top corner, but this was a much better half and Adeyemi climbed to win a good header which he sent back across goal. It wasn't clear whether it would have crept inside the post, but it didn't matter as a defender was there to hook the ball away in any case.

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As we entered the final few minutes of normal time Darboe picked up a yellow card for a clumsy challenge and two minutes later collected a second card, leaving the visitors with ten men for the remaining two minutes, plus five more of injury time. In between the two bookings we had our best chance of the match after Adeyemi made a good run and pass to Miller who then put another substitute through in Tino Carpene, who clipped the ball over Atkinson, only to see the ball miss the far post and also the incoming Springett by inches.

Our final chance came in the first minute of injury time, but as we sent a long throw in from Williams to the head of the towering Adeyemi it was apparent that there was no one actually beyond him to finish off a chance should one arrive! The flick on was duly won, with the ball dribbling past the far post for what would have been a certain tap in, had we gambled. It set the seal on a disappointing evening, although it must be remembered that our opponents are looking good for the playoff spots and were very solid last night.

The League table shows us third from bottom with 14 points from 19 available which currently provides a healthy gap between us and the two clubs below us. For some reason our club has chosen not to put a League table in its match programmes, which is a shame because it looks a lot better than it did at the end of September! Hopefully, we can continue to increase the number of points between us and the single relegation place when we visit Horley on Saturday for another important League fixture.

Epsom & Ewell: Toby Colwell, Nick Inwugwu, Ethan Nelson-Roberts, Steve Springett, Reece Tierney, Nick Wilson ©, Ade Batula, Thompson Adeyemi, George Owusu, Rory Edwards, Sirak Negassi

Subs: Tommy Williams for Nelson-Roberts (59), Luke Miller for Owusu (74), Tino Carpene for Batula (80), Kiyo Brown for Negassi (80)

Report Source: www.eefconline.co.uk

The word Calleva means “**where the paths cross**“.

Goalless draw with bottom side

7 January 2024

Colliers Wood United 0-0 Epsom & Ewell FC. Combined Counties League – Premier Division. Saturday 16th December 2023.

On Saturday, two clubs; each placed in precarious positions in the League, met each other and showed everyone present exactly why they were down there! An extremely poor goalless draw was the result of this match, although the real memory of this one for me will be the scrappiness of this contest with the inability of either team to string more than three passes together, despite having perfect conditions for football.

Premier Division South

#	Team	Pl	HW	HD	HL	AW	AD	AL	W	D	L	F	A	Diff	Pts
18.	**Epsom & Ewell**	18	2	0	5	2	2	7	4	2	12	26	42	-16	**14**
19.	**Sheerwater**	20	1	1	9	1	1	7	2	2	16	22	67	-45	**8**
20.	**Colliers Wood United**	20	0	3	7	1	1	8	1	4	15	16	49	-33	**7**

This was obviously a pivotal match and was bound to be a tense occasion, particularly for the home side who really needed to close the gap on those teams above them, while we were obviously keen to produce a similar performance to the one that had resulted in a 5-1 Salts win back in Steve Springett’s first match in charge on 7th October, but the only players who will take anything positive from this contest will be the two keepers, not that either had a vast amount to deal with though, as both defences dealt with the limited threats on their goal fairly comfortably.

In goal for the opposition was Toby McKimm, and any supporters who went to Hailsham Town last year will have remembered him making an appearance for us, although it was a debut he would want to forget as he was unfairly dismissed after just twenty-five minutes, making him the possessor of one of the shortest playing spells in our club history. We also had a change between the posts as Harvey Keogh was away for this match on a pre-arranged trip, although for those of you who recall his collision with the fencing the previous week, a Club Official advised that he is now fine, which is good news for all. In his place, and making his second appearance for our club was Toby Colwell, who has been most reliable this season, despite having to spend a vast amount of his time on the bench, as is the lot of a substitute keeper. Taking the Captain’s armband in place of Keogh was Ollie Thompson who returned to the starting eleven, along with the suspended Tijani Eshilokun, with Steve Springett and Ethan Nelson-Roberts unavailable to play.

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The hosts had an early opportunity when they dragged a shot wide from fairly close range in the second minute, although five minutes later we had what would prove to be our best opportunity of the half when Ade Batula sent a perfect ball through to Eshilokun just twelve yards out, but he delayed matters instead of shooting and McKimm was out quickly to clear the danger.

Soon after this Luke Miller put another great ball through to Jaan Stanley who tucked the ball low into the corner of the net, only to see the Assistant's flag raised against him. Batula then blazed high and wide after cutting onto his left foot, before Colliers Wood sent a deep ball to the far post where a shot was blocked by a defender.

In the 26th minute Thompson picked up a facial injury, believed to be a broken nose and required quite a few minutes of treatment. He was able to continue but would not reappear for the second half. It is hoped the injury will not result in him missing much time. From this point the match became more attritional with few real chances and we went in at the break goalless.

Sirak Negassi came on for Thompson which led to a reshuffle of our back line with Nick Wilson dropping back there and taking on the armband. We already had Rory Edwards playing in an unfamiliar right back role, so it was becoming a bit of a makeshift back line by this stage. Within a few moments of Wilson moving back, a long ball went just beyond him, although fortunately Colwell had smartly anticipated the danger and was out just in time to gather it ahead of an incoming attacker.

We had another decent opportunity just after the hour when a decent move down the left was centred to Miller who struck powerfully with his left foot, only to see the ball deflected away for a corner by a defender. McKimm then dropped the corner but the danger was cleared. Then at the other end a Wood attack finished with a low shot, and I must remind people that I was a hundred yards away from this, so apologies if I have this wrong, but the ball appeared to go out for a goal kick off the foot of our post.

In the 73rd minute we got another chance after McKimm's poor clearance went to Stanley thirty yards out, but he was unable to return the ball to what would have been a vacant goal at that point; instead he went down the left and squared the ball where Batula went in for the ball with McKimm, only for the keeper to lie almost motionless for a few minutes as a result of the collision which our man then picked up a yellow card for. From our angle it was hard to see what Batula had done wrong and protests were made to this effect while McKimm remained on the ground receiving treatment. Fortunately he was able to continue after another long break and the match continued to meander.

Finally, in what would become nine minutes of injury time there was a little more to write about, and the first chance involved one of our substitutes, Yannick Monga-Ebwa, who made tracks down the left and his ball was collected by Batula whose shot on the turn went just beyond the Wood far post. Then Eshilokun's twenty yard drive wasn't gathered by McKimm, although he was just able to recover the ball as Batula ran in. In the 98th minute another sub George Owusu was unfortunate to see his shot from eight yards ricochet off a defender and go wide for another corner.

From that corner we had a bit of controversy as a Nick Inwugwu header was fumbled by McKimm and looked like it was going to go over the line, but he reacted quickly to claw the ball away. There were appeals that the ball had crossed the line, but as with the earlier Wood chance where I was a hundred yards away, this time I was less than two yards from this one and I wasn't convinced it had crossed, although admittedly it was close. Far more relevantly than mine or anyone else's opinion, the Assistant was bang in line with the play and also felt it had stayed out. The final whistle blew shortly after this and Colliers Wood's first clean sheet in the League this season, along with Colwell's first for our club were confirmed.

It was a bit embarrassing to see our Club Secretary berating the Assistant over the goal line incident, purely on the basis of a phone clip he had taken (even though it was from a far worse angle) that he "claimed" had proven the ball had gone over the line. Further ridicule followed when he doubled down on this after the match by placing a picture on the club Twitter site that failed to show any clear view of the line or the ball! It was similar to the kind of grainy and inconclusive image that we've all seen in the papers whenever anyone thinks they've seen the Loch Ness Monster, and deserved the derision it received from a number of commentators!

Regrettably this ninety minutes proved about as fruitful as that peculiar Scottish hobby, but the draw ensures that we remain in a much stronger position than the two clubs below us. It must be said that one of the things we have failed to do this season is grind out a point from time to time, without falling to a late sucker punch as we have at Fleet Town, Eastbourne United and Abbey Rangers, so credit is deserved in that area, particularly with the personnel changes that were required at the back. Indeed, over the course of the match, we also had the slightly better chances close to goal, but by no means did either team do enough to say they genuinely deserved to win this match and hard work remains for both if they are to avoid being the one club that will make the drop to Step Six this season.

Epsom & Ewell: Toby Colwell, Rory Edwards, Nick Inwugwu, Nick Wilson, Reece Tierney, Ollie Thompson ©, Luke Miller, Thompson Adeyemi, Ade Batula, Tijani Eshilokun, Jaan Stanley

Subs: Sirak Negassi for Thompson (HT), George Owusu for Miller (89), Yannick Monga-Ebwa for Stanley (89), Tino Carpene for Batula (95)

Report Source: www.eefconline.co.uk

Salts beat County Town, or City?

7 January 2024

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Epsom & Ewell 4-3 Guildford City. Combined Counties League – Premier Division. Saturday 9th December 2023.

On Saturday we welcomed Guildford City to our temporary home at Cobham for a first League meeting since 2018 and a bizarre match ensued with our boys just about coming through to secure the points by a score of 4-3.

On a fairly wet and often gusty afternoon that attracted just 72 spectators, despite many local matches falling foul of the weather, I firstly noticed that there were some changes in the dugout. Joint Manager Sam Groombridge was still absent due to personal issues and in view of this, Steve Springett brought in Gwynne Berry and Warren Burton to help him as Coaches. Burton is in fact a former Salt, making a couple of first team appearances in 1993/94 before moving on to greater things, while Berry was formerly with Sutton United amongst other clubs.

This “reshuffle” allowed Springett to take his place back on the field in his newly favoured central defensive midfield position after missing the previous two contests and in addition Luke Miller and Ade Batula came back into the starting line up with Tijani Eshilokun, Tino Carpene and George Owusu making way, although the latter two would play a part from the bench. For Guildford, our former Captain Callum Wilson was in the starting line up for a team that had taken just five points from their last twelve League matches, although they had picked up three of those with a win over Colliers Wood United just three days previously.

