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Top teams level at the end

28 November 2022

Epsom & Ewell 1-1 Shoreham Southern Combination League – Division One Saturday 26th November 2022.

Two very late goals after 85 minutes of attritional combat ensured that the best two teams in the League couldn't be separated on Saturday. However, as a spectacle, this match won't live long in the memory, with exception of a deserved 98th minute equaliser from our boys, which may turn out to be an extremely important goal in the grand scheme of things.

Shoreham were the visitors to Fetcham Grove and although they kicked off in third place in the table, they represented the largest threat to our title hopes, sitting six points behind us but with two games and boasting an unbeaten record. They also held a 100% away record in the League.

We made just the one enforced change from our win at Wick as Nick Wilson had to sit this one out after accumulating five bookings; he was replaced in the starting eleven by Gavin Quintyne, and that gap on the bench was filled by Tre Trowers. We made a bright start and had a half chance in the first thirty seconds when Johnny "Sonic" Akoto got down the right wing, but his pull back was skied by Athan Smith-Joseph.

We had another opportunity after Smith-Joseph was fouled around 25 yards out and Ryan Smith's set piece cleared the bar by around a foot, while in response Shoreham also had a couple of free kicks of their own, but without major threat. In reality this was to be a match with a number of half-chances, but very few really good ones.

There was no shortage of fight from both teams as the players knew that this was an extremely pivotal encounter. Neither team were getting very close to goal and we had another Smith free kick that just cleared the bar before Jaevon Dyer's ball in from the right was just ahead of Jamie Byatt. Brad Peters headed a Smith corner goalwards, but the danger was cleared, while at the other end Akoto headed a Shoreham effort on target clear from the goal line. As the match meandered towards half time Dyer tried his luck from twenty-five yards and Lewis Sheppherd in the Shoreham goal just about kept the ball out, while at the other end a misdirected header from Zach Powell was met by a wayward shot from the visitors from just outside the box.

The second half continued in a similar vein but with arguably even less chances. The game was a little niggly at times and the play was often stopped. We did have a very good chance in the 48th minute after Josh Owen won the ball and found Byatt who sent a great pass over to Smith-Joseph, who then cut back in, beat his man and saw his shot beaten away by Sheppherd, with the loose ball being fired at goal from Byatt but blocked by a defender.

Kane Charles had to punch away an Alex Fairs free kick from wide out and Harry Heath and Danny Jones picked up yellow cards for cynical fouls as the game degenerated. Charles then required treatment after appearing to get another knock that looked like it was also fairly deliberate before Quintyne picked up a yellow of his own and the game looked to be heading towards an uninspiring goalless draw. Until the 88th minute that is, when a visiting player got beyond Akoto who chased him but then brought him down needlessly for a penalty. Jones stepped up for the penalty, but Charles produced a good save, only for Marcus Richmond to nip in and fire the loose ball into the net from close range before our defenders could clear the danger.

This wasn't in the script! With just two minutes of normal time remaining we were in danger of losing our second home match in a row, but responded well. and got the ball forward a bit more frequently as time began to run out. As Shoreham players suddenly started to require treatment for injuries we tried to push them back. However, a Dyer free kick that went over the bar was all we could show for it as the clock ticked deep into injury time. Fortunately redemption was coming and it arrived in the 98th minute, Owen chased a ball into the far corner, retrieving it before delivering a great cross with his left foot. The ball was flicked on by one of our substitutes Ben Bauchop and was met at the far post by the outstretched leg of Smith-Joseph who found the net from about five yards out to secure the equaliser.

The match finally concluded after almost nine minutes of injury time and with the Shoreham bench saying that "this wasn't the World Cup" but looking back, there was quite a bit of injury time required in this half. Smith had required treatment before limping off, while injuries to Charles, Dyer and Smith-Joseph also took a while out of the forty-five, so maybe the extra time was justified in this case, although it did seem a tad generous.

Was it a fair result though? Absolutely! To lose this match would have been extremely harsh on our boys who were at least as good as our opponents. However, it must be said that we were not great and have played far better this season. Of course, the importance of the occasion almost ensured that this would be a tight encounter with neither team wanting to give anything away. It was just a shame that the match wasn't very well advertised by the club who seem to think that one tweet, repeated a few times in the week is sufficient. It clearly isn't, as an attendance of 94 counted by two different sources (inclusive of a few from Shoreham) testifies, although the club advertised it as 107. Maybe they were all inside the club house watching the World Cup instead!

This contest marked the halfway point of our League season and we have now completed both of our matches against Shoreham, failing to win either. However, we have a better looking run in and have nine of our remaining sixteen matches at home. Under the circumstances, I believe this point was better for us than for Shoreham, but only time will tell if that is

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the case. One thing is for certain in my opinion, which is that these are the best two clubs in the division and the title will go to one of them. However, it wouldn't surprise me if this battle goes all the way to the final day and this late equaliser from an otherwise forgettable match, may prove to be one of the most important we will score all season.

Epsom & Ewell: Kane Charles, Johnny "Sonic" Akoto, Zach Powell, Ryan 'Butch' Smith, Brad Peters (c), Gideon Acheampong, Athan Smith-Joseph, Gavin Quintyne, Jamie Byatt, Josh Owen, Jaevon Dyer

Subs: Ben Bauchop for Smith (63), Josh Alder for Byatt (71) Kevin Moreno-Gomez for Powell (82)

Wick burned at both ends

28 November 2022

Wick FC 0-2 Epsom & Ewell FC. Saturday 19th November. Southern Combination League – Division One.

A goal towards the end of each half was sufficient for our boys to see off the challenge from second placed Wick at Crabtree Park on Saturday; a result which extends our lead at the top of the table to five points.

However, this result was more than just the win. Last Saturday we threw in an awful performance against Worthing United. So poor in fact that our football club chose to hide away from even releasing a report, although obviously there was still one on this site, as supporters will always be kept informed of what is going on here. In that report I wrote that if we were able to defeat Wick and Shoreham in our upcoming matches that we would be able to write off last week's aberration as a freak result, and we are now half way towards being able to do just that.

Despite the substantial amount of rain in midweek, the pitch passed the inspection and looked in fairly good condition from pitch side. We took the field with two changes from the starting eleven against the Mavericks seven days previously; Johnny "Sonic" Akoto came in at right back with Gideon Acheampong moving across to cover the absent Aaron Bogle, who had only played 45 minutes of that Worthing United match before being replaced. Further forward Jaevon Dyer came in for Gavin Quintyne, but found himself out on the wing with Jamie Byatt playing down the middle. Additionally, we would have three new Salts in this match as Kevin Moreno-Gomez (Horley Town, Burgess Hill), Ben Bauchop (Farnham Town) and Oliver Thompson (Colliers Wood United) would all see action off the bench.

The opening exchanges were fairly even, with a slight ascendency in favour of the home team, although as the match progressed we began to hold a greater share of possession. Athan Smith-Joseph was giving a lot of trouble to the two defenders that were covering him, although the end product never found a team mate on this occasion. Balls in to the near post were cleared away by defenders, while deeper crosses just always seemed to elude Byatt in the middle.

Dyer was slightly quieter in the opening half, but actually appeared to carry more of a threat to goal when he had the ball. He was upended after quarter of an hour just outside the penalty area, and Ryan "Butch" Smith's shot was well saved low to his right by Keelan Belcher. Byatt put Josh Owen through on goal with a clever ball, but the defender did well and forced him away from goal. Then Smith-Joseph sent a shot just over the bar after he cut in from the left. Just after the half hour a Wick clearance hit a team mate and rebounded kindly for Byatt, but he chose to pass instead of shooting and probably instantly regretted it as his ball was too far ahead of Owen.

However, it was apparent that we were the ones pushing more and more for the opening goal and it came in the only minute of first half injury time. Akoto got away down the right wing and he pulled the ball back to Dyer, standing around fifteen yards out. His shot went across Belcher but was blocked by a defender on the goal line, although Byatt was alert as ever and nipped in to force the loose ball into the net from around half a yard out before the defender could reach it.

This was a fair half time score and heading towards the evocatively named Condemned Tree end in the second half we continued to push. Dyer was brought down, leading to a bit of a scuffle, although nothing came of it. The home side sent a looping header wide of our goal from a deep free kick, but we were back on the attack soon after and Dyer beat a number of men as he ran across the edge of the Wick penalty area before striking a shot back across Belcher, which went just beyond the far post with Byatt steaming in and unable to reach it. The only thing that ended up in the net was the covering defender!

The game took a serious turn in the 62nd minute when Tommy Farr made a good run on the right for Wick, only to stumble over just outside the box. It looked comical when it happened, but it was soon apparent that he was in a lot of pain and the game stopped for ten minutes while Farr received treatment for an injured knee before being stretchered off. The home team advised after the match that it didn't appear too serious, which was a relief to all.

