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Miller hat-trick saves Epsom and Ewell FC

1 April 2025



Spelthorne Sports 1-4 Epsom and Ewell FC. Combined Counties League – Premier Division South. Saturday 29th March.

It's like London buses; you wait eight matches for a win and then along come two at once! The same story could be applied to our little winger Luke Miller, who had scored 36 goals for our club previously, but not a single one since September, and yet his well taken second half hat trick was enough to break a fairly weak Spelthorne resistance as we won at the Sports Club by four goals to one, confirming our mathematical escape from relegation this season.

Maybe unsurprisingly, we stuck with an unchanged starting eleven for our meeting with the club at the foot of the League in the hope that momentum gained in Tuesday's win over Corinthian-Casuals would continue. Going into this contest we knew that a win would guarantee our survival at Step Five for 2025/26, but anything less would leave us looking over our shoulders at the fast improving Balham team.

We got off to a fine start at the Spelthorne Sports Club; a venue we have never lost at in five previous visits, and were ahead as early as the seventh minute after some early pressure led to the ball being passed around on the edge of the Spelthorne Sports penalty area and out of nowhere, Brendan Murphy-McVey struck a shot across home keeper Aaron Etukado with the outside of his left foot. It was a cultured and clinical finish and was also our new man's first goal for the club, having been unfortunate when hitting the post four days previously.

The home side were forced into an early substitution due to injury and after Jason Bloor was brought down on the edge of the area, Murphy-McVey's strike forced Etukado into a low save. Bloor sent a strike over the bar from distance and Toby Young headed wide from a deep Miller free kick. It was interesting to see the Spelthorne number ten Glenn Yala stumble in the penalty area and then receive a yellow card for simulation which looked harsh, before a card was issued in the direction of our bench for something that was said. Just before half time Ethan Nelson-Roberts saw his shot take a heavy deflection wide and from the corner Anthony Nazareth headed wide at the far post.

As the players went off at half time there was only really one team in it, but a substitution at the break worked instantly as Oliver Jovanovic came on and with just 20 seconds having elapsed, he tried his luck with the breeze now in his favour and it flew right into the top corner, leaving Sami Nabbad helpless.

A week or two ago this might have caused us to wobble, but the home side rarely challenged and we soon picked up where we had left off in the first half. There was time to see Craig Dundas trying a cheeky throw in off the back of a retreating opponent in an attempt to get the ball straight back, but he was pulled up for the foul throw! However, it didn't take much time before we restored our lead and it arguably came from an unlikely source. Miller had missed three good opportunities against Casuals on Tuesday and hadn't troubled the scorers for a few months, but this time he was far more clinical and when he ran on to Ethan Brazier's great pass over the top of a static defence, he ran in on goal before cheekily flicking the ball, again with the outside of his foot like Murphy-McVey had, to send the ball beyond Etukado's left hand and into the far corner of the net in the 64th minute.

We then posed a tricky problem for the referee when substitute Kionte Gillfillian-Waul made good ground on the left before colliding with the keeper. It wasn't clear to see who was at fault here, but despite our appeals, the man in black waved away the penalty appeals. Again though, it didn't matter as we made the game safe in the 80th minute. This time Gillfillian-Waul did well down the right flank and his pull back enabled Adam Green to strike a low shot at goal from just outside the area. Etukado got down to make the save, but couldn't hold on and Miller was there at the far post to firstly win the ball off a defender before tucking it in from a narrow angle just a couple of yards out.

Etukado was badly injured in making the save and required treatment for a lower leg injury before being replaced in some pain. This required the home side to throw in an outfield player and as they had used all their substitutes by then, they were also down to ten men as a result. I thought the same was going to happen to our Captain Green in the 89th minute after he needed treatment, as we had also used our subs by then, but he recovered to rejoin the action and Miller wrapped things up in the third minute of injury time with a cheeky lob from an angle, only twelve yards out, that went in off the far post to give him his third hat trick in Epsom colours, and his first one away from home after registering triples against Mile Oak and Billingshurst, both at our temporary home ground of Fetcham Grove in 2021/22.

Spelthorne will now take a season or more out in Division One of the Combined Counties League, having fallen away quite badly this season, while Corinthian-Casuals will surely dispense of their Manager at season's end having just about survived at this level, when they will have been hoping to bounce straight back. What I will say in our favour is that these two wins were pivotal and you can only beat who is in front of you. We'll get a better idea of whether we have really turned the corner on Tuesday against in-form Balham, but either way, assessing the performance is not really important right now; it was all about the points, and as it was at the end of last season we have made it count just when we needed to. The same could also be applied to Miller, who now jumps five places on our Club Hall of Fame list to 42nd after not moving for such a long time. I think he would agree, it was overdue!

Epsom & Ewell: Sami Nabbad, Ethan Brazier, Ethan Nelson-Roberts, Adam Green (c), Toby Young, Anthony Nazareth, Luke Miller, Niall Stillwell, Craig Dundas, Brendan Murphy-McVey, Jason Bloor

Subs: Kionte Gillfillian-Waul for Stillwell (63), Ali Fofahan for Bloor (75), Jack Torbett for Murphy-McVey (83), Stefan

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Aiwone for Nelson-Roberts (85), Nicolas Bostan for Brazier (85)

Report Source: www.eefconline.co.uk

Epsom and Ewell FC beat landlords

1 April 2025

Corinthian-Casuals 1-2 Epsom and Ewell FC. Combined Counties League – Premier Division South. Tuesday 25th March 2025

It could be argued that our opponents were the ideal team to play as they had not won any of their last 15 League matches dating back to November, but we of course went into this match on a nine match losing run of our own; our worst run since the relegation season of 2003/04, (when we went down with just one point fewer than Corinthian-Casuals!) so nothing was ever going to be straightforward in our battle to escape relegation, which was brought into sharp focus by our 3-2 defeat to Balham on Saturday.

Although Dundas was technically in charge yesterday, he continued his role up front, so the bulk of the match decisions were in the hands of Max Johnson and the rest of the Coaching team. It could therefore be argued that there was not a lot of difference, but our performance in this match was more aggressive and attacking than we had been in recent matches.

We made a couple of personnel changes from Saturday's match. Former Casual Sami Nabbad came in between the posts against his old club while Ethan Brazier returned to the starting eleven, resulting in Niall Stillwell moving forward into a midfield role in place of the absent Sean-Michael Anderson.

