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Epsom & Ewell FC imperious victory in Imperial Fields

12 November 2023

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.

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

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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

12 November 2023

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.

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

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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?

12 November 2023



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

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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

12 November 2023

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.

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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-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

12 November 2023

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

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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 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

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Salts shot down by friendly fire

12 November 2023

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.

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

12 November 2023

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

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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!

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

12 November 2023

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 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.

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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)

Report Source: www.eefconline.co.uk

Not quite a “veni, vidi, vici” victory for Romans

12 November 2023

Tadley Calleva 1-0 Epsom & Ewell FC. Combined Counties League – Premier Division. Saturday 30th September 2023.

Ultimately our latest match was decided by a clinical Kieran Rodgers finish from an errant and arguably unnecessary Ollie Thompson pass in the 40th minute. However, this doesn’t tell the full story here as a resolute Epsom side more than held their own in this match and were most definitely worth a point against a Tadley side that had scored twelve goals in the last week.

In fact the **Romans**, so named because of the old Roman settlement of Silchester just down the road, probably thought this would be a fairly easy day at the office after their heavy FA Vase win on Saturday followed by a five goal romp against Sheerwater, who of course, we failed to beat two weeks ago. However that would not prove to be the case here as our boys ensured this would become a tight and competitive encounter between two evenly matched sides.

Many of our regulars were missing once again, although Zach Powell did return after a few games unavailable. He probably thought he would be eased in after being named on the bench, but an injury to Reece Tierney in the warm up forced our Manager’s hand and left us with only four other substitutes for the match. Additionally, Marlon Pinder and Sirak Negassi were absent and so Tino Carpene and Ade Batula came back into the starting line up, as did Ethan Nelson-Roberts at the expense of Jabari Ofosu-Hernandez with Ayran Kugathas moving from the left to his more regular position out on the right.

We started brightly and took the game to our hosts in the opening stages. George Owusu had a near post cross cut out from a dangerous position and then in the sixth minute Carpene set up Ade Batula for a low shot from the edge off the penalty area that took a slight deflection on its way and made the save by Tadley keeper Craig Atkinson even more special as he stuck out a right glove to keep it out when it threatened to creep under him. Atkinson has played against us on numerous occasions previously for Cove and Hartley Wintney amongst others and always performs well against us.

We forced another couple of half-chances as we continued to display the attacking threat from Tuesday’s League Cup match, but the home side gradually began to find a way around us and created a couple of opportunities of their own. Harvey Keogh dealt with the first of these fairly comfortably, although with the second, a weak punch nearly cost us as the ball fell for a Tadley striker whose shot was on target but blocked by Thompson Adeyemi amid futile shouts for handball.

We attacked again and Thompson’s far post header was on target but claimed easily by Atkinson, but we then had to defend for a few minutes after Powell cut his knee and was forced to leave the pitch for treatment and if we had conceded from one ball across the area, it would have been hard to swallow as I couldn’t see why the referee wasn’t allowing our man back on. Neal tried his luck from thirty yards as the home team seemed to be running out of ideas, but our set pieces weren’t any better with many deliveries either not getting past the first man, or way beyond all our players. We did have a good chance just after the half hour when a Nick Inwugwu ball towards the far post resulted in two defenders going for the same ball, which then fell kindly for Carpene, but his shot lacked real power and was easily claimed by Atkinson.

Next to try his luck was Nelson-Roberts whose corner was returned back to him out on the right, from where he cut in and struck at goal, but he missed the target with better options waiting in the centre.

It was beginning to look like a frustrating day for both teams when out of nowhere we conceded. Thompson out on the left played the ball square to where he thought Powell would be, only to give the ball straight to Rodgers who ran in on goal and gave Keogh no chance in the 41st minute. It nearly became two in first half injury time with a smart shot on the turn from Fragata, but Keogh was down well to turn the ball away as it was creeping inside his left hand post otherwise. Half time came with no one on either team particularly happy with the situation.

We made a change at the half with Jaan Stanley coming on in his favoured number ten position for Inwugwu as we reverted to a 4-3-3 which looked more like a 4-2-1-3 personally, and we had a good chance in the 48th minute when a ball

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across from Kugathas found Batula at the far post, but it was on his weaker left foot and he barely made contact; the ball dribbling through to Atkinson from six yards out. Then we were back on the defensive as Rodgers got through on their left but Keogh stood up well and made a good save from the close range strike. The game swung from end to end and Carpene and Stanley saw shots blocked in quick succession and then Kiyo Brown came on for Carpene and Stanley was moved from the "ten" to the centre-forward role after just twenty minutes.
Ofosu-Hernandez came on for Kugathas with fifteen minutes remaining and it was interesting to note that both he and Nelson-Roberts advanced more in this match when we were playing four at the back than they had in recent games where they had been wing backs! Still, we only really created half chances, the best of which came when Ofosu-Hernandez sent a deep cross over and Owusu jumped high to claim the header but couldn't keep it on target.