We had an early scare in just the fourth minute when our Captain and keeper Harvey Keogh came out to clear a ball, only to hammer it against a visiting player who was trying to close him down, with the rebound luckily heading out for a goal kick. It was a warning that we wouldn’t heed later in the match.

We responded well and took charge of proceedings for a while. Ethan Nelson-Roberts and Jaan Stanley were linking well on the left and we took the lead in the twelfth minute with one of the best deliveries of a ball I have seen at this level as Nelson-Roberts pinged the ball diagonally from around 35 yards right onto the head of Thompson Adeyemi who then nodded the ball past Adam Longman from eight yards to open the scoring.

The visitors nearly levelled up soon after this as a ball in from the left was met by a Guildford striker, but he was unable to get his close range effort on target and it almost appeared as if he hadn’t expected the ball to reach him. We were soon back on the attack though and a Springett free kick found Adeyemi’s head again, although the effort went straight at Longman. Two minutes later though his next set piece caused panic in the defence and the ball was guided into the corner of the net by Niall Stillwell for an own goal. Stillwell was Keogh’s PE teacher a few years back and he currently teaches my boy Nathan, so I’m sure words will be had at school next week!

At 2-0 up we were good value for our lead and we nearly made it three on the half hour when Stanley pressured a defender to head the ball beyond his own keeper and although he was then able to clear before our man could get there, the ball didn’t go far and was fed back in where Miller’s powerful drive was just deflected over the bar at the last minute by our former Captain Wilson.

Unfortunately in the 38th minute the game swung in Guildford’s favour when Keogh tried to see the ball out of play for a goal kick and was robbed. Our man then collided head first with the fencing as the ball was fed across goal for Darnell MacDonald to fire into the empty net. We were a long way from the action but there was certainly an argument from people closer than me that he had been fouled. Either way, the ball should really have been sent into Row Z. Keogh appeared to have recovered after five minutes of treatment, but then in the seventh minute of injury time, ironically only being played as a result of his earlier collision, he let a corner slip through his hands and Will May fired in an equaliser.

Clearly our keeper was struggling and he never came out for the second half, leading to a second appearance in goal this season for our midfielder Nick Wilson. In fact the early part of the second half was a bit of a trial for our supporters as Guildford came at us with the momentum they had gained at the end of the opening forty-five minutes and Wilson had to punch away one corner before producing a world class save in the 57th minute as a low right wing ball was met at the far post with a tap in. The away supporters behind the goal were already cheering, only to see Wilson recover to claw the ball away from the line and stop a certain goal. If a striker can score a worldy, then this was the goal keeping equivalent and it turned the game back in our favour.

It was easy to forget at this point that whilst we had lost our keeper, we were not down to ten men and as the half wore on we began to get more of a foothold. Then in the space of two minutes we took charge again, firstly in the 67th minute with a typical powerful low drive across the keeper into the far corner from Miller from just inside the penalty area. Both Wilson and Longman got slight touches to the ball on its way, but couldn’t keep it out. Then two minutes later a ball from the right was finished off at the far post by substitute Sirak Negassi who had come on at the break for Keogh.

As we were celebrating behind the goal we realised that Longman was requiring more treatment and he was replaced soon after, leaving us with the very rare occurrence of both starting keepers failing to finish the match! After a small break we continued and Stanley did ever so well on the right wing to chase a lost cause and rob a defender, only to then try an ambitious strike from a narrow angle with two of our players waiting for a pass who were not best pleased! Then Springett was inches wide with a free kick from 25 yards that the keeper wasn’t going to reach.

Then in the 83rd minute we conceded again as Wilson shouted to claim a corner, only for the ball to sail over his head where it was nodded in from close range. This led to quite a nervy ending, especially when the referee advised the replacement visiting keeper that we were going to see an extra seven minutes, but we saw them out with minimal worry,

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although Wilson made another superb save with a low block from close range in the final minute of normal time. We nearly scored a fifth goal when Negassi sent the ball over for Tino Carpene, only for his shot to be deflected inches wide.

The final action came in the 98th minute when Nick Inwugwu was fouled as the visitors were chasing an equaliser, only for Owen Sims to vent his frustration about the decision to the referee who sent him straight to the sin-bin for his comments. He must have been sat down on the bench for ten seconds at most when the final whistle blew anyway.

This was a strange encounter that had a few turning points. We looked well in control for a large part of the match, only to be pegged back, and effectively we had to go and win the match a second time. This was an important victory to take us further away from the bottom two clubs, and more relevantly, it was a well-deserved one too. Hopefully we can extend our winning run to two matches when we visit Colliers Wood United next Saturday.

Epsom & Ewell: Harvey Keogh (c), Nick Inwugwu, Ethan Nelson-Roberts, Steve Springett, Reece Tierney, Nick Wilson, Luke Miller, Thompson Adeyemi, Ade Batula, Rory Edwards, Jaan Stanley

Subs: Sirak Negassi for Keogh (HT), George Owusu for Miller (75), Tino Carpene for Batula (75)

Report Source: www.eefconline.co.uk

Salts fail to clear foggy condition

7 January 2024

Alton 2-0 Epsom & Ewell FC. Combined Counties League – Premier Division. Saturday 2nd December 2023.

“Sorry you had to see that” said our young Captain Harvey Keogh as a dejected Epsom team came off the pitch after competing against an Alton side who were in all honesty, no better than we were, but found a way to score twice midway through the second half to claim the points on offer.

The irony of his comment was that most of the spectators really didn’t see that much of the match, as the foggy conditions made the contest look like a throwback from the old pre-war days when fog was the only reason you would ever get a match postponed for. The conditions were no one’s fault of course, but as a result of them, the contest was lacking something in the way of atmosphere and this seemed to project onto the players too, as it must have felt like they were playing a match in an empty ground, even though the attendance was a very respectable 142, despite the bitterly cold winter’s afternoon. Ultimately though, our first visit to the redeveloped Anstey Park since May 1977 ended exactly the same way as our last did with a 2-0 defeat.

With Ollie Thompson joining Tommy Williams on the suspended list for this one match, Nick Wilson found himself playing in the back four, just a week after he had taken positions both in midfield and in goal! Ethan Nelson-Roberts moved into the back four in place of Ethan Brazier for whom George Owusu came in further forward. Finally, Jaan Stanley started ahead of Luke Miller who would join the action later.

I have to be honest here and apologise to our opponents. My report, as our regulars will be aware, is compiled from behind our goal so it was really hard to see, let alone describe many of Alton’s attacks, although it’s fair to say that in the first half there weren’t many by either side. Nick Inwugwu was first to try his luck for us as he advanced towards the edge of the area, but after having made good progress with his right foot, he struck well wide with his weaker left foot. In response the home side sent a shot straight at Keogh in the 16th minute and another effort wide from a good position five minutes later. A further strike from a decent position also failed to trouble our keeper and the teams went off at the break with just one shot on target between them to show for their work.

Clearly our Manager Steve Springett had seen enough by the break as just seven minutes into the second half he replaced our entire front three, so Miller came on alongside Sirak Negassi and debut boy Yannick Modeste Monga Ebwa. To be fair though, these three had a similar lack of success against an Alton team that were very well drilled at the back. Negassi sent a shot wide from a half cleared Rory Edwards free kick, but as we reached the hour mark it looked like this match was going to end with the goalless draw it deserved.

But the home team had other ideas and took charge. In the 61st minute they had an attempt headed off the line by an Epsom defender, but we didn’t heed the warning and two minutes later, a ball in from the right was converted at close range by Perry Coles. Three minutes later it was game over as a right wing cross was headed low past Keogh from a few yards by Pat Cox.

Very little happened in the final twenty minutes with exception of a Tijani Eshilokun header from a Nelson-Roberts cross and a speculative Wilson attempt from twenty-five yards that went high and wide. We had a glimmer of light six minutes from time when an injury to an Alton player left them down to ten men, as they had used all five of their substitutes, but the player returned after a few minutes on the sidelines and the chance was gone. In fact, the home side were denied from extending their lead by a low injury time save from Keogh.

It is fair to say that whilst conditions were awkward and our opponents difficult to break down, this was one of our weaker performances in recent weeks and I would imagine our boys would probably agree with that assessment. Certainly our

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Manager felt that way as evidenced by the triple substitution just after the halfway mark. Additionally, we are now on a run of just one win and one draw in seven matches. However, we have an intriguing and winnable set of fixtures coming up against teams in the lower half apart as we approach Christmas, including the pivotal trip to Colliers Wood United, and we need to start getting a few more points in the near future. Performances, particularly from an attacking standpoint will need to improve, but no one watching this match will be surprised to read that.

Epsom & Ewell: Harvey Keogh (c), Nick Inwugwu, Ethan Nelson-Roberts, Thompson Adeyemi, Reece Tierney, Nick Wilson, George Owusu, Tijani Eshilokun, Tino Carpene, Rory Edwards, Jaan Stanley

Subs: Luke Miller for Owusu (52), Yannick Modeste Monga Ebwa for Carpene (52), Sirak Negassi for Stanley (52)

Report Source: www.eefconline.co.uk

Penalty shoot out in normal time....

7 January 2024



Abbey Rangers 2-1 Epsom & Ewell. Combined Counties League – Premier Division. Saturday 25th November 2023.

In a match decided by three penalties and some rather odd officiating, we were extremely unfortunate to fall to a 91st minute defeat in a match where we were the equal of our top four opponents on their own patch at Addlestone Moor.

We made three changes to the starting eleven following our narrow defeat against AFC Croydon Athletic. Manager Steve Springett didn't select himself for this match and Tommy Williams was suspended, so Nick Inwugwu and Ethan Charles-Brazier came in at the back while Nick Wilson came in for his first start since returning to our club and Jaan Stanley moved to the bench.