It was clear from the opening exchanges that this was going to be a more open encounter. Both sides fired early sighters just wide of the goal and Nabbad had to come out smartly to head clear. Young gave away a foul out on the touchline but the free kick was claimed by Nabbad as the "home" team shaded the early possession. As the half went on though, we began to gain a foothold in the match. The 44 year old Dundas set a fine example by chasing down a lost cause and retrieved the ball just before it went out of play, which led to a shot from Brendan Murphy-McVey that smacked against Murillo Bernardes' left hand post with a defender just preventing Jason Bloor from knocking the rebound into an empty net.

Adam Green tried his luck from distance with Bernardes turning the ball around the post before Murphy-McVey saw his shot flick up off a defender, requiring an acrobatic save from the keeper to claw the ball away. The best chance of the half came for us in the 45th minute when good pressure from Dundas and Green allowed Luke Miller to have a clear shot at goal from fifteen yards, but he dragged the shot horribly across goal when he should at least have hit the target. Still, as the half time whistle blew, we appeared to be in the ascendency, despite the goalless scoreline.

Of course this counts for little as we found out three days previously if you don't sustain things in the second half and in the 48th minute we were behind after Ben Checklit drilled a low shot across Nabbad into the far corner from just inside the penalty area to put us in a difficult situation. We were going to have to come from behind to win for the first time since winning at Phoenix Sports in an August F.A. Cup tie.

It is sometimes easy as a supporter to focus on your own club's shortcomings on the field of play without realising that other clubs have their own issues too. For example, our nine match losing run had been underlined by our inability to hold onto a lead against Balham. However, Casuals had concerns of their own, having failed to win for so long themselves and from the point when they took the lead, they started to exhibit the same signs that we had been guilty of so recently. A defensive error let Miller in on goal just four minutes after we had conceded, but with just Bernardes to beat, he lifted his shot over the bar from just twelve yards.

Then in the 57th minute came the turning point in the match as a hopeful ball forward took a very solid bounce and completely deceived Bernardes who could only get a faint glove on the ball, enabling Bloor to continue the run he made and nod the ball into the empty net from eight yards! It was a massive lifeline and we had taken it to level the scores.

Seven minutes later it was Bloor again who received a ball on the left and as he cut in, he was brought down in the penalty area by Marcus Dos Santos who then received a second yellow card for his foul. Ironically, their powerhouse midfielder will now be suspended for their next fixture against…. Balham! Adam Green tucked away the penalty in the 65th minute and we had a lead. In fact, we had turned the match around in a ten minute spell, much the same as Balham had done to us on Saturday, but could we hold on?

Against ten men it should have been fairly straightforward to manage the game, but it was never going to be quite that simple as our opponents began to push forward in search of an equaliser. Our bench cleverly broke up any momentum with some regular substitutions during this period with Ali Fofahan, Kionte Gillfillian-Waul, Stefan Aiwone, Callum Wilson and Nicolas Bostan all joining the action over the next twenty minutes and it was interesting to see Wilson stationed up front as we tried to relieve any pressure with a clearance in his direction, although we kept trying to push forward in this match instead of sitting back and Miller sliced a shot wide in the 70th minute before his pull back from the touchline was cleared just ahead of the incoming Green.

At the other end Toby Young made a great defensive block but we looked dangerous going forward and Fofahan saw his shot turned around the post, before receiving a superb crossfield ball from Miller a couple of minutes later, which really should have brought success, especially when he had done the hard work to cut inside the defender, but with just the keeper to beat, he put the ball over the bar from ten yards.

Nabbad had to be alert to block a shot at the near post, but the final whistle blew soon after and celebrations commenced. Although we are not mathematically safe yet, the relief was everywhere to see and the exuberance was justified on this

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occasion. We now sit four points clear of Balham who have just two matches remaining and also now sit above Chipstead with a better goal difference. We can guarantee safety with a win at bottom club Spelthorne Sports on Saturday, or with a win for Corinthian-Casuals over Balham on Saturday and failing both of those outcomes we still have three more fixtures to play. We're almost there now and for the first time in a while we have momentum; one of the most important things to possess in any sport. New Manager bounce? It definitely exists!

Epsom & Ewell: Sami Nabbad, Ethan Brazier, Ethan Nelson-Roberts, Adam Green (c), Toby Young, Anthony Nazareth, Luke Miller, Niall Stillwell, Craig Dundas, Brendan Murphy-McVey, Jason Bloor

Subs: Ali Fofahan for Murphy-McVey (66), Kionte Gillfillian-Waul for Bloor (68), Stefan Aiwone for Dundas (78), Callum Wilson for Nelson-Roberts (79), Nicolas Bostan for Brazier (87)

Epsom & Ewell FC mid-week loss

1 April 2025



Horley Town 2-0 Epsom and Ewell FC. Combined Counties League – Premier Division South. Tuesday 18th March.

We made some changes from our defeat at Tadley Calleva on Saturday as Kevin Kardel returned between the posts, with Toby Young in front of him in place of Stefan Aiwone, while Kionte Gillfillian-Waul came back in on the left, enabling Ethan Brazier to switch back to his natural right hand side and releasing Niall Stillwell to play further forward. Up front there was another surprise as Craig Dundas took on the centre-forward role ahead of the late arriving Carl Oblitey and Ali Fofahan came in ahead of Jason Bloor. However, for the second match in a row we went behind in the opening minutes.

It's one thing conceding early, but quite another to let a goal in that is easily preventable and in the fourth minute the ball was just pinged into the danger area from the left wing, where former Salt Will Kendall was waiting unmarked to guide a header past the helpless Kardel from fairly close range.

We then had a chance of our own two minutes later when a ball through towards Dundas came back off the Horley keeper George Hyde, rebounding kindly for our Player / Coach to get a shot in, but he hooked his left footed shot just over the bar from eight yards out. We didn't know it at the time, but our best chance had already gone.

Kardel had to punch away a dangerous delivery, but we were on the attack soon after where Luke Miller saw his shot blocked only for Brendan Murphy-McVey to strike his shot wide from a good position, and whilst it took a slight deflection on the way, the corner came to nothing.

The home side were creating more than us though and had a spell of corners, from which they extended their lead in the 31st minute after one wasn't cleared and Ben Senior's shot from ten yards ended up in the net via at least one deflection. Clearly our boys were unhappy with this, although it wasn't clear from where I was standing exactly what had gone on, but it must have been important as Anthony Nazareth protested to the extent that he found himself in the sin-bin for his comments.

We didn't suffer too much during this enforced absence and Adam Green came quite close with a superb strike from around twenty yards that dipped just over the Horley crossbar, but we could have no real complaints at the scoreline as the teams went in at the break with the home side two goals up.