In the 92nd minute Keogh stood tall again as he made a fine save, but we were unable to breach the opposition's defences and had to accept our sixth straight League defeat. There have been signs of improvement in the last couple of games, but it is a little concerning that, Pinder apart, we haven't seen any other new signings yet, as all of our other players have been at the club since the start of the season. We now enter a potentially pivotal three game stretch against teams at our end of the table as Balham and Colliers Wood United come to us before we go to Sandhurst Town a week later. On the evidence of the last two performances we should still have hope, but the fixtures get noticeably more difficult on paper after those, so it's now time for us to start picking up points or we will have a mountain to climb otherwise.

Epsom & Ewell: Harvey Keogh, Ayran Kugathas, Ethan Nelson-Roberts, Ollie Thompson ©, Zach Powell, Nick Inwugwu, George Owusu, Rory Edwards, Tino Carpene, Thompson Adeyemi, Ade Batula

Subs: Jaan Stanley for Inwugwu (HT), Kiyo Brown for Carpene (66), Jabari Ofosu-Hernandez (74)

Report Source: www.eefconline.co.uk

"Veni, vidi, vici" means "I came, I saw, I conquered" – attributed to Julius Caesar and refers to a swift and conclusive victory.

Epsom and Ewell's 3 – 1 lead lost in 12 minutes

12 November 2023



Epsom & Ewell 3-4 AFC Croydon Athletic. Combined Counties League Cup – First Round Tuesday 26th September 2023.

A devastating three goal swing in just twelve minutes enabled AFC Croydon Athletic to pinch a 4-3 win in this First Round League Cup tie at the Madgwick after we had led 3-1 and been very good value for that lead for 75 minutes.

And it's such a shame because that first 75 minutes of the match was most definitely our most aggressive and threatening of the entire season as we shrugged off the fact that a number of regulars were missing from this match and took the game to our visitors from the start.

The unavailable list contained Callum Wilson, Zach Powell, Chester Clothier, Ash Snadden, Tommy Williams, Kiyo Brown and Ethan Nelson-Roberts, but this opened the door for a number of players who hadn't had the chance to stake a claim for a place recently and Sirak Negassi and George Owusu both made strong claims for a starting place on Saturday with energetic performances. Ollie Thompson became our fourth Captain of the season and Nick Inwugwu came in alongside him and Reece Tierney, while Jabari Owusu-Hernandez and Ayran Kugathas both came in at the wing back positions.

Only 47 spectators were present to witness a match which would prove to be very good entertainment for a neutral and within a minute we had attacked with Ofosu-Hernandez sending an early strike over the bar from 20 yards. Then Thompson Adeyemi nearly got through with a clever piece of skill, only to be robbed at the last second. This didn't deter us and a ball over to the left found Negassi whose shot back across goal was well saved at full stretch by Oshane Brown's left leg. Brown had played for us twice back in 2014 when we needed emergency cover for a pair of FA Cup ties against Croydon, although when he was reminded about this, he couldn't remember. I suppose it was a few years back!

We continued to attack and Negassi saw his shot half blocked across the field to Owusu, but his side footed strike skipped just beyond the far post from around 15 yards, and in all honesty he probably should have at least hit the target. In response to this point, the visitors had just one strike over the bar from distance by Kamara. Then in the 20th minute Negassi was bundled over by McCarthy who picked up a yellow card for the challenge. Rory Edwards took the free kick and struck the ball at the wall, where it hit an arm and the referee awarded a penalty. Marlon Pinder stepped up to send Brown the wrong way in the 22nd minute and we were ahead.

Things got better in the 32nd minute as a great crossfield ball found Negassi who ran in and simply slotted the ball past the advancing Brown to put us two goals up. There was a suspicion of offside about the goal and there was certainly some protest by the visitors, but the goal stood. However, what next? Well, regrettably just as we needed to see out the half, Inwugwu brought the ball out of defence, but was robbed by Mal Thomas who simply ran in from thirty yards and drew Harvey Keogh out before then clipping the ball past him from close range to reduce the arrears in the 40th minute.