The opening exchanges were very even. An early bout of head tennis in our penalty area resulted in a header going just wide of the post, while in reply Rory Edwards produced a good run and low finish that was only a yard wide of the post from just outside the penalty area. Reece Tierney put an Edwards free kick over the bar, but in reality the first half hour contained little in the way of goal threat.

That changed in the 32nd minute when a clever little flick through from an Abbey Rangers player reached their number 15 whose close range volley was excellently kept out by Harvey Keogh and he then made another superb close range block a few minutes later from former Salt Daryl Cooper-Smith to keep us on level terms. We would take full advantage of this by earning a couple of corners and from the second of these, the ball fell back towards Ethan Nelson-Roberts who showed quick feet to elude his defender who brought him down in the area. The referee delayed his decision for a while and for a moment I thought it wasn't going to be given, but finally the whistle blew and Wilson tucked away the penalty high to the keeper's left in the 41st minute.

The half time lead was probably a little harsh on our opponents who had given as much as we had in that first half, but for a top four team, they had threatened us only rarely. They are in the top four for a reason though, and in the 50th minute Abbey pressed for an equaliser and got it when Ollie Thompson brought down Cooper-Smith from behind, picking up a yellow card. King put the penalty down the middle, but Keogh had already moved to his left and we were level at 1-1.

Just before the hour we had a fantastic opportunity as Nelson-Roberts, playing further forward this week, delivered a dangerous low ball into the six yard box, but from only a yard out Tijani Eshilokun was unable to get the ball over the line as the Abbey Rangers keeper made a fantastic stop from close range and then gathered the ball.

We then had one of the most bizarre incidents I have seen in a year or two and guess what, yes, the referee was being assessed! Our keeper was actually penalised in the 62nd minute for the crime of holding the ball for too long!! Leaving aside the fact that he hadn't been holding it for that long, insult was then added to injury after he threw the ball away and received a yellow card and after further discussion he was then sent to the sin bin! With no substitute keeper on the bench Wilson went between the posts, not for the first time in Epsom colours as he had been in goal last February at Hailsham Town when Toby McKimm had been harshly dismissed. Fortunately, the ten minutes passed uneventfully enough and Keogh was soon back on the field. Wilson joins a rare group of people who have scored a goal and played in goal in the same match, the last of which was Nathan Ayling at Frimley Green back in April 2014.

As we approached the closing stages of the match Thompson Adeyemi tried his luck from twenty yards with his left foot, requiring the Abbey keeper to make a good save low to his right. However, Abbey then broke away and in the 89th minute one of their players rounded Keogh and struck at goal. It was blocked on the line by Thompson, but what by? Obviously I was a long way from the incident, but the Assistant, standing some forty yards away and on the far side of the pitch was certain that he had seen something and following consultation with him, the referee issued a straight red card in our man's direction. Murdoch tucked away the penalty low to Keogh's right for what proved to be the winner in the 91st minute, but was it the right decision? According to Thompson as he walked past us just after being sent off, the ball hit him squarely on the forehead. Assuming this to be the case, it is really hard to accept the Assistant's view, particularly as it was from so far away. Thompson will also serve a one match suspension for this alleged offence.

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There was time for the Abbey Rangers 7 to be sent to the sin bin after complaining about receiving a yellow card for a foul as we pushed for an equaliser, but we only had a minute left for play and were unable to take advantage of the ten v ten situation before the final whistle blew.

So Abbey Rangers extended their unbeaten run to twelve games and it has to be said that they certainly didn't deserve to see that run end here. However, compared to some of the other teams we have played recently like Farnham Town, Knaphill and AFC Croydon Athletic, Abbey didn't hurt us nearly as much and I felt we were well worth a draw from this match. To lose it in such disappointing circumstances is cruel, but I see some more points being picked up soon if we keep playing this way.

Epsom & Ewell: Harvey Keogh (c), Ethan Charles-Brazier, Nick Inwugwu, Nick Wilson, Reece Tierney, Ollie Thompson, Ethan Nelson-Roberts, Thompson Adeyemi, Tijani Eshilokun, Rory Edwards, Luke Miller

Subs: George Owusu for Miller (79), Jaan Stanley for Nelson-Roberts (81), Tino Carpene for Edwards (84)

Report Source: www.eefconline.co.uk

Salts succumb to athleticism

7 January 2024

Epsom & Ewell 2-4 AFC Croydon Athletic. Combined Counties League – Premier Division. Saturday 18th November 2023.

A rather harsh 4-2 home defeat to AFC Croydon Athletic in our latest League match should have been the big story of the day, but regrettably we had another to report as a couple of hours before the match it was announced that our long-serving Club President Stella Lamont had passed away seven days previously at the grand age of 95 having completed twenty years in the role, having been appointed at the Annual General Meeting in 2003. As you would expect, the minute's silence (far more appropriate for a Committee member or supporter than applause) was impeccably observed and the focus returned to the football.

Our opponents had of course already won once at our ground this season when turning around a 3-1 deficit into a 4-3 League Cup victory and had strengthened since then with the addition of striker Louie Theophanous, who scored five goals a couple of weeks ago against Sheerwater. We made just the one change with Ethan Nelson-Roberts coming back into the line up at the expense of Nick Inwugwu. Despite no Premier League action taking place and many other matches being postponed it was disappointing to see an attendance of just 79 counted at the ground, particularly as we have been playing better in recent weeks.

Maybe we were affected by the sombre occasion at first, but either way we were a little slow out of the blocks in this match, although there was little of real danger for Harvey Keogh to deal with either. A couple of dangerous crosses into each box whizzed out the other side after failing to reach their intended targets before we lost the ball coming out of defence in the 12th minute. Fortunately the left wing cross into the danger area was then sent well over the bar by Olalekan Osideko from a good position.

It was a bitty start from both teams, with the visitors in particular struggling to keep the ball on the pitch, but we grew into it and Luke Miller was only just beyond the far post with a fifteen yard header as he met Jaan Stanley's cross, before Nelson-Roberts struck at goal, only for his powerful looking strike to hit team mate and Manager Steve Springett and rebound away to safety! Rory Edwards was next to try his luck from around fifteen yards and the ball took a slight deflection before David Boateng stuck out a leg and diverted the ball only just over his own crossbar from six yards. We were pressing for an opener at this stage with debutant AFC Croydon Athletic keeper Toby Fisher being kept busy, although Keogh had to make a low save on the half hour to keep out a shot from Osideko.

Regrettably, just as we were going into first half injury time a pass through our defence found Theophanous in space and he ran in and slotted the goal past Keogh from close range to open the scoring.

If that half time scoreline looked harsh, things then got worse in a hurry as we conceded two more goals in the 48th and 51st minutes to leave us facing a mountain to climb. The goals came in a similar manner with dangerous balls in from the right wing and close range finishes, although it transpired that the first of these goals was actually knocked in by one of our defenders with Brandon Pierrick registering their third goal. Keogh then made a low save from an angle with his feet as the visitors threatened to run away with things.

We made some substitutions, only for one of them, Nick Wilson to spend just five minutes on the pitch before he was sent to the sin bin for disputing an extremely harsh yellow card that had been brandished in the direction of Eshilokun. This appeared to be poor officiating and I was waiting to hear the comment from someone that "he's being assessed" which of course he was!

The ten men made a fight of it though and Eshilokun made a good run, only to drag the shot wide with teammate George Owusu in a better position, but I don't blame any of our strikers when they want to have a shot if they are in a good position. We then had another scare when Keogh was robbed and nearly conceded a fourth goal, but it came anyway in the 73rd minute after Pierrick received the ball on the left and his pull back was struck home by Newbay Haile with the

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aid of a slight deflection.

At 4-0 things were getting desperate. We pushed for a goal and Edwards appeared to be clattered in the penalty area before Owusu then threw himself to the ground, picking up a yellow card for simulation as a result. However, he redeemed himself two minutes later after a Springett corner was flicked on by Eshilokun and the loose ball found its way through to Owusu who scooped the ball into the net from four yards out to reduce the deficit in the 78th minute.

The visitors sent a left wing cross over that clipped our bar on its way out, but we were getting on top now and Wilson was fouled as he broke away, earning a yellow card for his assailant before Owusu received a pass from Miller, but instead of returning the pass he chose to shoot and Fisher was untroubled by it. We did get a second goal in the 87th minute after a deep Edwards free kick resulted in a couple of collisions. Reece Tierney went up with Fisher and although there was contact, the referee felt there was no foul and with the visiting defence almost frozen, expecting a whistle for a foul, Nelson-Roberts nodded the loose ball over the line from a yard to make the score 4-2.

It was a grandstand finish as Owusu saw his next shot deflected just wide by Fisher's leg, before their new keeper made a fantastic save with his left foot to deny Edwards his first goal for the club and Thompson Adeyemi then sent his header over from a corner before Owusu then celebrated a "third" goal only to see the flag raised for offside.

We had finished quite strongly and in many ways it was a completely opposite ending to our previous meeting, but AFC Croydon Athletic had enough in the bank to see them over the line with that 4-2 score line and probably did deserve the points over the course of the ninety minutes, mostly for that blistering start to the second half when we had no answers, but football was of secondary importance to our club on this sad day.

Epsom & Ewell: Harvey Keogh (c), Tommy Williams, Ethan Nelson-Roberts, Steve Springett, Reece Tierney, Ollie Thompson, Luke Miller, Rory Edwards, Tijani Eshilokun, Thompson Adeyemi, Jaan Stanley

Subs: George Owusu for Stanley (54), Nick Wilson for Thompson (54), Nick Inwugwu for Williams (58)

Report Source: www.eefconline.co.uk

Madness at the Meadow

7 January 2024

Sandhurst Town 4-4 Epsom & Ewell. Combined Counties League – Premier Division. Tuesday 14th November 2023.