The game restarted and was followed by the best chance of the match for the home team. They held some good possession down the right and as the ball came in, Aaron Tester appeared to almost flick at the ball with the outside of his foot from just inside the box and it cleared Kane Charles' bar by inches.

Our first substitute Josh Alder replaced Byatt with ten minutes of official normal time to play, although due to the earlier injury it would become almost twenty-five. The match then saw a solid challenge from Brad Peters that Johan Van Driel reacted to and he got up and pushed Peters over from behind. However, the ball was up at the other end of the field by

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then and none of the officials saw it conclusively. The referee chose to award just the yellow card, which was probably the correct decision, although we have certainly seen red cards issued before for similar infringements.

A few minutes later Wick tried a long range dipping shot that cleared our crossbar by inches, rippling the net as it landed and convincing a few excited supporters that their team had equalised. In response Alder broke through on the left but his shot was well kept out by Belcher's leg. However, he would get a second opportunity in the 96th minute as Wick pushed up and Zach Powell's long clearance cleared the defenders on the half way line and Alder was through again. This time he ran in and finished clinically with a low shot across Belcher which just clipped a glove, but still nestled in the far corner for our second goal.

Both teams had a final chance as the time ticked down. Dyer was denied in the act of shooting by a superb block challenge from Harry Williams, while at the other end Dave Crouch tried his luck from distance, but Charles was able to tip the ball onto the post and away for a corner that ultimately came to nothing. Finally, after around fifteen minutes of injury time the whistle blew to confirm that all three points were Epsom bound.

Overall, this was a vastly improved performance on the previous one. Instead of a porous defence that looked like it might concede to Worthing United at regular intervals, we kept Wick at arm's length for much of the match and restricted them mostly to long range efforts. Up front we created more opportunities, while in midfield we took charge of the match, which was something we had struggled to do in our previous contest. The only black mark on the day was a rather harsh booking for Nick Wilson who will now miss the important Shoreham match on Saturday through suspension. I'm not sure why the club chose to put this information in the public domain, but if we play as well next week as we did in this match, it shouldn't make any difference as we have decent strength in depth across the squad.

Epsom & Ewell: Kane Charles, Johnny "Sonic" Akoto, Zach Powell, Ryan 'Butch' Smith, Brad Peters (c), Gideon Acheampong, Athan Smith-Joseph, Nick Wilson, Jamie Byatt, Josh Owen, Jaevon Dyer

Subs: Josh Alder for Byatt (80), Kevin Moreno-Gomez for Smith-Joseph (91), Gavin Quintyne for Wilson (97), Ben Bauchop for Owen (100), Oliver Thompson for Powell (102)

Report Source: www.eefconline.co.uk

Maverick win over the Salts?

28 November 2022

Epsom & Ewell FC **1 – 3** Worthing United FC. Saturday 12th November 2022. Who said lightning doesn't strike twice in the same place? Last season we hosted Worthing United with the knowledge that we had won easily away from home and on the back of an eleven game home winning run, only to lose that day by the only goal. Eight months on and with another 3-0 away win in our pocket from this season's trip, we witnessed the end of our twelve match unbeaten run this time as the Mavericks travelled home from Fetcham Grove with a 3-1 victory. This was also our first loss at home on this day since 1949!

It would be very easy to look at the recent departures of our Joint Manager Liam Giles along with some of our players as a reason for this loss, but I don't believe this was the case. Quite simply, this was just a very poor performance with all three goals coming as a result of defensive miscommunications and in a way it was very similar to the one we suffered on the opening day of the season at Shoreham.

The starting line up contained three changes from our win over Billingshurst. Aaron Bogle came in for Steve Springett at the back, while in midfield Nick Wilson returned and Jamie Byatt made his first start since re-joining the club, while Jubril Adamson had left for Croydon and Jaevon Dyer was sitting on the bench.

For the first quarter of an hour possession was mainly in favour of our boys, although there were hints of problems ahead as the visitors missed two good chances to open up their account when our defence parted rather easily. Then we took the lead in the 15th minute. I wrote in my preview of this match about how Byatt would fit in to the line up and the answer was easy to see as Athan Smith-Joseph got down the left and sent a low ball in for our striker to poach his first of the season and 32nd for the club on just his 30th appearance with a typical close range finish inside the six yard box.

We continued to press as we exerted more control over our opponents, but then in the 22nd minute the wheels fell off and we never truly got them on again. The visitors pumped a hopeful ball forward and Dan Hills just got a toe to it ahead of Kane Charles. The ball fell a little ahead of him though and it looked like Bogle would make the routine clearance, only for Hills to stick out a leg and block the attempt back into the net. I recall Matt Ferdinando doing something similar for us to win a match against Spelthorne Sports a few years back and I gave him credit for his innovation, and so I must also praise the scorer equally here. However, I couldn't help but think that this was a completely avoidable goal to concede and it appeared to hit us very badly.

Worthing United nearly scored again a few minutes later as they broke through once again, but Charles stood his ground well and the shot was dragged across the goal. The remainder of the half contained little to write home about apart from a

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thirty yard strike from Ryan Smith which only just cleared the bar, but the period was mostly broken up by injuries and poor passing, although only two minutes of injury time were played, which was somewhat surprising.

Whilst it wasn't clear whether it was tactical or injury related, Bogle did not reappear for the second half with Johnny "Sonic" Akoto coming on and Gideon Acheampong moving into the centre of defence, but the general pattern of play continued. We held possession for large periods but appeared extremely vulnerable to the counter attack. One of these resulted in a powerful shot just wide of our goal in the 48th minute, but eight minutes later a delivery in from the right was poked past his own keeper by Brad Peters and the visitors were ahead.

Jaevon Dyer entered the contest for Gavin Quintyne who had covered an enormous amount of ground and he created one chance on the right that Byatt poked at with his left foot and sent over the bar. Further changes followed as Josh Alder and Warren Colman came on, but with the clock showing the 74th minute we conceded again in similar comedic circumstances as Charles flapped at the ball and half knocked a cross away, but then chased after the loose ball and lunged in, appearing to bring a striker down. However, as we appeared to freeze, maybe expecting a penalty against us, Kiko neatly chipped the ball back over everyone into an empty net from twenty yards.

This was serious. We hadn't created much of a threat throughout the second half and were now two goals down. Bad became worse after Springett came on but lasted only a few minutes before being sent off after kicking out. Whilst it probably wouldn't have made any difference by this stage whether we had kept eleven men on the field or not, this was our fourth red card of the competitive season, together with three sin-bins, and this indiscipline needs to improve before it costs us further points. I'd be surprised if we aren't right at the foot of the merit tables right now.

There was still time for Hadleigh de Vall to pick up a second yellow card for our opponents, but all we were able to produce was a decent Wilson free kick from an angle that was tipped away for a corner, while in the eighth minute of injury time Peters did well to get to a Zach Powell ball into the box, but he was at full stretch and couldn't keep the header down.

The good news is that if we are able to pick up wins at Wick next week and at home to Shoreham seven days later, then this result will be able to be consigned to the history books as just a bad day at the office. I'd like to think that we are good enough to make that happen, but we will have to produce a vastly improved performance in those matches if that is to be the case, as this one was awful!

Southern Combination League – Division One

Epsom & Ewell: Kane Charles, Gideon Acheampong, Zach Powell, Ryan 'Butch' Smith, Brad Peters (c), Aaron Bogle, Athan Smith-Joseph, Nick Wilson, Jamie Byatt, Gavin Quintyne, Josh Owen

Subs: Johnny "Sonic" Akoto for Bogle (HT), Jaevon Dyer for Quintyne (62), Josh Alder for Byatt (73), Warren Colman for Owen (73), Steve Springett for Smith-Joseph (80)

Report Source: www.eefconline.co.uk

Ducks in a Row put Epsom 4 points on top

28 November 2022

Forest Row 0-2 Epsom & Ewell Southern Combination League – Division One Tuesday 18th October 2022

Five weeks ago we visited Forest Row and were heading for a goalless draw in a tame contest before the match was abandoned for a nasty injury to Andy "Woody" Hall. This time we did at least manage to complete the fixture and although we were well worth the win, the supporters couldn't really relax until a late second goal secured the points, which were then dedicated to Woody by the players after the match.

This third visit to Tinsley Lane this season means that we have now played as many League matches here as we have at Leatherhead this season. In fact, this eighth away fixture ensures that we have now completed half of our away schedule already!

We took the field in our red kit which might look nice, but is not our traditional colour and really shouldn't ever be used competitively, and we got off to a worrying start when a free kick was squared for a shot at goal that pinged off our crossbar in just the eighth minute, but were soon on the attack and broke through, albeit in fortuitous circumstances in the 14th minute when Ryan "Butch" Smith tried his luck from 25 yards and although the ball took a slight deflection off a defender, Ben Abbott, the Forest Row keeper will have been disappointed as he let the ball slip under him and into the net.