We had been playing for just a couple of minutes after the restart when we really should have gone three goals behind. Another former Salt, Lewis Pearch, made tracks down the right and his delivery in found Kendall six yards out and completely unmarked, from where he lashed his shot against the frame of our goal; rebounding down and away off our crossbar. It was a lucky escape, but could we use this let off to get back into the match? Regrettably not, as we created little by way of a threat from this point. Miller set up Green for another powerful strike that was just wide of the top corner.

Oblitey came on as we went with an extra man up front and it took Horley a few minutes to come to terms with it, during which we nearly got a goal back when a clever ball over the top from Brendon Murphy-McVey put Dundas through, only to be denied by a well-timed challenge just as he was about to shoot. Oblitey sent a dribbler straight at Hyde before Sean-Michael Anderson and Conrad Essilfie-Conduah were introduced, but the pattern of the match remained unchanged and our final chance of the match came when Green's cross was headed wide by our final substitute Bloor. Seven minutes of injury time were played, but we were unable to reduce the deficit and the final whistle confirmed another loss for our boys.

We can look at this result in two ways. We can look at the eight straight defeats and feel sorry for ourselves, or we could take in the simple fact that despite the losses, a win on Saturday at home to Balham will guarantee our survival. A loss to Balham would leave them just one point behind us and make for an extremely nervy end to the season, but we can consign all that to the history books with a home victory. It's not much to ask, but it would require a significant improvement from our recent performances if we are to achieve that.

Epsom & Ewell: Kevin Kardel, Ethan Brazier, Kionte Gillfillian-Waul, Adam Green (c), Anthony Nazareth, Toby Young,

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Luke Miller, Niall Stillwell, Craig Dundas, Brendan Murphy-McVey, Ali Fofahan

Subs: Carl Oblitey for Fofahan (58), Sean-Michael Anderson for Miller (71), Conrad Essilfie-Conduah for Stillwell (79), Jason Bloor for Dundas (87)

Report Source: www.eefconline.co.uk

A comedy of errors – but it wasn't funny as Epsom & Ewell FC lose again

1 April 2025

Tadley Calleva 5-2 Epsom and Ewell FC. Combined Counties League – Premier Division South. Saturday 15th March.

"We are right in the s**t now" stated our Manager Warren Burton after Wednesday's awful loss at Guildford City and if he felt bad then, who knows what he is thinking now after this self-inflicted implosion at Tadley Calleva who defeated us 5-2 without really playing that well. In fact, this was a dreadful advert for the Combined Counties League with six of the seven goals scored as a direct result of bad defensive errors, whilst the referee also got into the act with the worst display I've seen in over a hundred matches watching Epsom and non-Epsom matches this season.

On a bitingly cold day in front of a pitiful crowd, Burton handed Brendon McVey his debut after joining from South Park, but before he had a chance to get involved we were already up against it in a big way after Stefan Aiwone miscontrolled the ball and Alex Miller got through, only to be brought down for a penalty. Worse was to follow as the referee then decided our man should also receive a red card! Now, I'm aware that the rules state that this can still happen, but thought that it needed to be in cases where the defender made no effort to play the ball, which Aiwone clearly tried to do. Either way, Kieran Rodgers stepped up and sent Sami Nabbad the wrong way from the spot in just the fifth minute. It's possible this may have been our earliest ever sending off in a match and in my opinion it was the wrong decision.

This was a nightmare start but we were nearly level just three minutes later when McVey tried his luck from thirty yards, only to see the ball cannon off the face of the Tadley crossbar. It would have been a great way to mark a debut! Then Luke Miller drilled the ball low into the net, only for a foul to be awarded against Jason Bloor in the build up.

From that point though, we began to struggle as the home side began to make the extra man count. Nabbad made a great save when the Tadley player got through on goal and then a few minutes later in similar circumstances the shot was fired wide. Unfortunately Nabbad then came out for an ambitious long ball, but misjudged the bounce and caught it just outside the penalty area. The moment I saw the Assistant's flag go up, I knew we were in trouble, yet for some reason the referee awarded only a yellow card. Any thoughts of having had a lucky escape were crushed moments later when the free kick was saved but not held by Nabbad and Ash Neal knocked the loose ball in from close range to make it 2-0 in the 35th minute.

Despite the deficit, we were still competitive. Then the home side started to make errors themselves, firstly when a pass was sent back to the home keeper Donny Burke whose touch let him down and allowed Carl Oblitey to take the ball round him, but his own touch wasn't the greatest and allowed Burke to recover and reclaim the ball. We went in at the break 2-0 down and a man down, but also fortunate to not be down to nine men.

The second half had been in play for just three minutes when the referee; clearly struggling with the contest and appearing to be out of his depth, stopped the game for an injury and restarted it with a contested drop ball, yet this rule was removed in 2019 according to Law 8!

We tried to reduce the deficit and with the wind in our favour McVey tried a lob from 40 yards, but Burke was able to catch it comfortably. Unfortunately, in the 56th minute the contest was as good as over with the only goal of the entire match that could truly be credited to the attacking side, as Rodgers scored his second and Tadley's third with a good run and cut back before almost stroking the ball beyond Nabbad into the far corner from 18 yards.

Yet within three minutes of their third goal, the home side started to be generous too. A hopeful ball towards the penalty area wasn't dealt with at all, and Oblitey ran through on goal, guiding the ball just inside Burke's left hand post to reduce the deficit. We then had another chance as the Tadley defence was opened up with substitute Sean-Michael Anderson setting up Adam Green for a shot, but it was a difficult angle and his shot was kept out by the well-positioned Burke. The match continued to be end to end though and in the 64th minute the home side restored their three goal lead with a slide rule pass through to Rodgers as our defence parted which left Rodgers a simple finish from fairly close range to complete his hat trick.

However, we were soon back on the attack and Green saw his shot brilliantly tipped over the bar by Burke, although Burke was fortunate when his next clearance hit Anderson and could have gone anywhere, but went across goal with our man requiring treatment for a ball to the face for his troubles. Burke would not be so fortunate in the 74th minute though, when he went to claim a simple catch, only to completely fumble it and leave another of our substitutes Ali Fofahan with an empty net to fire into from ten yards out and reduce the score to 4-2.

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Despite being two goals behind, there were enough errors being made to give us some small hope of turning things around, but that was extinguished in the 81st minute after another bizarre decision. Oblitey clearly thought he had been fouled and said something, earning him a visit to the sin bin. However, Oblitey clearly was injured and as he walked slowly towards the touch line, he went down again, only to be shown a second yellow card! I'm still not entirely sure what rule he broke here and many of our people were confused with the situation also. Either way though, we were down to nine men for the eleventh time in our history and any chance of recovery was gone.