A superb advert for the Combined Counties League took place on the excellent artificial surface at Bottom Meadow; the home of both Sandhurst Town and their larger neighbours Bracknell Town, as two fully committed teams shared eight goals in an all out attacking encounter that unfortunately spilled over at times and led to a pair of red cards as a result.

We made just the one change to the starting eleven from our win at Tooting & Mitcham United and this was enforced as Ethan Nelson-Roberts had issues reaching the venue. Luke Miller stepped up from the bench, while amongst the substitutes was the returning Nick Wilson, who was a part of our successful promotion side last season.

The home side opened proceedings with an early shot into the side netting but we were soon attacking at the other end with Tijani Eshilokun going close with a shot from the edge of the area after good work from Miller on the right. Miller then sent over a teasing cross that the extremely tall keeper Henry Pidgeon was just able to reach at the second attempt before Harvey Keogh then made the first save of the night as he was down well to make a stop that was then cleared. His next save in the 15th minute was an even better one as the referee played an excellent advantage and allowed Jose Sani to break through on goal but Keogh stood up well and blocked the shot from fairly close range.

However, Sani would only have to wait two minutes before opening his account as a left wing break was followed by a cross to the far post that was knocked in by the unmarked player from close range. We then had another worry when a dangerous ball was played in and Nick Inwugwu turned the ball out at the far post for a corner, although his clearance was about a foot wide of the post which was a little too close for comfort!

At the other end, Miller was fouled on the edge of the area, although Steve Springett's free kick was just inches over the bar from a central position. We were building pressure though and a wayward back pass caused Pidgeon to concede a corner. From Springett's touch back Eshilokun delivered a near post delivery and Thompson Adeyemi's deft header from eight yards out went across Pidgeon and into the far corner to level things up in the 34th minute. We then took the lead just three minutes later when a ball towards the edge of the area was reached by Jaan Stanley, just ahead of the advancing Pidgeon. He nodded the ball past the keeper and was just able to get to the ball ahead of covering defenders to clip the ball over them into the net from a couple of yards out to register his fourth goal for the club, but his first in open play.

As we approached the break Keogh made two fantastic saves. Firstly, he got down well to save a powerful thirty yard free kick that threatened to zip past him on the wet surface and then in injury time he reacted well to tip a dipping shot over the bar at full stretch. We went in at the break with a narrow 2-1 lead but the knowledge that we would surely need more goals if we were to win this match.

We opened up the second half well and Eshilokun's free kick deflected over the bar for a corner. From the Edwards delivery Pidgeon jumped to claim the ball, but Adeyemi jumped in front of him and nodded the ball just inside the post from three yards out to give us a 3-1 lead in the 48th minute. Things got better still six minutes after that as Stanley made a run on the left and sent over a delightful far post cross that Miller controlled before smashing the ball low and back across Pidgeon from six yards; the ball going in off the Sandhurst far post to make it 4-1!

However, there has hardly time to advise the description of the goals on Twitter (@EEFCOnline) before the hosts pulled a

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goal back as Keogh's clearance went straight to Dylan Ive who lobbed our keeper with a speculative effort from twenty-five yards that dropped over everyone into the far corner of the net in the 57th minute.

Despite being 4-2 up you could never say we were comfortably ahead, although the eleven men would probably have held on and maybe scored more. However, the match turned against us in the 63rd minute when Tommy Williams brought down Logan Coles just outside our penalty area and near the touchline. It was hard to see exactly what went on from a hundred yards away, but it looked as though there was a reaction from Coles and Williams retaliated to it, leading to our man receiving a red card and Coles getting a yellow. Unfortunately as it is the second dismissal of the season for Williams, he will face a four game suspension for this action.

Most concerningly the whole incident was unnecessary as we were leading at the time and this gave the home side added impetus. Despite a couple of substitutions with Ethan Charles-Brazier making his debut and Wilson coming on for his first Epsom action of the season, the deficit was halved in the 70th minute when substitute Harvey Seeman volleyed in an equaliser from a low right wing cross. Keogh then made another close range save but the home side were rampant at this point and Seeman broke the offside trap to slot past Keogh to level the scores at 4-4 just five minutes later.

However, there was no denying that the match had become a little bit niggly and a Sandhurst substitute was fortunate not to see a red card for a horrible foul on Adeyemi; the referee determining that the yellow card was sufficient. Then in the 88th minute Wilson sent in a powerful long range free kick that Pidgeon did well to parry away and as Miller battled for the ball with Coles out wide, the Sandhurst man brought ours down and then attacked him. This was surely the easiest decision of the night for the referee, and to be fair the red card was raised very quickly in the direction of Coles. The match would finish as a ten v ten contest.

The final chances of the match took place in our penalty area as Keogh made a couple of important blocks before their final chance of the night was headed wide and after five minutes of injury time had been played, the final whistle blew and everyone was able to take a breath again. Well, except for those who had to leave immediately to get their cars out of the nearby car park that was due to close in a matter of minutes!

This was a breathless and pulsating end to end contest; one of the best Epsom matches I have watched in many years, and whilst you could look at this from a perspective of never wanting to lose a three goal lead, it has to be said that Sandhurst were well worthy of a draw over the ninety minutes and a point isn't such a bad position to be in as it takes us five points clear of the bottom club Colliers Wood United and with two matches in hand. Remember, regardless of tables you may see showing two clubs going down, only one club will be relegated this season, due to size increases to the Step Four Leagues for 2024/25. The two Management teams may not have enjoyed the openness of the play when a bit of control was needed to slow the game down, but it was a fantastic match for the neutrals!

Epsom & Ewell: Harvey Keogh, Tommy Williams, Nick Inwugwu, Steve Springett, Reece Tierney, Ollie Thompson, Luke Miller, Rory Edwards, Tijani Eshilokun, Thompson Adeyemi, Jaan Stanley

Subs: Ethan Charles-Brazier for Stanley (63), Nick Wilson for Springett (69), Sirak Negassi for Edwards (78), Ade Batula for Eshilokun (78)

Report Source: www.eefconline.co.uk

Epsom & Ewell FC imperious victory in Imperial Fields

7 January 2024



Tooting & Mitcham 0-3 Epsom & Ewell. Combined Counties League – Premier Division. Saturday 11th November 2023.

Cast your mind back to the 4th March 2003. Some young lad by the name of Justin Timberlake was at number 1 with Cry Me A River, Tony Blair was Prime Minister and our Manager was Adrian Hill, who was approaching the end of a club record thirteen year tenure in his second spell in charge. Oh yes, and we defeated Tooting & Mitcham United by four goals to three in an Isthmian League victory on our first ever visit to Imperial Fields.

Just over twenty years on, it was great to see our former Manager, now aged 78, amongst the crowd as we achieved our first victory over the Terrors since that date and it has to be said that this 3-0 win; our best since 1934, probably flattered us a little, as the match was very even for a large part of the contest. However, a second half sending off for the home side followed by a crazy own goal enabled us to cruise home comfortably by the time the final whistle blew.

There were five players in our starting eleven who had taken the field in Epsom colours last season, yet there were also three in the Tooting & Mitcham team! We renewed acquaintances with Tom Theobald, Johnny "Sonic" Akoto, and Warren Colman, not to mention another former Salt Kieron Campbell who was with us in three earlier spells and this wasn't even including Captain Alex Penfold who was an unused substitute and their Manager Jamie Byatt who was not in the playing line up on this occasion.

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For our part, we made just the two changes from our defeat against Sutton United with Tijani Eshilokun coming in for George Owusu, while Jaan Stanley played ahead of Luke Miller, although both of the replaced players were on the bench and would come on later in the contest.

The home side were in decent form and the match programme referred to their aim of reaching for the playoffs. Arguably they were, and remain under more pressure to achieve this season than our club does, and much of that pressure is centred on their Centre-forward Shay Brennan who had a number of goals already this season. However, one feature of this match was that he was kept very quiet throughout and it could be argued that this was our best defensive performance of the season as a result, as Harvey Keogh didn't have a massive amount to do in this match, certainly compared to the recent games we have played.

The first half probably should have finished 0-0 as neither team created a vast amount. Both keepers made the occasional save; Theobald, the hero in our penalty shoot out win over Selsey last season was down well to save from Rory Edwards, while Keogh made a couple of decent blocks too, but nothing too taxing. Despite the lack of real chances for either side, we took the lead in the 34th minute from a well directed Edwards corner that was challenged for by a number of players from both sides, but the ball looped up off them and was heading towards goal. Fortunately Eshilokun got a toe to the ball on its way down to get it over the line from close range and save me from trying to work out who the scorer would have been otherwise!

In reality, neither team probably deserved to be ahead to that point, but this is sometimes where expectation and pressure tells. A 0-0 draw would have been fine for us, but totally unacceptable to the home side who would have been well aware of our recent defeats to Knaphill and Farnham Town and aiming to replicate them. However, they were severely hampered in that target just two minutes into the second half when Edwards played a nice pass towards Stanley, only to then be taken out by a challenge from behind. It looked a naughty challenge, but was still a surprise to me when a straight red card was shown in the direction of Jayden Hutchings, although other people who saw the challenge from another angle said it was deserving of a straight red.

Ironically, the home side then had their best spell of the match, but they were struggling to find Brennan and Keogh kept out a good volley from the edge of the penalty area with his feet. He was then down well to make a low save that came from a decent move down the right and a near post strike, but the threat from the home side completely evaporated in the 81st minute when we scored our second goal. It's hard to say exactly how much credit we deserve for this one as it was mostly down to the home side as Sam Orisatoki sent the ball twenty yards back to Theobald who then missed the ball with his kick completely and despite rushing back to try and repair the damage, the ball had crossed the goal line by the time he was able to clear it and the Assistant flagged accordingly.