Josh Alder then broke through on goal and poked the ball wide of Abbott who brought our man down, earning a yellow card in the process, but he redeemed himself by saving Smith's penalty in the 19th minute. Then Jaevon Dyer, back again after being indisposed at Montpelier Villa on Saturday, had a good run and shot at goal but Abbott saved comfortably. He was followed by Gideon Acheampong, maybe remembering his left footed strike when he scored at Oakwood in August, and decided to have another go from distance, but this one sailed over the bar.

We had to make an early substitution when Alder was tackled and damaged his leg in the process and Athan Smith-Joseph

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came on in his place. Smith-Joseph had originally been named in the starting eleven ahead of Alder, before the line-up was switched just before kick off, and the new man's contribution was almost immediate as his ball in from the left was poked into the net ahead of Abbott by Dyer, only for the offside flag to be raised against him.

Brad Peters picked up a yellow card for a foul out wide, but from our next attack Dyer shot from an angle with Abbott doing just enough to divert the ball around the post and from the corner Josh Owen was waiting as the ball was half cleared, and saw his snap shot fly inches wide of the top corner. We nearly got a second in injury time as Smith-Joseph mishit his low left wing cross and it nearly crept in; Abbott keeping the ball out with a desperate lunge with his foot.

The second half opened in a similar fashion to the first half with the home side making a decent opportunity on the right, but the ball in was just in front of the incoming striker. We attacked again and Nick Wilson's shot appeared to hit a hand, but to be fair, the defender it hit was standing in very close proximity and it would have been a very harsh call to give the penalty.

Smith-Joseph was causing a lot of damage on the left wing, but then he was switched with Warren Colman and neither provided quite the same threat. The Row striker sent a decent chance wide of our goal from the edge of the area, but they were restricted to very few efforts on goal and their chances of taking anything from the match reduced substantially after their number 18 saw red for a foul on Athan Smith-Joseph in the 65th minute. It didn't appear to be particularly dangerous from where I was situated, but our players saw it from a different angle, clearly didn't like it and reacted as a group. Maybe this convinced the referee to issue the red card and there was really no way back for the home side from this point. Colman struck over after good interplay with Wilson before Smith's free kick had the power taken out of it by a defensive wall that was no more than six yards away from the ball. We really should ask referees to pace the ten yards out more often.

Eldi Baze came on for Colman and Smith-Joseph reverted over to the left wing. However, the game was starting to get a bit niggly and Dyer made a great run before his shot was blocked for a corner and while on the ground he was stepped on by a defender, which understandably led to a reaction. The referee decided to call both Captains over to tell them to calm down and to be fair this seemed to do the trick. From the subsequent corner, Smith-Joseph saw his goal bound shot blocked on the line by a defender and the danger was cleared.

We were then finally able to clinch the points in the 86th minute. Baze chased a ball on the right and just managed to keep his footing as he rode a challenge. He then cut in from the right before drilling the ball into the net from twelve yards with his left foot; the ball just flicking off both Abbott and a defender on its way in. It was his first goal for our club and one that could prove to be quite crucial in the grand scheme of things. Another substitute Johnny "Sonic" Akoto then made a good run and set up Baze for another shot, but this time a defender got in the way.

In the fourth minute of injury time we had one final chance when a loose defensive pass enabled Smith-Joseph to break through on goal, although he was unlucky to see his low shot cannon back off the post from twelve yards and the danger was cleared.

The final whistle went soon after and we now lead the table by four points and have dropped less points than any other club in the division. However, this match and the one before it have not seen us at our most clinical, bearing in mind that the matches were against the two teams at the foot of the table, and I believe we will need to step things up if we are to claim the points on Saturday when we are visited by Seaford Town. However, if that sounds a little critical, it should also be pointed out that this was our third straight clean sheet, which is a definite defensive improvement from our September results.

Epsom & Ewell: Kane Charles, Gideon Acheampong, Zach Powell, Ryan 'Butch' Smith, Brad Peters (c), Aaron Bogle, Josh Alder, Nick Wilson, Jaevon Dyer, Josh Owen, Warren Colman

Subs: Athan Smith-Joseph for Alder (28), Eldi Baze for Colman (74), Steve Springett for Wilson (88), Johnny "Sonic" Akoto for Dyer (88)

Report Source: www.eefconline.co.uk

Joust in Lancing drawn

28 November 2022

Montpelier Villa **0-0 Epsom & Ewell FC**. Southern Combination League – Division One. Saturday 15th October 2022. Last January, we witnessed a mad encounter at **Culver Road, Lancing**, West Sussex, that ended 5-4 to the home side. Fast forward nine months and we witnessed a goalless draw instead as our hosts took everything that we could throw at them and held on for a well-earned point that also ends our winning league match run at eight; a mark only beaten three times in the last seventy years, and our joint seventh best run in club history.

We had some changes from our win over Hailsham seven days previously. Ricardo Fernandes started a two match suspension, while from last week's starting eleven Jaevon Dyer was ill, and Athan Smith-Joseph and Steve Springett were moved onto the bench. Jubril "Jibs" Adamson, Josh Alder and Aaron Bogle took their places.

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We nearly had a stunning start to the match with little more than five minutes on the clock when Ryan “Butch” Smith tried a shot from nearly forty yards with the wind at his back and it just glanced the post just under the height of the crossbar. It would have been quite an amazing opener.

I don’t know who won the toss of the coin but I have always maintained that it is better to go with the wind in the second half because by the time you have got used to playing with it in the first period, you are often quite a long way through it. This was the case here as through ball after through ball just ran out for a goal kick or straight to the keeper and it was disappointing that we didn’t find a way to do something else with the ball while we had the advantage. As a result our best threats came from deliveries from wider angles and from one of those, Nick Wilson’s free kick found Josh Owen at the far post, although his shot from an angle was well saved by the home keeper after 19 minutes.

Josh Alder then saw a similar result when the ball was fed into him from the right wing and then just before half time Gideon Acheampong put a good ball over to Owen who saw his shot well blocked by the keeper. And that was it! For almost 45 minutes of possession and a strong wind behind us, these were the only moments of real threat. Clearly the wind was a factor, but we have played at far more windy venues in the past and we should have adapted our plan earlier. Strangely enough, against the wind in the second half, we appeared to do this less, just when it looked like that would be the best time to do it, as passes would have held up more!

The Villa managed a long shot on target at the start of the second half but Kane Charles fielded it comfortably and we were back on attack soon after. And Adamson fed the ball back to Gavin Quintyne, whose shot from the edge of the area was kept out but not held by the keeper, although as Owen ran in for the loose ball he was flagged offside.

For all our attack, it is fair to argue that Montpelier Villa’s only real chance was probably the best one of the match. Brad Peters lost the ball around the half way line and the striker moved in on goal before squaring it to their number nine, but he sliced his shot well wide from inside the penalty area. In response Athan Smith-Joseph and Warren Colman came on, with the latter particularly looking quite dangerous, but Alder’s shot was blocked again on the hour and then Smith thought he had been fouled and said something to the referee who immediately sent him to the sin-bin, which reduced us to ten men from the 71st minute.

I’ve no idea what he said, but we have now had a few visits to the sin-bin in addition to four red cards and this indiscipline threatens to hamper our league title hopes. Fortunately we were so much on top on this match, that the ten minute absence passed quickly and without alarm. With only ten minutes of normal time remaining though, we were struggling to break through. A punch clear from the keeper went as far as another sub in Springett, who tried to head the ball back from where it had come, but was wide of the target.

As we approached the end of the ninety minutes the home side sent a free kick just over our bar, but the final moments and nearly ten minutes of injury time were almost all played out around the Villa penalty area, and in the 99th minute Smith’s full blooded strike from the edge of the area was superbly turned away by the keeper’s left hand, and another close range save from a header moments later ensured it was not going to be our day. I’d like to advise their keeper’s name and give him proper credit, but the opposition never even advised their line up and that was a pity, as the Villa side clearly belied their league position, defended extremely well and deserve credit.

I’ve said all season that we have enormous strength in depth and if one person isn’t available then their replacement would be of a similar standard, but we really missed our young striker Dyer in this match. It is clear to me that with him in the side, we have more of a cutting edge and without him we failed to break down a committed and organised team. I’m sure our Management will be well aware of this, as both Hailsham and East Preston before them appeared to play us with one eye on damage limitation too.

It wasn’t due to a shortage of effort either. In fact, our full backs Acheampong and Zach Powell got forward more in this contest than in any other match this season, so we definitely put the yardage in and also monopolised the ball for most of the ninety minutes. We just found ourselves going sideways far too frequently and ultimately our failure to score came down to an inability to adapt to the conditions better.