There was still time for some more poor defending in the 88th minute when Nabbad kicked his clearance straight at Oliver Rowan who then put it straight back past him for a fifth Tadley goal. To be fair to Nabbad he then made two good saves in the closing minutes as we fell apart and these could be really important now, as goal difference may yet come into it, although we did ourselves no favours in this match. We could blame the referee for some of this, but he also let us off big time with Nabbad's handball, which was almost identical to the offence that led to a red card for the Guildford keeper on Wednesday.

So where does this leave us? Strangely enough, things have become a lot clearer after this week's results as Balham also lost. Quite simply this now means that a home win against them next Saturday will relegate them and require something miraculous from Spelthorne Sports to overhaul us, even if we were to accumulate no further points at all. However, a loss next week against Balham will leave us in a precarious position and it's clear that we are going to need at least three more points from our remaining seven matches, starting at Horley Town on Tuesday. We are not the only team looking over our shoulders though, as Chipstead, Sandhurst Town and Camberley Town are not safe either and all have played more matches than us. However, we can only focus at our own situation.

Epsom & Ewell: Sami Nabbad, Niall Stillwell, Ethan Brazier, Adam Green (c), Stefan Aiwone, Anthony Nazareth, Luke Miller, Craig Dundas, Carl Oblitey, Brendon McVey, Jason Bloor

Subs: Sean-Michael Anderson for Bloor (59), Ali Fofahan for McVey (68), Conrad Essilfie-Conduah for Dundas (70), Kionte Gillfillian-Waul for Brazier (75),

Report Source: www.eefconline.co.uk

Cobham 10 beat Epsom and Ewell 11

1 April 2025

Epsom and Ewell FC 1-3 Cobham. Combined Counties League – Premier Division South. Tuesday 4th March.

Back in November, a Will Kendall free kick enabled us to secure a 2-1 victory against Cobham at the Madgwick, but any thoughts of repeating that win were dashed in the opening fifteen minutes as a much improved opposition got off to a flying start and then kept us at arm's length for the majority of the match, despite having ten men for a large part of the contest; eventually winning by three goals to one at the KGF and providing us with our fifth straight defeat into the bargain.

We made three changes from Saturday's defeat at Knaphill. Sami Nabbad came in for Kevin Kardel in goal and it was also good to hear the news that Dan O'Donovan has recovered from a broken finger and is now training again. In other changes Conrad Essilfie-Conduah came in for Craig Dundas who was on the bench, and Ethan Nelson-Roberts was back in for the absent Ali Fofahan.

For the second week in a row we kicked off six minutes late in front of a crowd of 59 which was inflated to 70 once again. If you exclude last week's match against Balham, recent official attendances have been 60, 65 and 70 along with this one, also advised at 70, which does give the impression that our club are just guessing currently. However, we made a bright start with a delivery into the Cobham area being half cleared to Niall Stillwell who chested and then volleyed the ball at goal, only for it to be blocked and cleared. Stillwell was also involved in the next incident when he tugged a Cobham player back as he threatened to break away. It was early in the match, but it was the right decision.

The visitors opened the scoring in the sixth minute with a goal of real simplicity, as a pass to Patrick Murray in the right hand channel left him free to run close to thirty yards unchallenged before firing powerfully past Nabbad from twelve yards. It was a horrible way to start. Whilst it's above my pay grade to suggest whether the goal came about because of a missed assignment or the three man defensive formation, this is one of those goals that needs to be analysed, as it was a bit Sunday League.

Things got worse in the 13th minute with a decent Cobham move, added to a huge stroke of fortune, enabled them to double their lead. A move down the right was followed by a deep far post cross to Derick Hayford, who set the ball up for a team mate to strike. Had the ball gone in at that stage, it would have quite rightly been lauded as a fine goal. However, the strike was then scuffed badly, but fortuitously straight back to Hayford who then drilled the ball in from a narrow angle!

Across the park it was easy to see why Cobham are now firmly involved in the playoffs. They were bigger and stronger

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than us and clearly had a little more to play for. Our boys were trying, but our best chance, coming on the half hour, summed up our plight as Luke Miller sent a ball into Carl Oblitey, only for our striker to overhit a simple pass to the unmarked Adam Green, who had bust a gut to get into that position in the first place. Oblitey then sent a header from a corner just over the bar as we briefly threatened to pull a goal back.

Then in the 38th minute we received some inadvertent assistance in our chase as Ryan Marklew was sent off for his second yellow card. It certainly looked like a foul on Jason Bloor that was deserving of a caution, but there was just one problem; you could see clearly from the visitors reaction that it was the wrong man who was getting the card! It is ironic that a team can lose a man for over 50 minutes of a match with no recourse, yet we lost Luke Miller for less than ten minutes last week against Balham and managed to get a match replayed, but Cobham had no such opportunity and still hadn't calmed down by the time that Reis Stanislaus was pulled up for a handball two minutes later and his reaction earned him ten minutes in the sin-bin, leaving the visitors down to nine men.

Unfortunately, in the period without Stanislaus which was spread fairly evenly across either side of the half time break, we managed the sum total of zero shots on target and the only real alarm during that time came was for us when Stillwell appeared to foul a Cobham player in the corner. It sounded like a foul, although I'm assured by people nearer to me that no contact was made. Either way, and once the impassioned Cobham pleas for a second yellow card had fallen on deaf ears and died down, Warren brought Ethan Brazier on in his place, probably earlier than was originally planned.

Cobham were back up to ten men in the 53rd minute and moments later we had a shout for a penalty when Bloor rounded his man before being brought down, but I had a really good view of this and it looked like a solid challenge, with the referee agreeing with that view and awarding the corner instead, which came to nothing.

Little else happened of note as our eleven men matched up well against their ten men, without a great deal of goalmouth action for either side, but insult was then added to injury in the 67th minute when the ten men scored a third goal. A raking pass down the right wing required Nabbad to come out and clear; palming the ball away with his hand just ahead of their winger, but his intervention didn't get the ball out of play and the winger simply retrieved it and sent it over, where Hayford reacted first to head the ball into the vacant net from close range.

With the contest over we threw three substitutes on with Nicolas Bostan making his first appearance for a few weeks. This gave us some life and Miller saw his strike deflected wide by the head of a defender. From the half cleared corner, Miller received the ball again and his low shot was saved, but not held by Cobham's keeper Conrad Knight and Oblitey was first to reach the loose ball to tap it across the line from about a yard to pull a goal back in the 73rd minute.