The goal knocked the stuffing out of the home side and the match was all over as a contest. Five minutes later we had a third as Edwards, arguably playing his best game for our club, got down the left wing and pulled the ball back to substitute Luke Miller in the vicinity of the penalty spot and he drilled the ball first time into Theobald's bottom right hand corner to seal the points. We had further chances in the closing minutes as Tommy Williams played a one-two with Ade Batula but dragged his shot beyond the far post, while Batula's shot was deflected over the bar, although no corner was awarded. In the end it didn't really matter and whilst the scoreline may have been slightly generous, I have bemoaned the fact that we were unlucky to lose by so many in recent weeks, so it's swings and roundabouts really!

I wrote last week that good, hard-working performances like those at Farnham and Knaphill were great, as long as we could take that on and get something from our next games, and I'm happy to report that we did exactly that at Imperial Fields with a performance that was very similar to the one at Spelthorne Sports three weeks previously, but was also our first three goal haul away from home in any competition since winning 3-1 at Billingshurst back in April and our largest away win since we scored five at Oakwood back in August 2022. We go to Sandhurst on Tuesday in good form and are now up to third from bottom of the table with games in hand. A good weekend!

Epsom & Ewell: Harvey Keogh, Tommy Williams, Nick Inwugwu, Steve Springett, Reece Tierney, Ollie Thompson, Ethan Nelson-Roberts, Rory Edwards, Tijani Eshilokun, Thompson Adeyemi, Jaan Stanley

Subs: Luke Miller for Stanley (59), Ade Batula for Eshilokun (77), George Owusu for Nelson-Roberts (87), Tino Carpene for Springett (93)

Report Source: www.eefconline.co.uk

Epsom Derby football cup defeat

7 January 2024



Epsom & Ewell 1-2 Sutton United. Surrey Senior Cup – Second Round. Tuesday 7th November 2023.

Our first match back in the Surrey Senior Cup for five years, coupled with the fact it was our first meeting for twelve years against our old rivals Sutton United, ensured that a healthy crowd, counted at 135, were present at Cobham for this encounter, maybe like me with memories of past encounters and rivalries long consigned to history.

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It is obviously difficult to assess the quality of this performance. This was often the case back when we were at Step Six and played Development and Reserve teams and you never really knew quite what standard of opponent you were going to face. Indeed we defeated a Sutton United Development eleven by seven clear goals in the Surrey Premier Cup not long ago, but it was clear from the start that this wasn't going to happen in this match. It was also good to see two former Salts in the Sutton dugout as Jimmy Dack and Ross White took charge for the visitors. Dack played for us as a 16 year old under Ricky Kidd from March 1989 before moving up the footballing pyramid, while White made his debut in March 2011, although it was his younger brother Sean that made the lion's share of their appearances for our first team.

Our club chose to insult people's intelligence on its social media by making out that we had narrowly lost to a team five divisions above us, when quite obviously we weren't playing their first eleven. Their Academy side provided more than enough of a challenge though and deservedly won this match 2-1, despite our boys taking the lead just after the hour. In fact, the margin of victory would probably have been greater, had Harvey Keogh not made half a dozen superb saves in what was arguably his best performance for the club.

Keogh made his first start with the Captain's armband on in the absence of injured Zach Powell, and it was also good to see Tommy Williams back on the field after his own injuries, while Caretaker Manager Steve Springett made his first start of the season too. Further forward Thompson Adeyemi came back into the starting eleven along with George Owusu as Sirak Negassi and Ade Batula dropped out, although the latter would join the action from the bench later. Finally, Ollie Thompson was good to go again after being withdrawn just before kick off against Knaphill and he came in for Ash Snadden.

We had an early scare in just the seventh minute when Jack Phillips sent an early strike just beyond out far post, but in response Luke Miller put Owusu through on goal and his shot was tipped onto the bar by Bradley House, although the offside flag would have ruled the strike out anyway. Adeyemi was next to strike the Sutton bar with a header, but he too was offside.

Just after the half hour mark Keogh made the first of his fine saves with a point blank range save from a far post header and he had to make another low one to keep the scores level at the break. However, the second half was just ten minutes old before he had to make a further good block from a header that was definitely going in.

Despite threatening rarely to that point, we then won a penalty in the 60th minute. A good move down our left flank ended with a trip on Edwards right in the corner of the penalty area. With Jaan Stanley on the bench and Marlon Pinder absent, Miller stepped up to take the spot kick, only to see it well reached by House, diving to his left to parry the ball for a corner. With the visitors maybe thinking they had got away with it, a Steve Springett corner eluded everyone and was nodded in from close range at the back post by Ethan Nelson-Roberts in the 62nd minute.

We made a couple more substitutions with Lewis Elsom, joining from Aldershot Town, made his debut when he came on for Williams, while Stanley replaced Miller, probably wishing he had come on ten minutes earlier to take the spot kick! Stanley was soon attacking and his deflected strike from twenty yards had House scrambling to keep the ball out, although the ball was going just wide anyway.

Unfortunately for us, as the match reached the closing stages the visitors drew level. With the clock showing the 76th minute a deep ball in from the right was knocked back across goal where a powerful low shot was again well blocked by Keogh, but the loose ball was then knocked in from ten yards out by George Vorster.

It was the least they deserved though, and Keogh had to be alert once again to tip a Sutton header over the bar, but was powerless to stop their winner in the 86th minute as a dangerous run from the left resulted in the ball being laid back into the path of Vorster who drilled a low shot into the far corner from around 15 yards out which proved to be the winner.

The game turned around quite rapidly here and it is becoming noticeable that we are conceding a lot of late goals. If you look at those which have come after the 80th minute of our matches, we have scored twice, yet conceded thirteen! I'm not sure if our people were aware of this, but hopefully something can and will be done that will increase either our fitness or our game management, or both. Luckily this match was largely irrelevant in the grand scheme of things, but with important League matches coming up against Tooting & Mitcham United, Sandhurst Town and AFC Croydon Athletic, we need to tighten up in those final stages.

Epsom & Ewell: Harvey Keogh, Tommy Williams, Nick Inwugwu, Steve Springett, Reece Tierney, Ollie Thompson, Ethan Nelson-Roberts, Rory Edwards, George Owusu, Thompson Adeyemi, Luke Miller

Subs: Ben Amissah for Owusu (55), Lewis Elsom for Williams (64), Jaan Stanley for Miller (67), Tino Carpene for Springett (75), Ade Batula for Nelson-Roberts (81)

Report Source: www.eefconline.co.uk

Epsom and Ewell FC caught Knapping?

7 January 2024



Epsom & Ewell 0-4 Knaphill. Combined Counties League – Premier Division. Saturday 4th November 2023. We have been

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unfortunate to come up against arguably the best two teams in the League in consecutive weeks and we appear to have been soundly beaten by both if you look solely at the score lines. However, as with last week's defeat at Farnham, we gave as good as we got for large periods of this game, only to fall apart in a ten minute spell at the end of the match, when the visitors scored three times to complete a 4-0 victory over our boys.

Now, all who read these reports will know that I'm honest with my summaries, even when we are poor, and it might sound like a broken record here, but we have actually played quite well in our last two matches. However, the two teams we have faced just had more quality than we do currently and whilst we are now a lot more competitive and will fancy our chances of survival this year, these two results will not define our season.

In a match that was in my opinion excellently officiated, with exception of a penalty shout towards the end that was never likely to be given, due to the referee allowing the game to flow instead of blowing the whistle every few seconds, we made a few changes to our starting eleven. In came Nick Inwugwu and Ash Snadden at the back, while further forward Luke Miller came in for his first start since returning to our club in a more central role than where we used to see him play a couple of seasons back while Sirak Negassi earned another start on the left wing after playing well from the bench last week. We then had to make a final change after Ollie Thompson tweaked his knee in the warm up and it was decided not to risk things; Reece Tierney coming in for him, although Thompson remained as a named player on the bench.

The opening ten minutes of the match were very much in favour of the confident visitors who had been unfortunate to pick up just the one point in Jersey the Saturday before and an early chance was headed over the bar before they took the lead in the 11th minute when a ball into the right hand channel was then set up into the stride of Calvin Camara running across the edge of the penalty area and he guided a low left footed shot beyond Harvey Keogh into the far corner to open the scoring.

The crowd of 98, boosted largely by the postponements of other local matches is definitely a positive advertisement for having an artificial surface. However, one of the negatives appears to be that we just cannot go ninety minutes on this surface without picking up at least one injury and this time, following a corner, Zach Powell went down after twisting his lower leg as he landed and he required treatment, although was unable to continue, so Thompson Adeyemi joined the action and it appeared as though Keogh took the Captain's armband on. If our keeper was Captain, it would represent one of our youngest ever players to hold the position.

The remaining twenty minutes of the half was very even, although it was apparent that the visitors were very solid at the back and we rarely threatened to break through. Inwugwu made a good run on the right and reached the touchline, but his cross was parried away by Jos Barker and we went in at the break, just the one goal down, but very much in the match still.

The first item of note in the second half came when the referee had to stop play to take issue with one of our substitutes, George Owusu, who was warming up perfectly normally on the touchline. However, his fluorescent yellow top was clashing with that of the Knaphill team and he was asked to remove it!

The game continued in a similar pattern to that of the first half with both teams cancelling each other out in midfield. Rory Edwards and Adeyemi were both heavily involved, but we were unable to find that pass through to our front men. In the 69th minute a deep Knaphill corner was met with a towering downward header at the far post but Keogh did really well to keep the ball out. However, the visitors were getting closer and they had a goal disallowed for offside just four minutes later before putting another header over the bar from a good position. Then Keogh was down low to make another good save from close range as Camara threatened a second goal.

However, it wasn't until the 80th minute when the man of the match got involved. Joining the action as a substitute Spencer Whitfield received a clever slide rule pass inside Inwugwu, which he ran onto and cut back before clipping the ball past Keogh into the far corner from 12 yards to give Knaphill that two goal cushion.