We will no doubt face a similar situation on Tuesday when we re-visit Forest Row in our next League match, but for now we must still take heart from the fact that we remain top of the table and have dropped less points than any other team. We would have taken that at this stage of the season had it been offered to us.

Epsom & Ewell: Kane Charles, Gideon Acheampong, Zach Powell, Ryan ‘Butch’ Smith, Brad Peters (c), Aaron Bogle, Nick Wilson, Josh Owen, Josh Alder, Jubril “Jibs” Adamson, Gavin Quintyne

Subs: Athan Smith-Joseph for Adamson (61), Warren Colman for Owen (61), Eldi Baze for Alder (70), Steve Springett for Powell (70)

Report Source: www.eefconline.co.uk

Epsom and Ewell FC Top the Table

28 November 2022

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Epsom & Ewell 2-0 Hailsham Town. Southern Combination League – Division One. Saturday 8th October 2022.

It was back to League action on Saturday following our midweek League Cup defeat, as **Hailsham Town** made the visit to Fetcham Grove for what was only our third home league match of the season and were defeated 2-0. Just like the two previous encounters at the Grove, the match was fairly comfortable for much of the time and extended our perfect league record there for the season. It wasn't the only winning sequence continued though, as this was our eighth straight League win and also our sixth straight win over the Stringers. More good news followed at the final whistle when Selsey's home defeat to Godalming Town confirmed that we went top of the table for the third time this season, and this time we will have the opportunity to stay there for a while.

If I'm honest though, this wasn't our greatest performance. The previous week we had dominated against East Preston, but this match was a lot tighter for much of the contest as we appeared to play for much of the ninety minutes in third gear, which ultimately proved to be enough this time.

We had a slight delay to the start of the match as the two Assistants were unable to get to the match following traffic issues on the way. As a result, two volunteers stepped in and it has to be said didn't appear to make any mistakes, which was more than could be said of the referee, of which more later! Incidentally, the last time we were an official short at a home match was just over ten years ago when John Bonner stepped in for a league match against Wembley in January 2012. John was actually present at this match, which probably brought back memories of that day at Merstham!

We made three changes from our previous outing. Firstly, we saw the return of Kane Charles between the posts in place of Matt Walton, while Steve Springett made his first start since his injury at Worthing United in place of the absent Aaron Bogle. Our third was our main threat on the day, Jaevon Dyer, who came in for Ricardo Fernandes and was the focal point of many of our attacks. He broke through on goal as early as the fourth minute before being pulled down by a defender from behind around 25 yards out in a central position. Now, I'm not entirely convinced that there was a lot of contact, but once the referee had decided it actually was a foul, surely a red card had to follow, but only a yellow was issued. Strange indeed!

We nearly made the visitors pay immediately as Ryan "Butch" Smith's free kick just cleared the bar, clipping the netting as it fell, it was that close. Hailsham responded with a couple of long range efforts before Conor Berwick had to make a fine close range save from Athan Smith-Joseph and he then punched clear a Smith corner as we continued to press.

However, in the 27th minute it was the visitors who almost opened the scoring as a good overlap on the right resulted in a deep cross and a header back across goal, where Kane Edwards sent a header off our bar and over for a goal kick from just six yards out. It was a lucky escape and we picked up the pace a little from that point and should have gone ahead ourselves. On the half hour mark Dyer beat two men again before unselfishly squaring the ball to Josh Owen, but he made a hash of it and ended up trying a back heel which was not even on target from a few yards out. We continued to press and Nick Wilson beat a couple of players before his shot was deflected into the path of Smith-Joseph who poked the ball wide.

A few minutes later Owen found Dyer in a good position and he twisted and turned before firing a shot just beyond the far post and then Smith tried his luck from twenty-five yards, which Berwick parried as far as Dyer who got a shot away before being clattered into by the keeper. It wasn't exactly Harald Schumacher at the 1982 World Cup (look it up kids) but it absolutely should have been a penalty, something that one of the Hailsham defenders openly admitted in conversation with people on the sidelines.

So the teams went in goalless, but it didn't stay that way for long as we were in front inside 120 seconds of the restart. Wilson played a nice pass to Owen in a central position; he then threaded the ball through to Dyer who finished clinically past Berwick from close range. He nearly scored again eight minutes later after beating two defenders before unleashing a shot that is best described by saying it hit Berwick and flew to safety, rather than him making the save. Either way, it stayed out and we then had another warning from our opposition as a free kick from twenty yards was struck fully against our crossbar with Charles beaten, and the ball flew off it to safety.

It was therefore a very good time to calm any nerves by scoring a second goal just a few minutes later. The 62nd minute to be exact and it started with a Smith-Joseph strike that was saved but not held, and the ball was fed back in again to our substitute Jubril "Jibs" Adamson whose close range shot was half saved by Berwick who had to then watch the ball dribble over his line. There was a little retribution here for Jibs, whose "goal" on Tuesday had been disallowed, despite crossing the line before being cleared. This one counted.

It should have been three-nil a minute later when Smith-Joseph roasted the full back on our left, but his low ball in was met by an air shot from Owen just three yards out. As it turned out, that would be the end of the scoring, but not the end of the controversy. Gavin Quintyne was robbed, clearly unfairly in the middle of the field and left in a heap while the attack continued. fortunately for us it came to nothing, but Quintyne made his view clear to the referee who then threatened to send our man to the sin-bin. As it was, he was about to be subbed off anyway, but it was a poor decision, regrettably it wouldn't be the last.

We added further subs in Josh Alder and Warren Colman while another, the increasingly versatile Fernandes slotted in at full back just three weeks after scoring two goals in an advanced role. Alder saw his shot deflected wide while Colman headed a deep Smith corner wide at the far post, but both players showcased our strength in depth and it certainly looked like we would be getting another goal shortly.

However, it didn't come and in the 90th minute things all went a bit strange. Firstly, a Hailsham striker got past Fernandes who then appeared to bring him down, clearly outside the penalty area, but he fell inside the box and the referee gave a penalty and booked our man. This was hugely frustrating, especially after we had been denied a clean sheet in injury time the previous week, but this time Charlie Playford's penalty wasn't a great one and Charles made a fairly easy save to preserve our clean sheet. However, this wasn't the end of it, as Fernandes wanted to continue his discussion with the referee who then waved a second yellow card in his direction to direct him to the sin-bin, only to then

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wave a red card at him moments later. It's obviously hard to know exactly what the referee actually sent him off for and indeed, we will probably only find out by the length of his suspension! As an aside, to ease any confusion and seeing as the "respect" rule appears to be here to stay, maybe it's time for a different colour of card to be issued if someone is sent to the sin-bin?

Either way though, it was a fairly shoddy display from the man in the middle, who would have earned far more respect if he had got his decisions correct and consistent. Despite the irritations though, we held on and for what it's worth, I think 2-0 was a fair scoreline over the ninety minutes. Hailsham clearly should be higher than their current position, and I'm sure by next April they will be. Meanwhile, we are back at the top and if we can keep this winning run going, who knows what we could achieve on the field this season.

Epsom & Ewell: Kane Charles, Zach Powell, Steve Springett, Ryan 'Butch' Smith, Brad Peters (c), Gideon Acheampong, Nick Wilson, Gavin Quintyne, Jaevon Dyer, Athan Smith-Joseph, Josh Owen

Subs: Jubril "Jibs" Adamson for Dyer (60), Ricardo Fernandes for Springett (60), Josh Alder for Quintyne (70), Warren Colman for Smith-Joseph (75)

Report Source: www.eefconline.co.uk

Epsom and Ewell pressed-on to Victory

28 November 2022

East Preston 1-3 Epsom & Ewell Southern Combination League – Division One. Saturday 1st October 2022
Report Source: www.eefconline.co.uk Reporter: Richard Lambert.

We won our second consecutive match by the score of 3-1 on Saturday at East Preston, but the two contests could hardly have been more different. On Tuesday at Godalming Town, we didn't play particularly well and relied on a late goal to clinch the points from an even match, so supporters came away fairly happy. On Saturday though, our first visit to the Lashmar was a much more impressive performance, and we arguably could have won by many more. However, a 93rd minute Alfie Moss goal for the home side spoilt the clean sheet that our boys deserved and left a slightly disappointing taste in the mouth.

There was originally just one change to the line up following the win at Godalming as Josh Owen came in for Jaevon Dyer, but then Johnny "Sonic" Akoto tweaked a hamstring in the warm up, so we needed to make a second change. Fortunately we had a more than able replacement in Gideon Acheampong ready to go. In terms of the substitutes, Dyer wasn't originally named on the five man list, but the non-appearance of Jubril Adamson meant that he was included just before kick off and he would also come on and score later! It was also interesting to see the return of Josh Alder in that group, having returned from a brief but very successful spell at Oakwood last month.