For a few minutes maybe we had a chance, but Miller's cross was just above Oblitey and as Cobham weathered the brief spell of pressure Anthony Nazareth picked up what looked like a fairly harsh yellow card for a foul, although he probably didn't help his case by then kicking the ball away! Either way, we were done by this point and a late Oblitey header from a Miller corner was sent just wide of the far post in the final minute of normal time with the final whistle following not long afterwards.

It's hard to assess our performances recently as I look back at this five match skid. There have been some good patches in there; most notably the first halves against AFC Whyteleafe and Knaphill, but we were dreadful against Balham and Wallingford & Crowmarsh and barely laid a glove on Cobham, although this one isn't just on us, as I thought Cobham were very good and may well surprise someone in the playoffs. They may not have been expected to be in the top five when the season started, but other teams should take note; they are there on merit. We now have a Saturday off before making the short journey to Guildford City on Wednesday evening for what should, on paper, be a perfectly winnable match. However, we went into the first match this season against them in a similar mood, following our F.A. Cup win over Step Four Phoenix Sports and the 0-5 home defeat that followed was a chastening experience. Maybe it will be our turn for revenge there.

Epsom & Ewell: Sami Nabbad, Niall Stillwell, Anthony Nazareth, Adam Green (c), Callum Wilson, Stefan Aiwone, Luke Miller, Conrad Essilfie-Conduah, Carl Oblitey, Jason Bloor, Ethan Nelson-Roberts

Subs: Ethan Brazier for Stillwell (48), Craig Dundas for Essilfie-Conduah (71), Sean-Michael Anderson for Nelson-Roberts (71), Nicolas Bostan for Wilson (71), Jack Torbett for Nazareth (86)

Report Source: www.eefconline.co.uk

Epsom & Ewell FC caught knapping at the end

1 April 2025



Knaphill 2-1 Epsom and Ewell FC. Combined Counties League – Premier Division South. Saturday 1st March.

At half time at Knaphill's Redding Way ground, we led 1-0 after one of our better halves of football in recent weeks, but a combination of us losing our way and an improved performance from the home team ensured that we would end up defeated by two goals to one, which was, I felt, a very harsh result for our boys.

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Visits to Redding Way have not been successful in recent years, with our boys conceding six times in each of our last two matches there. Throw in the lack of a programme for the second successive season (time for a League fine, surely) and the fact that it is frequently cold and damp when we visit, and I'll be honest I wasn't particularly looking forward to this match, yet on arrival, we found a picturesque ground bathed in spring sunshine and everything looked much better! The sun had brough people out and there seemed to be a fairly large number of spectators present; far more than the official figure of just 83.

From a playing perspective, clearly something needed to change after our dreadful midweek showing against Balham and some changes were made. Anthony Nazareth and Callum Wilson returned at the back and we went with three players there and the unusual sight of Luke Miller playing at left wing back with the right wing back role being entrusted to Niall Stillwell.

Whether it was down to the formation or just an attempt to restore some pride after our home loss to one of the relegation favourites is hard to know, but we came out of the blocks in much better shape and actually started to pass the ball around quite a lot. We were looking like a team, rather than the group of individuals that had taken the field against Balham and we made the first chance when following some good pressure Craig Dundas received the ball, but he was a little wide and couldn't wrap his leg around the ball enough to get the shot on target.

Admittedly, we did nearly go behind a minute later when a superb right wing cross took out Kevin Kardel and was met by a thumping far post header which sent the ball against the underside of our crossbar and the follow up strike was then well blocked. This was an isolated attack though and we were soon back on the attack when a great crossfield pass from Miller found Stillwell running into the penalty area and he lashed a shot that was heading just inside the post and Sam Gray in the Knaphill goal had to be alert to keep out. From the subsequent corner Stillwell rose again at the back post but couldn't keep the header down. It may have gone out of play off a defender, but the goal kick was given.

Stillwell was the best player on the park in this first half and it was his left footed cross in the 15th minute that led to our opener, as the delivery was perfect for Carl Oblitey to head at goal. It would have gone in but was almost immediately blocked by the hand of James Glover. After he received a yellow card we then had a lengthy delay after the Knaphill Captain Dale Burnham suddenly required treatment in the penalty area; a cynical move that the referee fell for. However, our own Captain Adam Green kept calm and thumped the penalty out of Gray's reach in the 18th minute.

Although we never again had the dominance of those opening stages, we remained on top for the remainder of the opening period and Ali Fofahan broke through on goal but Gray tipped his early shot wide. He then had an even better opportunity after Oblitey put him through once again just before the half, but instead of smashing his shot at goal from about six yards, he chose to cut back onto his stronger left foot, by which time a defender was able to get back and block his shot. As we went in at the half, we held a deserved lead and nobody could have argued had that lead been greater.

There was only one concern in that opening forty-five which was when Jason Bloor went down with an ankle injury a few minutes before the interval, but he recovered after treatment and was back on the field for the second half, only to break down again within a couple of minutes. Ethan Nelson-Roberts came on in his place, but we missed Bloor's all round game and were never quite as strong in this match again. It is worth pointing out at this stage that the last match Bloor started was the last one we won, against Abbey Rangers, and right now we are not quite the same side without him.

Having said that, we nearly extended our lead in the 51st minute after Oblitey set up Fofahan once again on the right wing and although the delivery was just too far ahead of Oblitey, the ball struck Glover and bounced inches wide of his own goal, almost in slow motion. Despite our superiority, within seven minutes of this chance the hosts drew level. Matt Copland unleashed a powerful long range strike that was heading for the top corner until Kardel pulled off a fantastic save. Unfortunately from the corner Burnham was able to volley the ball in from close range.

From this point the match began to get a bit niggly. The Knappers had clearly been given a talking to at the break and were fighting for everything. Our boys seem quite happy in those situations and battled back, leading to a flurry of stoppages. Wilson picked up a yellow card for a fairly agricultural challenge too, and whilst a Miller shot curled just beyond the far post and Oblitey sent a header from a hanging Nelson-Roberts cross towards Gray, it was the hosts who were next to score in the 75th minute after their new signing Sid Cannon ran through our defence and planted a shot beyond Kardel from around 15 yards to register his second goal in his second match for them. It would prove to be the winning goal as the game degenerated further. A foul on Nazareth earned a card and this was followed by another for Jack Watts after he clattered into Kardel, leading to the obligatory scuffle between a number of players and things also threatened to kick off between the benches too.