And with the result no longer in doubt, the visitors really turned it on. Keogh had to make another low save to turn the shot around the post. Owusu had by now been introduced although Ethan Nelson-Roberts' good work on the left was wasted a little when Owusu sent the shot high and wide. Then in the 88th minute we gave the ball away in midfield and Knaphill broke on the left, sending a sweeping delivery across goal to Stacey Thripp at the far post and his delivery was bundled in by Whitfield from close range. Moments later Edwards tumbled in the area, and whilst we have seen penalties given before, you knew it wouldn't be given today and we allowed the visitors to break where Whitfield then completed his hat trick at which point the substitute was then promptly subbed off again!

In summary, we competed well for all but the first ten and the last ten minutes of this match, but against the top teams in this division we need to accept we are still a fair way short and the upcoming match at Imperial Fields against Tooting & Mitcham United will provide a much better guide of where we are likely to finish this season.

Epsom & Ewell: Harvey Keogh, Nick Inwugwu, Ethan Nelson-Roberts, Ash Snadden, Zach Powell (c), Reece Tierney, Luke Miller, Rory Edwards, Ade Batula, Jaan Stanley, Sirak Negassi

Subs: Thompson Adeyemi for Powell (25), George Owusu for Negassi (55), Tino Carpene for Batula (70), Marlon Pinder for Miller (84)

Report Source: www.eefconline.co.uk

Scoreline does not reflect performance

7 January 2024

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EPSOM & EWELL TIMES
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19th November 2026

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Farnham Town 5-1 Epsom & Ewell. Combined Counties League – Premier Division. Saturday 28th October 2023.

Our trip to the Memorial Ground, home to Farnham Town, was always going to be a challenging one. They have a large budget, a great team and will almost certainly go up as Champions. In four home League matches coming into this match they had scored seventeen goals and conceded none, so under the circumstances, a 5-1 defeat not only represented the first time any club had breached their home defences in this competition, but I will go further and say that the scoreline was harsh on our boys who battled hard for the entire ninety minutes and deserved more than the one goal we registered.

In fact we more than held our own for large parts of this game and although our hosts held the balance of possession over the match, it was only the clinical finishing of our opponents, and Darryl Sanders in particular with a first half hat trick, that proved to be the main difference between the teams.

Our Manager Steve Springett was back in the dugout and as you might expect after our win at Spelthorne Sports he made only one change with Marlon Pinder returning to the starting eleven in place of Sirak Negassi who was on the bench. We made a bright start with a good run on the left from Jaan Stanley after just 50 seconds, although his low cross was just cut out by a defender ahead of the oncoming Ade Batula.

The opening ten minutes were fairly even and it almost came as a surprise when Farnham took the lead in the twelfth minute from a free kick unnecessarily conceded, although still some way out. However, Harry Cooksley's free kick was delivered to the near post where Sanders met the ball with a deft, glancing header that gave Harvey Keogh no chance at all as the ball nestled in the far corner of the goal. Worse was to come just ninety seconds later as Sanders collected the ball from a throw in and sent a superb curling effort right into the top corner from nearly twenty-five yards to put the hosts two goals up.

Moments later we had a good chance after a poor clearance from Pat Nash which went straight to Stanley, but with a decent sight of goal he rushed his chance and scuffed the ball gently through to Nash who was able to recover his position by this time. We then had a moment of controversy when Keogh came out to punch the ball clear, only to be completely taken out by a Farnham player. Luckily our keeper was able to continue after treatment, yet not even a card was issued to the assailant. The cynic in me would call this a home town decision and this belief was enhanced when ten minutes later Tijani Eshilokun picked up a yellow card for a slightly late challenge that wasn't in the same category as the previous assault.

We were having some success with deliveries into the box as we picked up on the second ball once the initial deliveries were half cleared, and Eshilokun had the next chance as the ball fell to him just outside the penalty areas, but his volley wasn't hard enough to trouble Nash. We were actually having a real go at our hosts and Batula broke down the right, before cutting inside onto his left foot, but his attempt went wide of the near post. Keogh was down to make a good save from a powerful Farnham strike but we were soon up the other end again and Batula's shot was deflected for a corner that came to nothing.

The home side were on the attack soon after and sent a header just wide of Keogh's post, but just before half time a good passing move ended with Sanders almost walking the ball into the net to complete his hat trick and we went in at the break three goals down, which was incredibly harsh on our boys.

Just before the break we had replaced the injured Jabari Ofosu-Hernandez with Nick Inwugwu and for the first time in club history we then made a quadruple substitution as early as the 51st minute, leaving our bench hoping we didn't suffer any injuries in the remainder of the match. We have never made five changes to a line up this early in a competitive match before, but at 3-0 down, it was worth a gamble!

Farnham nearly extended their lead two minutes after this, but Adam Liddle was closed down well by Keogh and put his shot wide. In response a Rory Edwards corner was met by a Thompson Adeyemi header, but the flick on went beyond the far post and out for a goal kick. The next corner wasn't such a good one, but it was cleared to the edge of the area where substitute Negassi let fly with a powerful strike that was arrowing straight for the top corner, only for it to be diverted by the slightest deflection from the head of Sanders, who was now saving goals at one end instead of scoring them at the other!

The next corner again didn't get past the first man and as the home team broke away, Ethan Nelson-Roberts had to take one for the team as he cleared out the attacking player. Fortunately there were defenders covering and he received only a yellow card.

We attacked again and a great pass from Edwards to Negassi on the left resulted in him cutting inside his man and sending him the wrong way but his shot was well blocked by Nash from twelve yards. However, we conceded a fourth goal in the 62nd minute when a deep Farnham corner was headed back across goal , where it was then headed into the danger area and Liddle was able to nod the ball in from close range.

The clouds had been gathering during the second half and as was the case at Spelthorne Sports seven days previously, the heavens opened just after the hour mark, but in the 68th minute we had some reward for our hard work as some great interplay in midfield enabled the ball to be fed through to another substitute George Owusu who rounded the keeper before slotting the ball into the net with his left foot.

The game continued to swing from end to end and Keogh had to make another good save from Owen Dean before Nelson-

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Roberts produced a mazy run, beating three men before teeing up substitute Luke Miller, whose shot from twelve yards maybe should have been a little higher and Nash was able to get across to palm the ball away for a corner, which again didn't get past the first man. If there was a criticism today, it was that we didn't use our set pieces well enough.

There was still time for another opportunity at both ends. A nice Eshilokun pass to Negassi gave him the chance to embarrass Michael Kinsella again, although the end product was straight at Nash, and then in the second minute of injury time Dean broke through on the right hand channel and finished clinically past the exposed Keogh.

This was one of our better performances of the season. A few weeks ago we went to Jersey Bulls and subsided meekly without a shot on target, but this performance, against a team that will surely wrap up the League title before March is out and may even be walking out at Wembley Stadium in the FA Vase Final come May, proved that we are now competitive enough at this level to survive the season. We have a hard set of fixtures this month, but the most difficult of them all on paper has now passed, and whilst no one can ever be happy to be on the wrong end of a 5-1 defeat, I thought there were many positives that our team could take from this match.

Epsom & Ewell: Harvey Keogh, Jabari Ofosu-Hernandez, Ethan Nelson-Roberts, Thompson Adeyemi, Zach Powell (c), Ollie Thompson, Ade Batula, Rory Edwards, Marlon Pinder, Tijani Eshilokun, Jaan Stanley

Subs: Nick Inwugwu for Ofosu-Hernandez (45+1), Sirak Negassi for Batula (51), Luke Miller for Stanley (51), Reece Tierney for Powell (51), George Owusu for Pinder (51)

Report Source: www.eefconline.co.uk

A hard-earned three points for Salts

7 January 2024

Spelthorne Sports 0-1 Epsom & Ewell FC. Combined Counties League – Premier Division.

On Saturday we visited the Spelthorne Sports Club for another important League match. This was a venue we had visited on four previous occasions without suffering defeat and we extended that sequence to five with a hard working 1-0 win, providing us with our second League win in a row. The win also gave us our third clean sheet, but unlike the first two against Met Police, our keeper Harvey Keogh had to work hard for this one, making some superb saves during the match.

In the absence of our Caretaker Manager Steve Springett; on a holiday that was booked before he took on the role, the bench duties fell to Assistant Manager Ash Snadden and Coach Sam Groombridge and three changes were made from our friendly match against Merstham last week. Zach Powell returned from injury ahead of Nick Inwugwu, while Sirak Negassi came in for Marlon Pinder and Tijani Eshilokun came in for Snadden and we kicked off in front of a rather pitiful crowd of 37, although admittedly, any "floating supporters" would have always chosen to go to an FA Vase match on this day instead.

We made a bright start with some early interplay on the left between Rory Edwards and Jaan Stanley with the latter's cross just cut out by the home keeper Shay Honey. In response the home side sent a deep cross to the far post, but the header went over the bar and a few minutes later another right wing cross was acrobatically volleyed over the bar by Kelvin Karanja; a player that had given us a lot of trouble a few years back when at Bedfont & Feltham.

We then had a real scare in the 14th minute after Keogh scuffed a goal kick straight to Leon Iloube and although our defenders closed him down quickly, he still sent a stinging shot towards goal that our keeper somehow clawed away from the top corner to record a fabulous save. This became doubly important a minute later when Ade Batula sent a really good crossfield pass over to Jaan Stanley. Stanley cut back and it looked like the chance might be gone, but then he got round his man and was brought down in the penalty area. I was expecting a yellow card for the defender, but ultimately the award of a penalty was the more important issue and Stanley sent the keeper the wrong way to give us the lead in the 15th minute.

Although we didn't know it at the time, this goal would be the only one of the match and the rest of the match could arguably be described as attritional! We battled to cover every inch and our job was made a little easier when the Spelthorne Captain, Jamie Fuller chose to argue his case with the referee and found himself in the sinbin. You can always tell when a referee is being assessed as it more often than not leads to a very fussy and over officious display from the man in the middle and this was definitely the case in this match! Admittedly, he had a tricky job in trying to deal with the home bench who yelled and appealed for everything. On one of these occasions Ollie Thompson picked up a yellow card after a coming together between him and another player which looked completely accidental but it's possible that the official was swayed into awarding the free kick and once it was, I felt that a card would follow.