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Pos		Team	P	W	D	L	F	A	Diff	Pts	Form
1		Selsey	9	7	1	1	20	7	13	22	
2		Epsom & Ewell	8	7	0	1	27	9	18	21	
3		Wick	9	6	0	3	18	14	4	18	
4		Dorking Wanderers B	10	5	2	3	20	13	7	17	
5		Godalming Town	9	5	1	3	21	12	9	16	
6		Shoreham	7	4	3	0	16	4	12	15	
7		Arundel	9	4	2	3	18	17	1	14	
8		Chessington & Hook	9	4	1	4	16	12	4	13	
9		East Preston	8	4	1	3	10	9	1	13	
10		Billingshurst	11	4	1	6	18	26	-8	13	
11		Mile Oak	9	4	0	5	16	16	0	12	
12		Worthing United	9	3	2	4	11	17	-6	11	
13		Seaford Town	9	2	4	3	14	15	-1	10	
14		Hailsham Town	8	2	2	4	8	13	-5	8	
15		Oakwood	9	2	2	5	11	18	-7	7	
16		Forest Row	9	1	0	8	10	28	-18	3	
17		Montpelier Villa	10	0	2	8	3	27	-24	2	

Southern Combination Football League

On a sunny day with a little shower now and then, we kicked off heading towards the remaining trees at the clubhouse end. When I had visited on a ground hop back in 2001 I thought there were more trees, but a club official pointed out that many had to be removed during the summer, which left the ground a lot more open to the sunlight, but lacking a little in character as a result. I hope they are able to replace them.

We started off well and just kept going. Ricardo Fernandes sent an early shot wide of the post before Nick Wilson and Athan-Smith Joseph both struck at goal only to provide comfortable saves for Maj Kason. Owen was a constant threat in this match and he set Fernandes through with a clever pass, but the shot went wide from a good position. The pair combined again as Owen flicked on a long throw to Fernandes, but he was unable to keep his header on target.

We continued to press. Kason had to punch away a dangerous delivery before a Ryan Smith corner to the far post was headed back across by Brad Peters only for Aaron Bogle to miss a straightforward header from five yards out, glancing it wide instead. Fortunately, we took the lead in the 35th minute after Smith received the ball just over twenty yards out and drilled it low into the keeper’s left hand bottom corner. Fernandes also had another try but his equally powerful strike went wide of the post.

This had been an extremely one-sided first half against a team in the top half of the table and the only criticism you could level at our team was that we probably should have been in a position of greater dominance on the scoreboard. We had a slight delay to the second half as an Assistant was unable to continue, so a home official ran the line for the remainder of the match and he was very busy as almost all of the play would again be contained within the East Preston half.

Athan Smith-Joseph was unfortunate to strike just beyond the top corner from nearly twenty yards and his next delivery was palmed up into the air by Kason, but a defender was able to head clear before it reached Fernandes. The home side did get a shot blocked by a defender for a corner which, disappointingly for the home side, went straight out of play and we made them pay as a nice through ball set Smith-Joseph in on goal from a central position where he clipped the ball past the keeper before rolling the ball into the empty net with his left foot for our second goal in the 54th minute.

Chances kept coming. Owen struck just over the bar after beating two men and on the hour Fernandes intercepted a pass across the back and was through on goal, but telegraphed his shot and Kason saved low down to his left. Dyer came on for Smith-Joseph in the 63rd minute and he found the net nine minutes later, although much of the credit goes to Owen who did well on the right before sending the ball over from the left for Dyer to side foot home from eight yards. Kason nearly managed to keep it out, but there was just too much power in the shot and it was 3-0.

Alder joined the fray and sent one powerful strike at goal but Kason did well to block the shot, then Alder set up Wilson who struck powerfully enough, but it went just over the bar from only ten yards.

Seven minutes from the end of normal time we saw the return of Steve Springett after his nasty injury at Worthing United back in August and he did well to head a rare home attack away, but unfortunately we were caught out ten minutes later with a looping header that dropped over Matt Walton and into the net. It was an unfortunate way to end the match from an Epsom point of view, but it shouldn’t be forgotten that this was still our seventh League win in a row and with leaders Selsey being held to a draw by Seaford, we closed the gap at the top to a point and hold a game in hand. Despite the late drama it was a good day in terms of the bigger picture.

Epsom & Ewell: Matt Walton, Gideon Acheampong, Zach Powell, Ryan ‘Butch’ Smith, Brad Peters (c), Aaron Bogle, Nick Wilson, Gavin Quintyne, Athan Smith-Joseph, Ricardo Fernandes, Josh Owen

Subs: Jaevon Dyer for Smith-Joseph (63), Josh Alder for Owen (73) Steve Springett for Powell (83), Lewis Jupp for

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Acheampong (88)

Away win for Epsom and Ewell FC

28 November 2022

Godalming Town 1-3 Epsom & Ewell FC. Tuesday 27th.

After a ten day break, a strong Salts line up had to work extremely hard to secure victory at Weycourt on Tuesday evening. It wasn't pretty for large periods of the game and the hosts certainly had at least as much possession as we did, but we held out well defensively and maybe for that reason alone deserved the points from this attritional contest.

For the first time this season, and unsurprisingly following our 6-1 win over Wick, we kept an unchanged starting eleven and won an early free kick, but Nick Wilson's delivery was off target. The hosts then attacked and from a corner Matt Walton had to claw the ball away from under his bar.

However, we then took the lead in the 17th minute and it was a great move, started by Athan Smith-Joseph, who beat a couple of men on the left before delivering a low ball in from the left. Alfie Mickley in the Godalming goal was able to push the ball away, but it fell to Ricardo Fernandes, and as he had his back to goal, he laid it back into the path of Wilson who chipped Mickley from eighteen yards to register his first goal for the club.

Godalming fought back and forced a good block from Walton after we had lost the ball in defence, but we extended our lead in the 24th minute. A clever ball over the top of the defence was controlled beautifully by Jaevon Dyer whose touch took him past his defender, and his second touch cut outside onto his right and took the keeper out, leaving him the simple finish into the net from ten yards. It was an extremely skilful goal and Dyer looks like a real prospect. Expect him to be playing at a higher level in the not too distant future.

Dyer received a bit of treatment as a result of taking a knock during his run to the goal and another injury would require him to leave the field for good after 42 minutes. This was a real shame as he looked in excellent form and we weren't quite the same after his departure. Fernandes missed a good chance after he had broken through, while Rob Parrott was booked for diving in our penalty area. It was hard to see whether this was the right decision as the lighting was rather poor. What was clear though, was that our opponents were beginning to look more dangerous and a close range finish from Sam Boultwood from a good low left wing delivery reduced the arrears in the fifth minute of first half injury time.

The second half was a tight and competitive affair with little in the way of goalmouth action for either side. Walton chased a wide ball, which he was unable to reach first and the ball was then delivered back into the danger area before he could recover; fortunately Brad Peters was there to block the header on our goal line, before another dangerous ball in was headed just wide of our far post, but very little of real note happened in the second half and we were gradually beginning to see the game out. However, the hosts weren't done yet and an excellent close range save from Walton denied a Godalming equaliser with just a couple of minutes of normal time remaining.

We then had another scare in the 91st minute when a low cross from the right was met at the far post, but despite being only a couple of yards out, the ball was placed wide of the goal. This was a major let off and we made the hosts pay in the 96th minute when Johnny "Sonic" Akoto made a great run all the way down the right touchline, being brought down in the penalty area just as he was about to deliver a cross. If I'm honest, it was a bit of a soft decision, but we've seen them given against us too, so this time it was our turn and Richard Pingling stepped up to deliver a clinical finish from the spot.

The final whistle blew shortly after this and we were able to secure our sixth league win in a row. For those who are interested, the club record is 13, set in 2012/13. Without a doubt though, it was a tough challenge and we really couldn't have complained had this match finished even.

They say it is a good sign if you can still win without playing particularly well, but we will have to improve notably if we are not to face a similar set of challenges on Saturday when the club makes its first ever visit to East Preston for another tough looking league match.

Epsom & Ewell: Matt Walton, Johnny "Sonic" Akoto, Zach Powell, Ryan 'Butch' Smith, Brad Peters (c), Aaron Bogle, Athan Smith-Joseph, Nick Wilson, Jaevon Dyer, Gavin Quintyne, Ricardo Fernandes

Subs: Richard Pingling for Dyer (42), Josh Owen for Fernandes (75), Adam Grant for Smith-Joseph (75), Gideon Acheampong for Smith (90), Jubril "Jibs" Adamson for Quintyne (90)

Report Source: www.eefconline.co.uk

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From 0-0 draw to 6-1 triumph

28 November 2022

Today we catch up with two match reports for Epsom and Ewell FC courtesy of Richard Lambert.