In the 92nd minute we then had an incident of rank stupidity from the Knaphill sub Ben Mitchell. Despite having been on the field only for a short period of time, he then also smashed clumsily into our young keeper, despite already having picked up a yellow for a foul on Nazareth, leading to the clearest "second yellow" you may ever see at this level. However, there was little time to take advantage of the extra man and after seven minutes of injury time the final whistle blew to confirm that the points were staying at Redding Way for the third straight time.

It's hard to know exactly how we didn't come away with at least a point from this match. We were the more superior side in the first half and although we seemed to run out of steam in the second half, maybe we struggled with Knaphill's second half intensity a little, so credit must also go to our opponents for their fightback. Certainly the loss of Bloor didn't help us either. At this stage of the season and with little to play for, Warren will probably be trying to find out which players he wants to retain for next season and which formation works best. Although Stillwell produced an excellent hour on the right in his advanced wing back role, I'm not sure that we learned much else from this defeat, even if it was an undeserved one.

Epsom & Ewell: Kevin Kardel, Anthony Nazareth, Luke Miller, Adam Green (c), Callum Wilson, Stefan Aiwone, Niall Stillwell, Craig Dundas, Carl Oblitey, Ali Fofahan, Ethan Nelson-Roberts

Subs: Ethan Nelson-Roberts for Bloor (48), George Owusu for Fofahan (67), Ethan Brazier for Stillwell (71), Conrad

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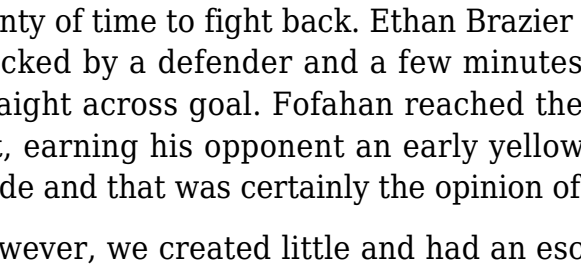
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Essilfie-Conduah for Dundas (83), Campbell Scott for Wilson (84)

Report Source: www.eefconline.co.uk

“…… , it is now!”

1 April 2025



Epsom and Ewell 0-1 Balham. Southern Combination Cup – Quarter-Final. Tuesday 25th February 2025

So it’s all over! A long and fairly successful 2024/25 cup campaign, covering fourteen matches in total, has now come to an end following our disjointed exit from the Southern Combination Cup at home to relegation threatened Balham by a goal to nil at the KGF on Tuesday evening.

As always, there was plenty of commitment from our boys, but this was arguably our worst cup display of the season as we struggled to put together anything of real danger against a Balham side, fresh from securing a rare League win on Saturday, who battled for everything, won almost every header and in the end could have won by more, as we registered just one decent shot on target in the entire match.

Kevin Kardel returned from injury to reclaim his spot in goal ahead of Sami Nabbad, while Craig Dundas came back into the starting eleven for the injured Callum Wilson from our spirited defeat to AFC Whyteleafe on Saturday, leading to Adam Green taking Wilson’s place in the back four for this match, but it is quite clear that our boys like to play on artificial surfaces and the KGF was the complete opposite! If I’m honest, I didn’t expect the match to pass the afternoon inspection, and whilst play was deemed possible, it was very heavy and cut up quite badly.

We kicked off six minutes late on a chilly evening in front of a crowd counted at 48 and it was the visitors who showed first, sending an early corner straight through our six yard box. They took the lead in the tenth minute from a free kick deep out on the left which was met towards the far post by a solid header that sent the ball back across Kardel and into the far corner of the net. It was an unstoppable header, although it would have been preferable to have actually seen some marking and from their response it was clear that our bench felt the same! But it was still early and there was plenty of time to fight back. Ethan Brazier combined well with Niall Stillwell who set up Ali Fofahan who then saw his shot blocked by a defender and a few minutes later Ethan Nelson-Roberts and Carl Oblitey did well before a delivery went straight across goal. Fofahan reached the ball just inside the touchline before a sliding challenge appeared to take him out, earning his opponent an early yellow card, although, whisper it quietly, but I don’t actually think any contact was made and that was certainly the opinion of some of the other nearby Balham players.

However, we created little and had an escape of our own when a Balham corner was met by a decent half volley that hit the full face of our crossbar and rebounded to safety. It was a niggly, scrappy match that normally suits us, but instead, players were shouting at each other, while our bench also hurled a couple of insults that I can’t print! As we approached the half Brazier pulled down his man as he threatened to break away, earning a yellow card for his challenge and in the third minute of injury time Marlon Galivanes reached a low ball in from the left wing, but Kardel kept the shot out from close range. We went in at the break maybe fortunate to be trailing by just the one goal.

It has been documented here previously that we have only won one match all season from a trailing position, which came way back in August at Phoenix Sports. We also had never beaten Balham in our previous five meetings, so the omens weren’t looking great. Still, Balham’s league position was enough to tell you that we were almost certain to get chances in this second half.

The half started with a foul on Green, or at least, that’s what everyone else thought, while the referee chose to play on. In his defence, he had been trying to keep the play flowing where possible, but he got this one wrong! Then Green popped up at the other end but couldn’t keep his header from a Luke Miller corner on target. As we neared the hour the visitors had another good opportunity; the first shot being blocked by Stefan Aiwone and as they reached the loose ball first, the shot was parried away by Kardel for a corner. There was no denying that our keeper was the busier of the two and when Kionte-Gillfillian-Waul limped off we reverted to a back three in an attempt to get players forward. Ironically our next chance came a few minutes later from Niall Stillwell who had been playing in midfield before moving into the back three. He struck the shot well from just over twenty yards, but it went straight at Theo Lloyd in the Balham goal.

Time was running out and we weren’t helped by an incident in the 85th minute when Miller was harshly pulled up for a foul. His frustrations were understandable, but even after the referee had warned him, he wouldn’t let it go and was sent to the sin-bin for what would prove to be the remainder of the match. During this time Noah Bartram should have scored a second goal as he latched on to a ball over the top, but Kardel again did well to deny him keep our hopes alive. But not for long as the final whistle went after four minutes of injury time to signify our exit from the competition.

Or was it? Rumours abounded at the end of the match that the referee had erred in applying a sin-bin in a competition that didn’t allow it. I have no idea whether this is a fact, as I do not have a copy of the rules to hand, but if this actually is the case, then it’s fair to say that we might have a case for a replay. We’ll no doubt find out soon enough, but in the meantime it is Balham that will visit South Park Reigate in the Semi-Final and it has to be said that they thoroughly

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deserved the win. They may be seven points adrift in the League, but if they play like this for the rest of the season there is every possibility that they could close the gap on the pack above them and this last few days may well kick start and even define their season.