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In a sign of things to come later in the match we got a little twitchy in the final few minutes of the half, as if we didn't know whether to go back on the attack, or try to hold on to what we had. However, we survived and went in at the break 2-1 up. Then with just 56 ticks of the second half played we restored the two goal advantage again with a pass to Negassi on the left and his left-footed cross was perfect for Owusu to head back across Brown and into the corner of the net from six yards. Moments later Owusu was inches wide with another shot, but it didn't seem to matter as we were well on top at this point.

Negassi sent another ball across goal that had both Pinder and Owusu stretching to reach it unsuccessfully, before Tierney suffered an injury and he was replaced by Jude Aikins-Hawkson at the back, making his debut for the club. Pinder made way soon after as Tino Carpene came on and then in the 74th minute Negassi was substituted. His replacement Jaan Stanley was flagged offside just as he produced a good finish from an angle with almost his first touch but we were still in charge.

Until the 76th minute, that is. It was hard to see exactly what happened, but a visiting player went down in our penalty area and a spot kick was awarded. Haile Richardson struck the ball away confidently and within seconds he was denied another by a superb close range save by Keogh. However, with the score at 3-2 and despite our dominance to this point, we suddenly seemed to go into our shell and the Rams took full advantage of this with a sweeping move from left to right that was finished off with a low shot under Keogh from Oriogun in the 84th minute. Brown asked us behind the goal if we would go straight to penalties at the 90 minute mark; which would have been the case, but we didn't manage to hold out that long, as a break on the left with just two minutes of normal time to play resulted in Keogh coming out of his goal but failing to gather and the ball across goal was then forced in from close range at the second attempt by Phillips for what would prove to be the winning goal.

We put on a couple more substitutes but the damage was done and despite the five minutes of extra time we fashioned just one more chance, earning a free kick right on the edge that Adeyemi sent high out of the ground. Our Cup hopes went with it and the whistle blew a minute later.

I am absolutely certain that we would have won this match had our recent form been better, but it almost seemed as if we froze within sight of a winning line we hadn't seen for a while, and having defended so well for such long periods in recent games, it was bit of a shock to fall apart as we did near the end. However, this level of football is relentless and unforgiving and we now have to dust ourselves down rapidly for the trip to Tadley on Saturday. This was, in my opinion, a vast improvement on anything we had seen all season from an attacking point of view and I actually saw glimmers of hope in this match, but we are going to have to be more clinical when holding the ascendency in a match, or those glimmers won't count for many points.

Epsom & Ewell: Harvey Keogh, Jabari Ofosu-Hernandez, Ayran Kugathas, Nick Inwugwu, Ollie Thompson (c), Reece Tierney, George Owusu, Rory Edwards, Marlon Pinder, Thompson Adeyemi, Sirak Negassi

Subs: Jude Aikins-Hawkson for Tierney (57), Tino Carpene for Pinder (65), Jaan Stanley for Negassi (74), Ade Batula for Owusu (89), Ben Bauchop for Edwards (89)

Report Source: www.eefconline.co.uk

Shoot-out ends Salt's Vase season

12 November 2023



Bearsted 1-1 Epsom & Ewell FC. Bearsted won 4-1 on penalties. Isuzu F.A. Vase – Second Qualifying Round Saturday 23rd September 2023.

A rather disappointing penalty shoot out, the twelfth in our history, ultimately sealed our exit from the F.A. Vase this season. However, much like the F.A. Cup defeat at Eastbourne, we had looked like going out with a whimper until Captain Callum Wilson pulled us level again as the match finished 1-1 after the ninety minutes was complete.

On the face of it, a draw against a team that are well placed in the Southern Counties East is not a bad result and had this been a League match, we'd probably have been more than happy with a point, but we were unable to take advantage of the Wilson equaliser and what was actually our second worst statistically of the seven shoot outs we have lost, ensured that the correct team went through to the next round.

We made three changes to the line up following the defeat at home to Sheerwater. Up front we had Marlon Pinder who returned to the club in midweek and he came in for Tino Carpene, while Wilson returned at the back in place of Nick Inwugwu and Rory Edwards also came into the starting eleven in place of Chester Clothier.

On a perfect playing surface the opening exchanges were mostly in favour of the home side. Harvey Keogh was in action early to keep out a shot from an angle with his legs before Reece Tierney picked up an early and somewhat harsh yellow card, which was probably given because of the theatrical tumble as it was only fractionally late. On the quarter hour the Bears had a good opportunity but Joel Wakefield sent his strike over the bar from just inside the penalty area.