Forest Row 0-0 Epsom & Ewell – abandoned after 82 minutes – Southern Combination League – Division One
Wednesday 14th September 2022. Report Source: www.eefconline.co.uk

Despite holding the balance of possession in the match against Forest Row at their temporary ground of Oakwood FC, we rarely looked like scoring and with the match heading towards a goalless draw, the contest was cut short following an 82nd minute injury to Andy "Woody" Hall, which I'm informed was provisionally diagnosed as a break to one of the bones in his lower leg. Although I don't have stats for injuries, it feels like decades since we had a player suffering a broken leg and we wish Woody all the best for a speedy recovery.

It was way back in 1938 that we last won on this date and in my mind I had already written the headline. "Epsom return to the top of the table, winning for the first time on this date since the Queen was merely a Princess!" Alas it was not to be, and we actually fell one place to sixth in the table, although will retain this match in hand for now while we await a date for the rearranged fixture.

On a chilly evening that reminds you that Autumn is on its way, the players gathered together for an immaculate minute's silence in respect of our late Queen. In terms of personnel, Hall came in for Aaron Bogle, while further forward Nick Wilson, Adam Grant and Josh Owen were in the starting line-up at the expense of Ricardo Fernandes, Gavin Quintyne and Jaevon Dyer, although all three were on the bench and would join the action later. Meanwhile in the absence of the suspended Gideon Acheampong, Brad Peters took the armband and was by some distance our best player tonight.

In truth very few players enhanced their reputation in this match. On a tricky surface, albeit one where we had coasted to a five goal win over Oakwood only a fortnight earlier, we overplayed the ball in the first half and then went far more direct in the second, yet created very few real chances with either tactic over the course of the ninety minutes.

Our opponents didn't fare any better and we rarely looked in serious danger, although Matt Walton had to be aware to make a good block from a header in the 26th minute. We had a couple of shots on target by this point from Owen and Richard Pingling, but neither caused the home keeper much alarm. Our first really good opportunity came from a Peters run which was unfairly ended on the edge of the penalty area and Ryan Smith's strike to the far corner was well kept out by the diving keeper on the half hour.

As the half came to a close we started to put more pressure onto the home side, but Owen's shot was half blocked which took the sting out of it and then Smith's free kick was headed back into the danger area by Peters, where Owen headed over from close range. The hosts put a header wide from a good position before Jubril Adamson poked a shot just wide from twelve yards and the teams went in goalless at the break.

Going down the slope in the second half I still felt we would break through and go on to win, but it was Forest Row who began to grow into the match and had a few long range shots at our goal, Walton tipped one wide for a corner, while another just cleared our crossbar. Fernandes and Dyer joined the action on the wings but still we couldn't find a way through.

Wilson struck a low fizzing drive inches wide of the far post before Dyer had our best chance just after the hour, latching on to a pass through the defence and sending his defender the wrong way, but after doing the hard work and with only the keeper to beat, he lost his balance and never really got a shot in, stumbling over the ball which dribbled through to the grateful keeper. You begun to wonder if this wasn't going to be our day and those fears were confirmed after Peters made a mazy run through defence, only to clip the ball back across goal, again missing the far post by inches.

Wilson picked up a yellow card in the 82nd minute for persistent fouls, but the game never restarted as the referee was then made aware that Hall was lying in the middle of the field in considerable discomfort. It looked like it had been an innocuous contact, but after a few minutes it was apparent that he wasn't getting up any time soon and after twelve minutes with no sign of an ambulance to this point, the referee chose to abandon the match.

This was only the second time in club history where we had an abandonment for a player injury, following a similar situation against Egham Town back in April 2008 up at Banstead Athletic. That match was rearranged and despite rumours of this result being allowed to stand, a replay will surely be ordered. As an example, last season Worthing United v Storrington was abandoned in the 90th minute for a player injury, yet had to be contested again, and whilst our abandoned match at Dorking Wanderers Reserves was allowed to stand, the circumstances of that one were completely different! Actually, the fact that the match will be rearranged was probably the only positive to take from the evening as it would give us another opportunity to win the three points. In the meantime I can confirm that everyone's appearance will be recorded as a competitive fixture in accordance with all other abandoned matches in our history.

Epsom & Ewell: Matt Walton, Johnny "Sonic" Akoto, Zach Powell, Ryan 'Butch' Smith, Brad Peters (c), Andy "Woody" Hall, Richard Pingling, Nick Wilson, Jubril "Jibs" Adamson, Josh Owen, Adam Grant

Subs: Jaevon Dyer for Adamson (56), Ricardo Fernandes for Pingling (56), Gavin Quintyne for Owen (80)

Epsom & Ewell 6-1 Wick Southern Combination League – Division One Saturday 17th September 2022

We registered our fifth straight League win on Saturday as top of the table Wick visited Fetcham Grove and received a bit

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of a hiding as we ran up a 6-1 victory which, coupled with other results on the day, enabled us to rise from sixth place to take our opponent's position at the head of the table. We currently have the highest number of goals scored and the best goal difference, as of course was the case in our division last season, even though it would prove only good enough for sixth place in the final reckoning. This time I have a feeling that this might be different.

In truth this was a strange match, which started slowly and was played at quite a slow tempo, which enabled our boys to show what they could do, particularly in the early stages of the second half when we were dominant. However, for large parts of the match there wasn't a lot between the sides, even though we did look more dangerous throughout and in Jaevon Dyer we had the best player on the park, providing a constant threat to the opposition and eventually winning a penalty in the final seconds of the first half that put daylight between the teams at the break and arguably allowed us to express ourselves freely in that second period.

In terms of personnel, the only bit of bad news was that Club Captain Gideon Acheampong remained suspended, due to Wednesday's match at Forest Row being abandoned and therefore not counting as his one game off. However, Johnny "Sonic" Akoto continued in his place and such is the strength in depth with this squad that it proved a seamless transition. Aaron Bogle came in for the Andy Hall, whose bad injury on Wednesday led to the abandonment and will keep him out for some time. Also returning to the starting eleven alongside Dyer were Athan Smith-Joseph, Gavin Quintyne and Ricardo Fernandes, so Richard Pingling, Jubril Adamson, Josh Owen and Adam Grant returned to the bench after starting in Wednesday's underwhelming performance. Finally, Steve Springett remained unavailable after his injury at Worthing United but the cast will be off shortly and he was kicking a ball in the warm up, so it won't be long before he is pressing for a recall.

The afternoon commenced with another impeccable minute's silence for Queen Elizabeth II and this was followed by something that may well become a new tradition at Fetcham Grove; that of counting the crowd! Our club have recently taken the sad step of inflating the size of the gate in a misguided attempt to show that support is increasing, even though the only news the supporters get told, comes from this website. For the record, three independent counts put the attendance at 87. Performances like this one will surely lead to an increase in support, but until this practice stops, the crowd number will be recorded here.

It was clear right from the start that the visitors were playing a very high line at the back, which meant that a number of our early passes ran through to their goalie, playing on the edge of his penalty area in a sort of sweeper/keeper role. This high line had a direct effect of compressing the play into midfield and provided proof to me, which some people doubted, that Zach Powell's opener was a genuine strike at goal from fifty yards. Under normal circumstances, it might have been seen as an over hit pass from midfield, but because of the high line, it would have required a pass of no more that twenty yards. Powell's strike flew at least forty yards through the air, just cleared the retreating keeper and bounced into the net in the 14th minute. It was clearly deliberate.

We had a bit of a scare a few minutes later as Matt Walton's scuffed goal clearance from out wide went directly to Wick's danger man Dave Crouch in a central position, and from 25 yards out he struck at the vacant goal. The ball seemed to run for ages before it just went the right side of the post from an Epsom perspective.

Smith-Joseph provided a nice low ball across goal just ahead of Fernandes and with Dyer having done the same just before our goal, I was wondering about the wisdom of playing one of our hard-working midfielders in such an advanced position. This became more apparent in the 35th minute when Dyer produced a great run and low shot from 18 yards that hit the inside of the Wick post and bounced across towards Fernandes, but his attempt to knock in the loose ball from less than six yards was denied by a combination of defender and then keeper. However, Fernandes would have the last laugh by the game's end.

We had a brief stoppage a few minutes from the end of the half which seemed to come out of nothing, but led to a scuffle between a few players and accusations of foul play from both sides, but it all settled down and we began to get on top again. Dyer was causing real trouble now and he beat three men on another run before setting up Smith-Joseph for a strike, but it was an easy save for the keeper in the end. However, Dyer wasn't finished though and in the second minute of injury time, he chased another ball on the right, twisted and turned his defender who then brought him down. Ryan Smith then stepped up to score his first goal for the club from the penalty spot with the same accuracy he uses for his free kicks. The half time whistle blew immediately after the restart and we went in two goals ahead.