Then we had another great opportunity on the half hour as Batula got through on goal, but his touch let him down and the ball rolled tamely through to Honey. If we had taken advantage here against the extra man, maybe this would have resulted in a more comfortable position but Fuller was back on the field soon enough and the chance was gone.

The half ended with a couple of Epsom half chances. Eshilokun sent a dangerous looking free kick just wide after Edwards had been fouled nearly thirty yards out, and then Sirak Negassi sent a decent effort just wide from twenty yards with his

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weaker left foot. We had just about shaded the first half as the players went off for the break.

The second half got going under leaden skies which would eventually become a fairly solid downpour and we nearly had a second goal to celebrate only two minutes in when Thompson Adeyemi clipped a ball goalwards from twenty yards and it ended up only three inches past the post and into the side netting. However, the home side were on the attack soon after and Keogh did well to spread himself to block a shot over the bar.

We had another worry in the 53rd minute when Zach Powell, now Captain following the departure of Callum Wilson to Guildford City, fouled a Spelthorne player. It was hard to tell if it was inside the area or not, but either way we were spared by the sight of the Assistant's flag going up for offside and the danger was over.

Bearing in mind that the referee had already made it clear he wouldn't stand for any dissent, it was incredibly hard to believe that anyone would take the risk again, yet in the 54th minute Daniel Watts for the home side and then Eshilokun for us in the 59th both found themselves in the sinbin too after taking issue with decisions that hadn't gone their way. Both had a very strong case for a free kick, but we need to learn not to say anything to an official, particularly when they have already sent someone for a ten minute rest previously!

It nearly cost us when a left wing cross from the home side was headed goalwards, but Keogh was there to tip the ball over for a corner. From the corner a delivery clearly hit the hand of one of our players, but the referee wasn't interested in the subsequent penalty shout, despite the rather desperate pleas of the bench some forty yards away from the incident!

As the game reached the closing stages, it certainly was to our advantage to break the game up and Adeyemi picked up a yellow card for delaying a free kick, but when a card was really deserved, after a late lunge on Ethan Nelson-Roberts, there was just a lecture given instead. We welcomed Luke Miller back into the side and he made his 50th appearance for our club, nearly two seasons after his 49th when he joined the action in the 77th minute, but by now we were more interested in hanging on to what we had, instead of attacking too much and Keogh was next to get a yellow card for delaying his goal kick. However, Keogh had already kicked the ball by the time the card was waved, and more time was actually wasted because the referee pulled the game back for a re-kick!

The home side continued to press for an equaliser, but they wouldn't threaten again and in fact the final opportunity of the match went to Eshilokun who nearly caught Honey out from twenty yards with a chip, but although the keeper's clearance wasn't the best contact, it was good enough to keep the ball out.

The final whistle led to celebrations from the players and few supporters that had made the journey and there was an additional bonus as results elsewhere ensured that the win actually moved us off the bottom of the table for the first time in weeks. It may be optimistic to expect to get anything out of our next two matches against Farnham Town and Knaphill, but we were looking like being cut adrift two weeks ago and yet now we are back amongst the other teams with games in hand. We're not done yet!

Epsom & Ewell: Harvey Keogh, Jabari Ofosu-Hernandez, Ethan Nelson-Roberts, Thompson Adeyemi, Zach Powell (c), Ollie Thompson, Sirak Negassi, Rory Edwards, Ade Batula, Tijani Eshilokun, Jaan Stanley

Subs: Tino Carpene for Negassi (61), Luke Miller for Batula (77), Nick Inwugwu for Edwards (92)

Report Source: www.eefconline.co.uk

Salts shot down by friendly fire

7 January 2024

Merstham 3-1 Epsom & Ewell FC. Mid-season Friendly. Saturday 14th October 2023.

With a spare Saturday on the schedule it made total sense to arrange a friendly against another team in a similar situation; that of Step Four Merstham, who edged us out by three goals to one in a match played on the artificial surface at Carshalton Athletic.

This match was arranged on Tuesday, yet our club only saw fit to announce it on Saturday morning, by which time most Epsom people had probably already decided to visit another match. It is a real concern that our club says it wants a new ground and says it wants supporters, yet wants to restrict all information to a small Committee, leaving everyone else in the dark. Fortunately Merstham did advertise the match and I counted 47 present at the impressive Colston Avenue ground.

We have played here on 35 previous occasions, yet if you exclude an Isthmian League Youth Cup Final win over Bromley in 1991, we hadn't won here since 1953 and hadn't even scored since we lost 2-1 here back in 1986, so it was nice for us to hit the net in the final minutes, even if Tino Carpene's penalty ended up as just a consolation goal. For what it's worth though, I thought we deserved a little more from this match, particularly in the second half after we had made nine changes at the break.

We started with the same line up we had used in our recent win over Colliers Wood United, except for the addition of Nick Inwugwu for the injured Zach Powell and the return of Ash Snadden ahead of Tijani Eshilokun, but the first half was almost exclusively in favour of our opponents with Harvey Keogh having to make a couple of good low saves to keep them out in the opening twenty minutes. They led with a well worked goal, starting with a great piece of skill in midfield that left our boys behind and a lay off for a shot that Keogh was able to block, although Lorenzo Lewis was there first to tuck away the loose ball from close range in the 34th minute.

We had our best chance in the final seconds of the half when Ade Batula cut in from the right, but his low left-footed strike was well kept out by the leg of the Merstham keeper.

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However, the second half appeared much better from an Epsom point of view as we started to make progress. Eshilokun joined the fray and scuffed an early shot at goal from a good position, while another substitute Sirak Negassi also saw his shot saved. In response Merstham also had a low shot well blocked by Toby Colwell who was in goal for the second half, but they then extended their lead with a superb strike into the roof of the net from the edge of the penalty area in the 62nd minute.

Negassi was linking well with George Owusu on the left and the latter won a corner, although the delivery was over everyone. Then on the break a low ball in from the left was tapped in from close range at the far post to make the score 3-0 in the 73rd minute. This was a little harsh as we had been putting some pressure on and Merstham had conceded a couple of fouls that most definitely would have earned yellow cards in a competitive fixture. A Steve Springett free kick was well held by the keeper before a defender brought down Owusu for a penalty in the 89th minute. Last week Owusu had been fouled for a spot kick and Carpene had wanted the penalty, only for him to then give it up to Owusu, but this time Carpene held on to the ball and scored in almost the identical part of the goal as Owusu had!

Overall you could see that Merstham were at a higher level than us and they deserved their win. Having seen us play against their League rivals Corinthian Casuals and Met Police, I feel that Merstham are a better team than those two were and will be fine this season. Bearing in mind that we used twenty players in this contest, a 3-1 defeat was fairly promising under the circumstances. We now visit Spelthorne Sports in our next fixture, hoping to build on this.

Epsom & Ewell: Harvey Keogh, Jabari Ofosu-Hernandez, Ethan Nelson-Roberts, Rory Edwards, Nick Inwugwu, Ollie Thompson, Ade Batula, Ash Snadden, Marlon Pinder, Thompson Adeyemi, Jaan Stanley

Subs: Toby Colwell for Keogh (HT), Ben Amissah for Ofosu-Hernandez (HT), Reece Tierney for Thompson (HT), Steve Springett for Nelson-Roberts (HT), Tijani Eshilokun for Edwards (HT), Kiyo Brown for Batula (HT), Sirak Negassi for Adeyemi (HT), George Owusu for Stanley (HT), Tino Carpene for Pinder (HT), Ellis Rowland for Snadden (61)

Report Source: www.eefconline.co.uk

Epsom and Ewell FC finally win with a glut

7 January 2024



Epsom & Ewell 5-1 Colliers Wood United. Combined Counties League – Premier Division. Saturday 7th October 2023.

We may have had some cup wins already this season, but whilst they are always welcome, it is the bread and butter of the League that is most important, and so to finally secure our first points of the season at the eighth attempt with a 5-1 win over Colliers Wood United was a massive step towards closing the gap between us and the rest.

Following the resignation of our Manager James Scott on Wednesday, interim Manager Steve Springett made four changes to the line up after Tuesday's loss to Balham, two of which were enforced as Callum Wilson and Ayran Kugathas were only able to attend with their pet dogs in tow, following their hamstring injuries, so Jabari Ofosu-Hernandez and Tijani Eshilokun came in for them as we switched from three at the back to a four, while on the wings Jaan Stanley and Ade Batula came in ahead of Sirak Negassi and George Owusu, although they would join the action later.

Who knows whether the visitors, sitting just one place above us in the League, were expecting us to play three at the back, but by the time they had found out we were operating a different formation, we were in front. The goal came from a Stanley penalty in the fifth minute, but the build up to this goal was superb and needs reporting. It started off with a great pass from Ollie Thompson into the left hand channel where Stanley sent a ball into the danger area. This was only half cleared to Rory Edwards who then saw his shot blocked, but only as far as Ethan Nelson-Roberts, who was tripped right on the edge of the penalty area. Or so I thought! Actually, the referee decided that the tackle was inside the box and awarded the spot kick, with very little complaint from the visitors about whether it was in or out. Marlon Pinder had taken our last penalty, but Captain Zach Powell made it quite clear that Jaan would be taking this one and he stepped up and finished comfortably past Jack Minchin.

We continued to press against a lack-lustre Colliers Wood and Thompson Adeyemi found Stanley again, although his shot was just beyond the post before we realised it was all academic anyway as the offside flag had been raised. The visitors then sent a free kick beyond everyone from a dangerous position, but we were soon back on the attack again and our second goal followed in the 20th minute. Again, this started with our defence as Powell pushed towards the area and the ball found its way to Ade Batula. His low shot was well saved by Minchin who got down well to stick a hand out, but Pinder reacted first to slot away the loose ball from seven yards.