The home side continued to press and a decent attempt from Jordan Tingley went over Keogh's head, but was wide of the

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goal and the danger was cleared. Then Wilson made a good block for a corner and from this, there was a concerted appeal for a handball, which certainly had me worried, but the referee wasn't interested and as we broke, Jaan Stanley was brought down, earning Alfie Sanders a yellow card for the home team. Wilson was in action again soon after as he made a fine block from Tingley and as we approached the half another Bearsted corner was headed over by the unmarked Ryan Blake.

The final action of the half was a rare Epsom attack as Tommy Williams found Ade Batula on the left, but his ball across goal was cut out by Frankie Leonard in the Bears goal. In fact we had the first chance of the second half too as a Williams corner was headed clear under pressure from Tierney at the far post, but in the 55th minute we went behind as a good pass in from the left to Ollie Freeman enabled him to square the ball for Tingley to finish from close range.

This had been coming and as with other recent matches it was looking as though we had a mountain to climb. Pinder had a good opportunity from an Ethan Nelson-Roberts left wing cross but his headed contact was minimal and the ball went across goal instead of at it. Our "new" man put in a decent shift and will get better as he regains fitness, but his service was sadly lacking in this match. Even our wing backs, who had provided the best opportunities in recent weeks were not getting forwards as often as they used to; something I feel we need to address if we are to provide more of an attacking threat.

Carpene came on after 66 minutes and looked lively. He was involved in our equaliser five minutes later as Batula did well on the right wing before laying the ball back for Stanley to deliver into Carpene who then knocked the ball on for Wilson, standing around the edge of the penalty area to drive low and hard past Leonard, who got a glove to it, but was never going to keep it out. Without a doubt this was against the run of play and would prove to be our only shot on target, but we'll take anything we can get right now! With our heads up we started to ask more questions and Batula tried his luck from 25 yards, only to see his shot blocked by a defender. Then in the 87th minute Carpene slipped his man and got through, running in on goal from about 40 yards out, but Blake was there to make a crucial tackle just outside the area and our chance was gone. Nelson-Roberts then found Kiyo Brown in the final moments but his shot was also blocked for a corner by a defender.

The home side struck a free kick over the bar during the five minutes of injury time, but the final whistle ensured we would go to penalties. Regrettably we had just taken off our regular penalty taker in Stanley and didn't really turn up for the spot kicks. With Bearsted electing to go first, Phil Headley, Ollie Freeman, Will Johnson-Cole and Blake all scored, rendering their fifth penalty unnecessary as Carpene and Williams both saw their weak kicks saved by Leonard. Wilson netted his penalty in between the two saves, but when Blake's fourth penalty went straight through Keogh it was all over for another year.

There were some positives. Despite missing Ash Snadden and Zach Powell at the back we looked a lot more solid than we had against Sheerwater, but the real concern here is that we are having to do too much defending right now and need to find a way to take the pressure off of our back line for greater periods. Pinder will improve options up front if we can get better service to him, but we now face matches against AFC Croydon Athletic (League Cup) who scored six this day before we travel to Tadley Calleva who hit seven. Neither will be lacking in form or confidence when they face us.

Epsom & Ewell: Harvey Keogh, Tommy Williams, Ethan Nelson-Roberts, Callum Wilson (c), Ollie Thompson, Reece Tierney, Ade Batula, Rory Edwards, Marlon Pinder, Thompson Adeyemi, Jaan Stanley

Subs: Nick Inwugwu for Thompson (62), Tino Carpene for Pinder (66), Kiyo Brown for Stanley (84)

Report Source: www.eefconline.co.uk

Epsom's football team concede 4 goals

12 November 2023

Epsom & Ewell FC 2 – 4 Sheerwater. Combined Counties League – Premier Division South. Saturday 16th September 2023.

Last week I wrote that our match against Sheerwater was likely to be a more telling indicator of where we are this season and whilst the football club may sugar coat things, I will be honest here as I always am and state what everyone else at the match was thinking, which is that we are now clearly in a relegation battle before the end of September as we shipped four goals to a team that hadn't scored one in the League for 341 minutes before this match in a truly disheartening 4-2 defeat.

Some people might say that the cup matches are important and we have done well in them this season so far, but our bread and butter is the League and four losses to start the season was not even close to the start we would have wanted. However, it could have been argued in our defence that we had played some good teams this season so far. Regrettably, all of those arguments went up in smoke as we faced a team as low on confidence as we were and still lost in this pivotal match.

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There may have been mitigating circumstances. Our first choice back three that played only two weeks ago at Eastbourne United were all out of the starting line up as Callum Wilson and Zach Powell were not available, while Ash Snadden was sitting on the bench. In their places came Ollie Thompson, Nick Inwugwu and Reece Tierney and whilst all have been decent this season, this lack of consistency must have had a bearing on why we conceded four goals for the first time this season. Throw in a jittery performance from our keeper Harvey Keogh behind them and some indiscipline from Ethan Nelson-Roberts and Ade Batula who both found themselves in the sin-bin for unnecessary comments and this all contributed to a home defeat that leaves us in serious trouble at the foot of the table and in danger of being cut adrift.