We came out for the second period in a more relaxed frame of mind and at times played some of our best football of the season. Smith-Joseph started to torment his opponents, pulling the ball back from the left, but Quintyne blazed over from just inside the area. Whilst Akoto was in my opinion harshly booked soon after, we extended our lead in the 55th minute when Smith-Joseph produced one of his trademark mazy runs and finished off with an unstoppable strike from ten yards into the roof of the net to make it 3-0.

If it wasn't game over then, it certainly was three minutes after that when a great pass from midfield broke the Wick high line and with their players claiming offside, Fernandes carried on his run, drew the keeper and then slotted the ball under him for our fourth goal. I had a fairly good view of this one, but even I couldn't say for certain whether he was onside or not. It was certainly a tight call. either way though the dog's abuse that was directed at the Assistant by at least three players was inexcusable and the Wick number 6 was rightly sent to the sin-bin. He could easily have been accompanied there by other team-mates.

While the visitors were down to ten men we extended our lead to five-nil in the 65th minute as Smith-Joseph got around the back of the defence on the left and his pull back was finished off superbly into the top corner by Fernandes from fifteen yards, who in one match doubled his goals tally for the club from two to four and proved me wrong in the process for suggesting he was playing too far forward. Sorry Ricardo!

The visitors returned to eleven men soon after, while we made a number of substitutions. Whether this disrupted our play is hard to say, but either way Wick pulled a goal back in the 77th minute as Ronald Kardos ran at goal and we stood off him, inviting him to shoot, which he then did into the far corner with Walton possibly unsighted at first. This was a pity

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but we bounced back in style four minutes later when a great pass from Pingling put Grant through the colander-like offside trap and he finished as clinically as Fernandes had earlier to make it 6-1.

In the final moments Crouch had a shot tipped over by Walton and Owen shot weakly from a good position but it made no difference as we were convincing winners by that time and while we now sit at the top of the table it should be pointed out that we have only played two home games and scored eleven times in those matches. Has anyone else in the country got a better home scoring record right now? Yes of course it is early days, and the performance at Forest Row on Wednesday is useful to remind us that we can still play poorly at times, but Saturday's win was more than just three points, it was a statement to the rest of the league. We are here and we don't intend to let it slip this season.

Epsom & Ewell: Matt Walton, Johnny "Sonic" Akoto, Zach Powell, Ryan 'Butch' Smith, Brad Peters (c), Aaron Bogle, Athan Smith-Joseph, Nick Wilson, Jaevon Dyer, Gavin Quintyne, Ricardo Fernandes

Subs: Josh Owen for Quintyne (72), Adam Grant for Smith-Joseph (72), Louis Chin for Akoto (76), Richard Pingling for Dyer (76), Jubril "Jibs" Adamson for Wilson (82)

Salts strike Anvils from League Cup

28 November 2022

Crawley Down Gatwick 2-3 Epsom & Ewell FC. Southern Combination League Peter Bentley Cup – Second Round. Tuesday 6th September 2022. Report Source: www.eefconline.co.uk Reporter: Richard Lambert.

Our first ever visit to the Haven produced a fine performance from our boys as they knocked Step Five Crawley Down Gatwick out of the Southern Combination Peter Bentley League Cup on Tuesday evening.

We had obviously given Step Five Redhill a decent match recently in the FA Vase, so our Management will have expected nothing less in this contest, despite being underdogs on paper. Fortunately we were able to recall Richard Pingling after his two match suspension was completed, although in the absence of Gideon Acheampong, Johnny "Sonic" Akoto came in at right back and Ricardo Fernandes took on the Captain's armband.

The Haven has changed greatly since my previous visit in the 1990s and it has become an enclosed and extremely picturesque tree-lined venue. However, there is limited cover behind both goals and a rainstorm accompanied the opening minutes of the contest!

Fortunately it subsided quickly and we got off to a fine start. A Ryan Smith long range effort was deflected wide for a corner and from Smith's low set-piece delivery to the near post in the fifth minute the ball was casually flicked into the roof of the net on the half-volley by Brad Peters, who has now registered four goals already this season. Not bad for a centre-half!

Pingling was inches wide of the far post with a low strike from a Fernandes pass, while Jaevon Dyer found himself in a great position, only to scuff his shot and the danger was cleared. Fernandes had a similar opportunity just before this and Peters headed a Smith free kick over the bar, before Pingling then intercepted a poor back pass but was then smothered by about four defenders before he could make it count. We thoroughly deserved our lead at the half and arguably it could have been larger, with the only concerns being a harsh yellow card for Jubril "Jibs" Adamson and a sin-bin for Zach Powell in the 37th minute, which was still in force as the teams went off at the half, with only a header wide of the target and a shot blocked just before the break being registered by the hosts to this point.

The second half would be more even in terms of possession, but shortly after Powell returned to the field of play we had extended our lead. A fantastic pass from Gavin Quintyne in the 47th minute was sent perfectly into the stride of substitute Josh Owen who chested the ball down, before striking the ball across the keeper into the far corner for his first goal for our club.

Crawley Down pulled a goal back in the 59th minute with a ball through our defence that was struck low beyond Matt Walton from close range, but just five minutes later we restored our two goal lead and this time the superb assist came from Pingling, way out on the right hand touchline; his deep ball to the far post being met by a left-footed volley from Fernandes about four yards out, giving the home keeper no chance.

Further substitutions came as Nick Wilson, Adam Grant and then Josh Alder came on in quick succession. I'm not sure what anyone else thinks about the new five substitutes rule, but one thing is for certain, the games become far more stop-start in the second half as up to ten stoppages can occur now. It certainly seemed to break up our flow and the home side started to press us back a lot more as they chased the match.

A long range strike looped up off a defender and just dropped over Walton's bar, but the respite was brief as the subsequent corner was met with a far post header from close range in the 78th minute as the hosts reduced the score to 3-2, and we picked up an unnecessary card when Alder kicked the ball away. It did seem a little harsh on our boys who seemed to be penalised for things in this match that the opponents didn't, and by the end even free kicks were being taken from advanced positions with the officials seeming not to notice. As the time ran down, a long range strike was tipped over the bar by Walton, but by now we were in the sixth minute of injury time and the final whistle blew shortly

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afterwards to confirm our progress.

This was a thoroughly deserved win against a good team and in truth I felt that the scoreline should probably have been wider on the balance of play, but ultimately we claimed the win and will now host Broadbridge Heath in the last 16 of the competition.

Epsom & Ewell: Matt Walton, Johnny “Sonic” Akoto, Zach Powell, Ryan ‘Butch’ Smith, Brad Peters, Aaron Bogle, Ricardo Fernandes (c), Gavin Quintyne, Richard Pingling, Jubril “Jibs” Adamson, Jaevon Dyer

Subs: Josh Owen for Adamson (41), Nick Wilson for Dyer (60), Adam Grant for Smith (68), Josh Alder for Pingling (80)

Epsom and Ewell Top the Table

28 November 2022

Oakwood 0-5 Epsom & Ewell, Southern Combination League – Division One, Monday 29th August 2022. Report Source: www.eefconline.co.uk. Reporter: Richard Lambert.

Any disappointment felt in the FA Vase defeat at Redhill on Saturday was firmly banished less than 48 hours later as we thrashed Oakwood 5-0 on the Bank Holiday Monday morning to go top of the League table for the first time this season.

It was almost a perfect day for a Salts supporter. Five goals, no bookings, a clean sheet and no apparent injuries. In fact, the only disappointment was the lack of a match day programme from the hosts, who had promised there would be one online. As far as I am aware, a programme is still mandatory in our league, yet it’s the third time in recent months that this has happened and it is probably time that the League reminded the clubs of their obligation to produce something that many supporters still want to see at each game.

The quick turnaround between fixtures always meant it was likely there would be changes to our line up, although only three were made; Johnny “Sonic” Akoto was unavailable, so Zach Powell moved to left back and recent re-joiner Gavin Quintyne made his first start for us, slotting seamlessly into Powell’s vacated midfield role. Up front Josh Alder came in for Jaevon Dyer and at the back Andy “Woody” Hall came back in for the absent Aaron Bogle. We would see two further debuts from the bench in this match as Nick Wilson and Jack Porter would each get their first run outs of the season.

We had performed creditably at Step Five Redhill, but so had Oakwood as they had lost narrowly 3-2 at another good Step Five team in Fisher, so although they had been struggling with early league form, this looked like it would be a tricky fixture to negotiate. However, after an even ten minutes we scored an early goal going down the slope and never looked in danger from that point onwards.