For us it was a disappointing way to go out of a cup we must have fancied our chances in; instead all we now face are eleven jeopardy free League matches, starting at Knaphill on Saturday where we have conceded six times on our previous two visits. A performance like this one could see us in serious trouble at Redding Way once again!

Epsom & Ewell: Kevin Kardel, Ethan Brazier, Kionte-Gillfillian-Waul, Adam Green (c), Stefan Aiwone, Niall Stillwell, Luke Miller, Craig Dundas, Carl Oblitey, Ali Fofahan, Ethan Nelson-Roberts

Subs: Conrad Essilfie-Conduah for Fofahan (64), Sean-Michael Anderson for Brazier (64), Jack Torbett for Gillfillian-Waul (74)

Salts get tangoed!

1 April 2025

Wallingford & Crowmarsh 3-0 Epsom and Ewell FC. Combined Counties League Cup – Third Round. Tuesday 18th February 2025.

On a chilly evening in deepest Oxfordshire we departed the Combined Counties League Cup at Third Round stage with little more than a whimper as Wallingford and Crowmarsh defeated us 3-0 and it could have been worse.

Forgive the 90s reference in the headline, but “Wally” as they are known by their supporters were resplendent in their orange and black kit, while we were wearing yellow and without being too harsh, it looked like oranges v lemons for large parts of the match.

We did at least have a four man bench for this cup tie, and following the departure of Will Kendall, we had one new face and one familiar one as Naseem James and George Owusu would both join the action later.

Unfortunately and with ironic timing, Carl Oblitey, who appears to have won the starting centre forward battle with Kendall was absent for this match, and it left a huge hole to fill up front. With Jason Bloor also unavailable as he was cup tied, Sean-Michael Anderson took on the 9 shirt, but we were toothless across the board all night, with Ali Fofahan, Luke Miller and Ethan Nelson-Roberts all equally unable to make any impact. We managed a sum total of four shots on target, but, aged 58, I could have saved all of them myself as they all dribbled towards the grateful Wally custodian, Alex Pratt.

The match started fairly evenly at first. The home side hooked a shot wide of our post, while Anderson saw his low shot blocked. Nelson-Roberts gave Pratt his hardest save of the match, with a shot from an angle that he had to move to his right to collect. However we went behind in the 20th minute when a pull back from the right wing was scuffed across goal by James Williams, yet somehow the ball crept in at the far post. As Pratt remarked to us behind the goal, “if he had hit it properly, it wouldn’t have gone in!”

Anthony Nazareth then made a fine defensive challenge to deny the hosts on a break and at the other end, a deep ball into the penalty area was headed back across goal by the ageless Craig Dundas although Adam Green’s strike was scuffed at goal. Green was making his 50th appearance for our club, although I doubt any of our players will remember this match for very long.

As we approached the break, Kevin Kardel made a good block, and then Callum Wilson made an even better one on the goal line as he denied the home striker with his chest that inevitably drew shouts for a penalty, but these were waved away. Anderson sent over a decent delivery in injury time but Fofahan miskicked and we went in at the break a goal down.

We had been better in a lot of recent second half performances and started brightly here with a delivery into the box that was headed up by a Wallingford defender and then claimed by Pratt. However, we created little else of danger in this period and in the 62nd minute a free kick was flicked on to Williams and he deftly lifted the ball over the exposed Kardel from just inside the penalty area to double their lead. Five minutes later another home player was sandwiched in the penalty area with Miller picking up a card for the greater part of the challenge and Williams completed his hat trick a minute after this with an unstoppable strike into the top corner to make the score 3-0.

Warren had seen enough by this point and went with a rare quadruple substitution which also included our two subs from Saturday, Ethan Brazier and Campbell Scott. Owusu made an instant impact, getting to the left wing touchline and sending a good cross over, but we were unable to get on the end of it and the home side hit the post as we began to fall away. Other shots were blocked by our defenders as we battled to keep the score down to three, but the contest was already over.

Much has been made of our cup form this season, but it is worth noting that all except one of our wins were secured at home. Our three defeats have all been against strong opposition in Carshalton Athletic, VCD Athletic and now Wallingford and Crowmarsh but even so, it is maybe just as well that our one remaining Cup tie is at home!

Epsom & Ewell: Kevin Kardel, Callum Wilson, Kionte-Gillfillian-Waul, Adam Green (c), Anthony Nazareth, Jack Torbett, Luke Miller, Craig Dundas, Sean-Michael Anderson, Ali Fofahan, Ethan Nelson-Roberts

Subs: Campbell Scott for Anderson (69), George Owusu for Miller (69), Naseem James for Torbett (69), Ethan Brazier for Gillfillian-Waul (69)

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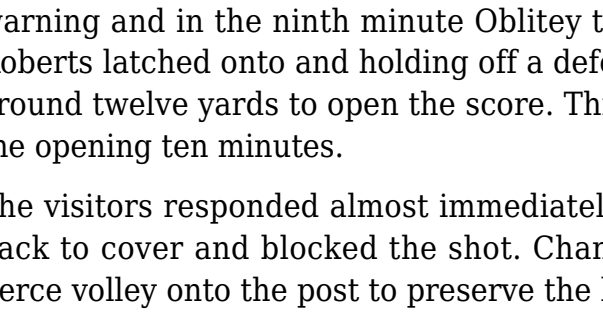
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Epsom and Ewell FC win for correspondent’s 2000th match

1 April 2025



Epsom and Ewell 2-1 Abbey Rangers. Combined Counties League – Premier Division South. Saturday 15th February.

Richard Lambert, both a dedicated fan of Epsom and Ewell FC, a club historian and match reporter, was awarded with a team victory on Saturday on the occasion of his 2000th match since 1981. We thank him for sharing his reports that feature on his website www.eefconline.co.uk

For the fourth time in as many contests, a match against Abbey Rangers finished 2-1 to the home team as we claimed the points at the KGF on Saturday afternoon in front of a crowd needlessly exaggerated from the 56 who were present to an official figure of 70.

At the start of the match, it looked like it might be a long day, as we took the field with just two named substitutes available, one of whom was Ethan Brazier, who had been out for some time, while the other was a new player from Fleet Town, Campbell Scott, who suffered the same initiation of many Epsom players by having his name spelt wrongly on the line-up board. Nothing else quite says “welcome” to a new player, does it!