With Captain and Vice-Captain absent, Chester Clothier took on the armband and in front of a disappointing attendance of 70, despite a perfect day for football we started fairly well. Batula was probably our best player and he made a good run on the ten minute mark which ended with a good pass over to Nelson-Roberts who chose to shoot high from an angle and sent the ball over Billy Wilson's crossbar.

A few minutes later Tommy Whitby sent a free kick over our bar, but Keogh then took his goal kick and passed it straight to an opposition striker just eighteen yards out! As he then ran in clear on goal, Keogh redeemed himself with a good save for a corner that fortunately came to nothing.

We recovered from this near fatal setback and started to create more with Batula prominent, playing more down the right than in his usual central role, but our momentum was checked when we lost Nelson-Roberts to the sin bin for comments he made. Clothier was protesting his teammate's innocence but the referee wasn't interested and off he went for a ten minute break.

Once we were back up to full strength though we had our best period of the game and Batula forced Wilson to tip over his strike from 20 yards. Although the subsequent corner was half cleared, the ball fell to Tommy Williams out on our left hand side who curled an unstoppable strike beyond Wilson and into the top corner via the far post to register an early candidate for goal of the season in the 36th minute.

We looked strong at this point which made the equaliser just seven minutes later a complete surprise to me. The most disappointing aspect was how easily the goal came about, as we appeared to think that a foul on Williams would be given, but the game was not stopped and a ball played out to the right found a player in space and his low ball in was swept past Keogh from just inside the penalty area into the far corner by Theo White. This was the visitors first goal for 384 minutes in League action and it had been so simple. There was no further action of note and the teams went off at the break with a goal each, but a feeling that we had missed our chance.

The second half started with some good interplay between Williams and Batula but the cross into the danger area was headed out. A minute later Batula fed the advancing Inwugwu just eight yards out but his touch let him down badly and the ball was cleared when we really should have had at least a shot on target. Regrettably Batula blotted his copybook when he made a sarcastic remark to the Assistant after being denied a throw in and found himself sitting down for ten minutes. Although Tino Carpene had a great chance in the 56th minute well blocked by Wilson while we were a man short, our opponents took the lead just sixty seconds later when Elliott York was put through on the left and he lifted the ball over Keogh to go 2-1 up.

The game drifted for a while, but with eleven men back on the field we secured the equaliser in the 73rd minute after Carpene won the ball just outside the area and he fed Jaan Stanley on the left whose delivery was side footed into the roof of the net from six yards by the unmarked Batula.

Just as it felt like we had got back into the match and were about to kick on for a winning goal, we were behind once again as a 75th minute free kick from White was met at the far post by the unmarked Rhys Paul who gave Keogh no chance from fairly close range and a minute later White tried his luck from 20 yards and the ball sailed into the roof of the net to make the score 4-2.

We had a couple of half chances as we tried to fight back with substitute Ben Amissah unlucky to see his near post header flick off a defender and drop just wide from a Kiyo Brown left wing cross and Wilson was down well to keep out a Brown drive, but the visitors had their moments too with Keogh doing well to keep out a close range effort at the near post.

We then had the very rare sight of a board advertising that six minutes of extra time would be played and in that period Batula struck wide from a good position before Amissah headed a left wing cross just over the bar. The chances were gone and the final whistle confirmed a depressing score line.

Overall, and in terms of possession and chances you could argue that we were no worse than Sheerwater, who themselves were not that impressive, but we made enough errors, both mental and physical over the ninety minutes to say that we probably deserved what we got. It was interesting at full time to see the players holding an inquest on the field with all the Coaches and Management having walked away by that point. I'll be honest though, I don't think our squad is strong enough right now and it will be key to see whether we will have any new faces in the next week or two, because without any we are going to be in a big struggle for the rest of the season.

Epsom & Ewell: Harvey Keogh, Tommy Williams, Ethan Nelson-Roberts, Nick Inwugwu, Ollie Thompson, Reece Tierney, Ade Batula, Chester Clothier, Tino Carpene, Thompson Adeyemi, Jaan Stanley

Subs: Rory Edwards for Adeyemi (63), Ben Amissah for Carpene (77), Kiyo Brown for Stanley (77), Ash Snadden for Tierney (83), Ayran Kugathas for Williams (89)

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