The scorer of our first goal was Jubril “Jibs” Adamson who received the ball from Tiago Andrade and curled the ball left-footed into the far top corner from outside of the penalty area in just the eighth minute. You couldn’t have placed the ball any further into the corner of the net without hitting the post or bar and the keeper, understandably had no chance of saving it.

We had already made a couple of chances by this point with a Hall header and an Alder volley both being just off target, but the home team had put a couple of dangerous balls in to our area themselves; one coming just after our opener with a far post header from the Oakwood number 11, but we were soon back on the attack and Adamson struck at goal once again after being found by a clever back heel by Andrade, although the home keeper was able to make the save easily enough.

We nearly extended the lead when a Smith free kick was up and over the wall, but was inches wide; grazing the back stanchion of the goal from twenty yards out and then Peters, already looking for his fourth goal of the season, saw his shot deflected over, although a goal kick was awarded.

We had a shout for a penalty when the home keeper came out for a high ball and appeared to clatter into Andrade first, but the ball was only half cleared to Smith and his long range shot was deflected kindly into the path of Alder who kept his composure to slot the ball under the advancing keeper from eight yards to register his first competitive goal for our club in the 37th minute.

We had further chances before the half with Alder and Andrade both forcing saves from the keeper and then Alder dragged a low shot across goal, just beyond the far post from a good position. However, we were well in charge by this point and I was confident that we could go on and score further goals in the second half.

And that is just what happened, although we had two good opportunities before that third goal did come, firstly from Quintyne who ran on to a good pass, but then saw his shot well blocked by the keeper, and then when Athan Smith-Joseph’s ball across goal took a hop on the long grass and bounced straight over Adamson’s leg. Fortunately our winger was on target soon after this, thanks to a lovely slide rule pass from Quintyne, only to see the shot saved but rebound onto the knee of the retreating number 3 and dribble apologetically into the net for an own goal in the 55th minute.

Wilson, Ricardo Fernandes and then Josh Owen joined the match and Matt Walton had a rare involvement as he had to tip a header from an Oakwood corner away, but we scored our fourth goal in the 62nd minute when Owen held the ball up on the left and drew defenders before crossing for the unmarked Fernandes to stroke the ball into the far corner from ten

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yards.

Owen was unfortunate to see his powerful header from Wilson's free kick ruled out for an offside flag, but we had a fifth goal in the 75th minute and it came from an unlikely source as Gideon Acheampong had made a fine run and received a return pass into stride from Smith-Joseph and finished clinically low to the keeper's left and just inside the near post from eight yards out. Cue large celebrations as it was only our Captain's second goal for the club in his 69th Salts appearance.

That would conclude the scoring for this match, although Walton had a scare at the other end when he appeared to take his eye off the ball and it came back off the frame of the goal before he gathered it, while our coach Porter came on in the final moments, getting bundled over in the box, but the referee wasn't interested and to be fair, he was probably right!

In truth this was a very comfortable win for our boys. Oakwood were not in the same league on the day and with a few more performances like this, maybe the two teams will actually be in different leagues next season as for the first time in 2022/23 we can actually look down from the top of the table, even though we probably won't be there after next Saturday as we are the odd team in a seventeen team division and have no league match that day. Our next competitive match is a challenging League Cup tie at Step Five Crawley Down Gatwick on Tuesday 6th September.

Epsom & Ewell: Matt Walton, Gideon Acheampong ©, Zach Powell, Ryan 'Butch' Smith, Brad Peters, Andy "Woody" Hall, Athan Smith-Joseph, Gavin Quintyne, Tiago Andrade, Jubril "Jibs" Adamson, Josh Alder

Subs: Nick Wilson for Smith (57), Ricardo Fernandes for Alder (57), Josh Owen for Adamson (59), Louis Chin for Andrade (65), Jack Porter for Smith-Joseph (89)

Lobsters at home with Salts

28 November 2022

Salts battle hard but Lobsters progress in the Vase. Redhill 2-1 Epsom & Ewell. Isuzu F.A. Vase – First Qualifying Round. Saturday 27th August 2022. Report Source: www.eefconline.co.uk Reporter: Richard Lambert

Our first Vase match of the season also became our last as we were defeated by Redhill at Kiln Brow on Saturday, but our opponents will know that they had to work for the full ninety minutes before coming through in a match that was ultimately only decided by a defensive error.

In fact, over the ninety minutes we had the greater chances and against a team in the top four of Step Five at the time the match kicked off, it was hard to tell that there was a full step between the two opponents. Although that didn't count for much in the end, our boys deserve a lot of credit and know that performances like this will result in a promotion at the end of the season, which was and remains our ultimate goal this season.

We made four changes to our starting line up with the injured Steve Springett, the unavailable Andy Hall and Adam Grant and the suspended Richard Pingling replaced by Johnny "Sonic" Akoto, Aaron Bogle, Tiago Andrade and Athan Smith-Joseph respectively. However, I have referred to our strength in depth and we looked as good this week as we had seven days previously at Worthing United.

Following a minute's silence for a Redhill Vice-President, Les Smith, we had a couple of early half chances with Ryan Smith's strike at goal and a nice bit of interplay between Jaevon Dyer and Andrade finished with a Dyer shot that was well blocked by the Redhill keeper Mike McEntegert. At the other end Matt Walton saved a low shot from Fred Hill with his feet after we were caught out by a long ball.

Our next chance fell to Zach Powell but he scuffed his shot from a good position before a defender made a great challenge to deny Dyer in the act of shooting. Then Dyer turned provider but Smith-Joseph couldn't quite direct his header on target at the far post. Next to try his luck was Smith from fully thirty yards although it was just wide of the post.

On the half hour Dyer struck another shot which I can confirm was creeping inside the post, but a defender's leg blocked the effort and the hosts broke with speed, earning a corner which was headed wide by Antonio Simeone. Then Walton was in action again, blocking away a shot from Jason Kaate, before Lyndon McGugan made a superb challenge after it looked as though Smith-Joseph would be able to finish easily when the ball fell kindly for him. Both of these Redhill players were with us briefly during the Covid friendly phase, although neither made a competitive appearance for us.

Dyer was giving the Redhill defence a lot of work and just before the break he was brought down by Sol Patterson-Bonner who earned the first yellow card of the day, but overall both teams looked solid in defence as we went in for half time with the goalless scoreline.

This looked like being a really tight encounter, decided by maybe just one goal, so when we took the lead in the 51st minute it looked like it might be pivotal. Dyer was again involved as he connected with a low ball in and his shot was well saved for a corner and from the Smith delivery Brad Peters rose highest to head home his third goal of the season from eight yards; his finish across McEntegert was unstoppable.

We could and maybe should have extended our lead a minute later when the ball was fed to Smith-Joseph, but his shot from ten yards was kept out by the keeper's feet. However, the game turned in the 56th minute. Dyer was brought down inside the penalty area, but it didn't look enough for a penalty for me. Meanwhile Redhill broke at pace and within

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seconds Yannick Monga ran in from the right and struck a low drive across Walton into the far corner. We had led for just five minutes.

Still we made chances as Andrade's delicious pass to Smith-Joseph was in stride, but his shot from six yards was straight at the advancing keeper and our flying winger was denied again by a saving defensive challenge minutes later. A couple of substitutions followed as Dyer and Jubril Adamson departed, but we failed to carry the same attacking threat that Dyer had posed and then in the 80th minute we tried to play out from the back, only for Max Oldham stole the ball, ran in and drilled the ball below Walton from close range for what proved to be the winner.

Moments later our Captain Gideon Acheampong to pick up a harsh yellow card for trying to get the ball off Oldham and nudging him over, although it should be noted that Oldham also received a card, but disaster then occurred in the final seconds when our defender tried to reach the ball to block an upfield clearance and he was adjudged to have caught the Redhill player, picking up a second card in the fourth minute of injury time. Clearly our Captain was angry at the decision, which I also thought was the wrong one. As it is Acheampong will now serve a one match suspension.

It is always unfortunate to depart the FA Vase. It is a competition that we have an indelible link with, having been one of the first two finalists in 1975 and we recognise our part in its history. However, as a Step Six team currently, promotion has to be our top priority and if we were going to get the rough end of a decision like that, then at least it didn't cost us league points. Hopefully we can put this result behind us when we face Oakwood on Monday morning as we go for our fourth League win in a row.

Epsom & Ewell: Matt Walton, Gideon Acheampong ©, Johnny "Sonic" Akoto, Ryan 'Butch' Smith, Brad Peters, Aaron Bogle, Athan Smith-Joseph, Zach Powell, Tiago Andrade, Jubril "Jibs" Adamson, Jaevon Dyer

Subs: Gavin Quintyne for Jaevon Dyer (69), Ricardo Fernandes for Adamson (69), Josh Alder for Powell (85)

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