It just kept getting better though and we scored a third goal just eight minutes later as Stanley made good progress on the left before sending over a delicious cross that was over Minchin and a defender, but not Batula who jumped to head the ball back across goal into the net from just four yards out. We had further opportunities before the break when Batula struck powerfully at goal, only for Minchin to tip the ball over, and then from the following corner, Adeyemi headed a good chance wide from 12 yards, having beaten his man to the ball. Although the Wood had a goal disallowed in the 42nd minute for offside, it was the first time this season the supporters were able to relax a little at the half!

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The second half stopped almost as soon as it had started, following an ankle injury to Daniel Webster and it seems like there is always at least one injury in matches on this pitch. A second would follow later, both of which would require the visitors to use substitutes, but in the meantime we extended our lead. Just nine minutes into the second half Eshilokun wasn't closed down on the edge of the area and he fired an unstoppable rocket past Minchin to become the second former Wood player to score against them in this match following Pinder's earlier strike.

On the hour another good Stanley ball in was cut out at the last moment by a defender, although he then picked up a silly yellow card for delaying the restart moments later. The Ofosu-Hernandez cleared the danger as the ball bobbled around in our six yard area for a moment. We made a couple of substitutions and Owusu interchanged passes with Pinder before sending a good ball in from the right but Edwards' attempted back flick wasn't the cleanest and the ball dribbled through to the grateful Minchin. The game was a little more even at this stage, even if it was over as a real contest.

We attacked again, only for Owusu to be pulled up for a foul when he was clean through, when all he had been guilty of was being stronger than his man. Kiyo Brown was also on the field by now and he received the ball from Nelson-Roberts but chose to shoot from a poor angle with team mates waiting. Had the shot been powerful he might have been forgiven, but it wasn't and his teammates made it quite clear what they thought about his decision making! Negassi would have a similar chance a few minutes later, but he too would make the wrong choice, although the shot did at least require a good save this time. The visitors saw a free kick deflect wide of Nelson-Roberts and Harvey Keogh watched a speculative effort sail over from twenty yards.

However, in the 94th minute a right wing cross from Evans Lamboh was headed in from close range by Christian Amankwah to spoil what would have been our first clean sheet since August, but within a couple of minutes we were celebrating again as Owusu was brought down in the 96th minute with Minchin picking up a yellow card and a minute later Owusu struck home the penalty he had won with a clinical finish to complete the scoring at 5-1.

This was a massive fixture for both clubs and should have been a tight encounter. The fact that it was so one-sided is largely because we were very good and Colliers Wood were so, well, wooden! This was inexcusable for such an important match and would have been obvious to the visiting officials, who sacked their Manager Ben Ewing within 24 hours. We now sit just a point behind them with two games in hand, which is a much healthier position than would have been the case if we had lost, as we'd have been at least seven points adrift of everyone else.

So, for once, I am able to report that "New Manager Bounce" does actually exist and is alive and well here at Cobham! The phenomenon that so often has gone against us in the past, has on this occasion come to our rescue and it will be interesting to see whether Springett throws his hat into the ring for the permanent job, or whether he or indeed, the club see this as a temporary role. Either way, he now has two weeks off to think about it as our match at Sandhurst Town, scheduled for next Saturday, has been moved back and we don't take the field until we visit Alton on 21st October. If you are a regular supporter, please make sure to let everyone know this, as our club haven't bothered to publicise the fact!

Epsom & Ewell: Harvey Keogh, Jabari Ofosu-Hernandez, Ethan Nelson-Roberts, Rory Edwards, Zach Powell (c), Ollie Thompson, Ade Batula, Tijani Eshilokun, Marlon Pinder, Thompson Adeyemi, Jaan Stanley

Subs: Nick Inwugwu for Eshilokun (58), Kiyo Brown for Batula (66), George Owusu for Stanley (68), Sirak Negassi for Adeyemi (70), Tino Carpene for Pinder (70)

Report Source: www.eefconline.co.uk

2 = brace, 3 = hat-trick, 4 = haul, 5 = glut, 6 = double hat-trick, 7 = haul-trick

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3rd narrow defeat in a row for Salts

7 January 2024

Epsom & Ewell 1-2 Balham. Combined Counties League – Premier Division. Tuesday 3rd October 2023.

For the third time in eight days we found ourselves involved in a competitive and fairly even contest, but in all three matches we had to accept a single goal defeat. This loss, our seventh straight defeat in the League, confirms our third worst start to a season in club history after 1963/64 (11 losses) and 1970/71 (9 losses) and although we have been getting closer, further injuries in this match may well hurt us going forward into another big match at the weekend.

James Scott made three changes to the line up against Balham; a team with whom he was previously connected. At the back it was good to see our Captain Callum Wilson back on the field, with Nick Inwugwu reverting to the bench, while up front Marlon Pinder returned in place of the absent Tino Carpene and Sirak Negassi earned a start ahead of Ade Batula who was also amongst the substitutes. However, there weren't many others in the dug out with Ash Snadden still away following his wedding, while Kevin Espinosa was also absent for this match, so Alfie Wyld our physio was the only other person there!

Equally concerning are the numbers coming through the gates right now and just 50 were present for this match, while our club chose to produce no match tweets for this contest after a woefully brief set were produced on Saturday. The club really needs to publicise itself much better. If only there was someone out there who would be prepared to help with that, and yes, I have offered!

The match started at a frenetic pace and the visitors almost took the lead in the fourth minute when a shot from their number 11 came back off the underside of our bar and was cleared to safety. Unfortunately before we faced the corner we had to make a substitution after Ayran Kugathas had hurt his hamstring making an early run and he was replaced by Jabari Ofosu-Hernandez in just the sixth minute.

In response Pinder tried his luck from thirty yards having seen the keeper off his line, but the shot lacked the requisite

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height and was easily gathered. However, we were the authors of our own misfortune in the 21st minute after we pushed forward on the right, but a wayward pass was intercepted and with one pass James Adebayo was through on their left and he ran in from forty yards out and slotted the ball past Harvey Keogh for the opening goal.

We were back on terms within five minutes after good work on the left between Ethan Nelson-Roberts and Sirak Negassi resulted in a deep cross over to the far side where Ofosu-Hernandez was waiting and from just outside the area he struck a piledriver which the keeper did well to parry up into the air. However, as the ball fell to earth Negassi nipped in from a very narrow angle only a couple of yards out and knocked the ball across the goal into the far side netting for the equaliser. It was our first ever goal against Balham at the third attempt.

However, just as it looked like we had gained a foothold in the match we were behind again. Literally within thirty seconds of the kick off they broke straight through on goal and Tom Read knocked the ball past the exposed Keogh to restore the Balham lead at 2-1 in the 27th minute.

The game continued at a frantic pace with both teams pressing each other and covering a large amount of ground and we had a couple of half chances, firstly when Rory Edwards struck at goal and then when Ollie Thompson met a flicked on corner at the far post, but Edwards' shot was straight at the keeper while Thompson was at full stretch and couldn't keep the header on target.

We then suffered another injury after Wilson also injured his hamstring and Inwugwu came on for him. In fact it was Inwugwu who prevented a third goal for Balham in first half injury time with a brave saving challenge which was originally awarded as a corner, before it was pointed out to the referee that our man had been fouled in the process of making the clearance and eventually the free kick was awarded! However, we were still very much in this match as the teams went off for the break.

The second half started with a great piece of skill from Negassi who left one man on his backside, before being taken out by a high challenge from their 11. On a level of 0 being ground level and 10 being Jaevon Dyer v Wick, this was at least an eight, although the official decided that a yellow card was sufficient punishment. A few minutes later a shot on our goal was deflected and Keogh was out to collect before being flattened by Adebayo and again this was one of those cases where on another day we might have seen a red card, but leniency was again the outcome as only the yellow was produced.

The visitors had a shout for a penalty in the 68th minute but it wasn't given and the resultant shot went just wide of our goal. Tijani Eshilokun came on for his debut, having featured in pre-season and showed some good touches, but the match was becoming a midfield affair with few chances. The only real chance in this period of the match came with an outrageous attempt from nearly 40 yards that caught Keogh off his line and he had to recover very quickly to just claw the ball away from his goal line for a corner.

Eshilokun was unfortunate with a low curling shot that the visiting custodian was definitely concerned about, but the ball evaded both him and his far post by a matter of inches and as time started to run out we then saw the Balham keeper drop the ball, only to be saved by the referee who saw some sort of foul in there, when there was none. Then in injury time it all boiled over in the final minutes of the match over on the touchline. It was hard to see exactly what happened but Pinder appeared to pick up a yellow card as did our Manager, along with the visitors Adebayo who then had to leave the field as it was his second of the night. However, he had already been subbed off by then so the visitors still finished the game with eleven men and after twelve minutes of added time had been played the final whistle confirmed another defeat for our boys.

There have been definite improvements in recent matches and there have also been a number of injuries too. None of our last three opponents could have complained had we come away with at least a point from any of these matches. However, time is running out as we approach our two most important matches of the season, against Colliers Wood United at home and Sandhurst Town away. Defeats to these two clubs will leave us well adrift of the rest of the League, and it is essential that we can have as many fit men as possible for these encounters. A bit of support would be nice too please. Come on down!

Epsom & Ewell: Harvey Keogh, Ayran Kugathas, Ethan Nelson-Roberts, Ollie Thompson ©, Zach Powell, Callum Wilson, George Owusu, Rory Edwards, Marlon Pinder, Thompson Adeyemi, Sirak Negassi

Subs: Jabari Ofosu-Hernandez for Kugathas (6), Nick Inwugwu for Wilson (35), Tijani Eshilokun for Thompson (70), Ade Batula for Owusu (76), Jaan Stanley for Negassi (81)

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