The match started well for us. Carl Oblitey shrugged off a defender’s challenge and got through on goal in the fifth minute, only for former Salt Shay Honey to deflect his shot onto the post and away, but the visitors didn’t heed the warning and in the ninth minute Oblitey turned provider with a cute ball over the top of the defence that Ethan Nelson-Roberts latched onto and holding off a defender, he clipped a shot back across Honey and into his bottom left corner from around twelve yards to open the score. This was the earliest goal we had scored this season and the first in the League in the opening ten minutes.

The visitors responded almost immediately as their Captain Luke Roberts almost broke through, but Stefan Aiwone was back to cover and blocked the shot. Chances were few and far between in this match, although Kevin Kardel turned a fierce volley onto the post to preserve the lead and five minutes later with the clock showing the 40th minute we extended it. Oblitey provided another great pass through, this time for Ali Fofahan to compose himself before guiding his shot beyond Honey’s right arm and into the net from ten yards.

Although there had not been a great deal between the teams at the half, I felt we deserved our lead for the quality of the two goals. Interestingly a tweet from one of the Abbey accounts stated that they had been “in control”. Football is of course a game of opinion! One thing was clear though; in our last League meeting we had recovered a 2-0 half time deficit at Sheerwater, so it was important that we kept our focus to ensure that the visitors couldn’t do the same to us.

The second half was a little scrappy to start with; not always a bad thing if you are two goals up, as we appeared happy enough to play on the counter attack and break up the opposition attacks, which we did fairly well. Nelson-Roberts picked up a yellow card for throwing the ball away, while Jack Torbett; making his first start, appeared to be badly fouled, although nothing was given by the referee. Later in the match he would limp off, still clearly feeling the effects, giving Scott a debut at left back.

Jason Bloor sent a header just over the bar, but in the 59th minute Abbey pulled a goal back after a low shot was half stopped by Kardel, but no one reacted to the loose ball and it was knocked in from close range by Stuart Mortimer.

The match was still fairly even and extremely competitive; then Craig Dundas linked up well with Nelson-Roberts, leading to a cross from the latter that was then met by a strike from Oblitey and then Luke Miller, both of which were well blocked by defenders. The visitors tried to force an equaliser and sent a dangerous ball just beyond the far post before seeing another shot blocked wide by a defender. At the other end Fofahan nearly got through, but was flagged offside and picked up a yellow card for then sending a shot over the bar, well after the whistle had blown. It was hard to argue with the decision.

There was just time at the end for a ten minute cameo from substitute Brazier, during which he headed a dangerous ball away from the goal line. Kardel then punched another delivery away and Brazier then got forward on the right, although his ball in was just cut out by a defender. It was a promising return and it is hoped that he is now over his long-standing hamstring injuries.

Overall, this was a typically hard-working performance and although at times, the play was congested in midfield, which affected the quality of the match, I think we had the better chances and deserved the win for that alone.

Epsom & Ewell: Kevin Kardel, Anthony Nazareth, Jack Torbett, Adam Green (c), Stefan Aiwone, Ethan Nelson-Roberts,

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Luke Miller, Craig Dundas, Carl Oblitey, Jason Bloor, Ali Fofahan

Subs: Campbell Scott for Torbett (64) Ethan Brazier for Bloor (83)

Epsom and Ewell FC go to next round

1 April 2025

Reading City 1-1 Epsom and Ewell FC. Epsom and Ewell won 6-5 on penalties. Southern Combination Cup – Second Round. Tuesday 4th February 2025.

It's official, we are definitely a cup team this season! An improved second half enabled our boys to rescue a 1-1 draw at the Rivermoor Arena, home of Reading City and for the first time in club history we won a second penalty shootout in a season to clinch a passage to the Quarter-Final and a home tie with Balham. Although results like this go down in the club records as a draw, we have now progressed from eight cup ties this season; one more than the sum total of our League wins!

Cast your mind back (if you were alive!) to 16th August 1983. The venue was Stompond Lane; the old home of Walton & Hersham and the occasion was a Southern Combination Cup Final which had been held over from the previous season. The tie finished 1-1 after extra time and for the first time in history we faced a penalty shootout, losing 5-4. We have had a lot more of these endings in recent history, largely due to the removal of extra time from many of our contests, and this was our fourteenth, but it has taken us over four decades to restore parity, as this was our seventh win to balance against the seven defeats. Maybe this was an omen and we will go all the way to the final ourselves? Certainly a defeat of the cup holders was a good start.

I understand that players had trouble reaching the venue, which doesn't bode well for our League Cup tie even further away at Wallingford & Crowmarsh next week! As a result, we took the field with just two players on the bench, one of which, Ayran Kugathas, hadn't played all season. Although we had the first chance in the match with just 44 seconds on the clock when Luke Miller's low drive was well kept out at the near post by Jonathan O'Sullivan, we went behind in the fifth minute when a deep right wing cross from Josh Baines was met by a smart volley at the far post from Sacario Waugh, which sent the ball into the roof of our net, giving Kevin Kardel no chance.

On a chilly evening just 49 spectators were in attendance with much of the first half taking place in midfield, and punctuated only by the howitzer like throw ins from Edward Lazarczuk that, on the whole we dealt with quite well. The balance of possession was definitely with the hosts though and we were restricted to half chances, although we nearly scored with one of them when Will Kendall's low shot missed the left hand post by inches; clipping the wheel that supported the frame, it was that close!

Right on half time Sean Anderson was put through by Kendall and we registered our first shot on target; dealt with comfortably by O'Sullivan, but it was a fairly non-descript first half really. As we moved to the far end of the ground it was apparent that the lighting was very poor, but much like our League match at Sheerwater, our performance began to improve in the second half. Kendall set up Kionte-Gillfillian-Waul in an advanced position on the left side, but his shot was straight at O'Sullivan. The hosts still posed a threat and some good defending was required to block a shot for a corner, but more was required and Kardel made a great double save to keep the score level from an attack down the left.

Although we had more of the second half than we had in the previous forty-five, our goal in the 70th minute still came as a bit of a surprise as Nelson-Roberts received the ball in front of O'Sullivan, who just pulled him down in an attempt to reach the ball. He received a yellow card for his actions and it was also interesting to see Adam Green step forward for the spot kick instead of Kendall who had seen his effort saved against Spelthorne exactly two weeks previously. Green tucked away the penalty with comfort and we were level.

From that point I think everyone in the ground must have been thinking that this could end in penalties. Real chances had been few and far between throughout the match. However, the final ten minutes of the contest would prove to be the most interesting by some distance. Warren sent on Stefan Aiwone for Anderson on the 80 minute mark and the reshuffle sent Craig Dundas further forward and we looked more threatening, albeit a little more open at the back too! The game swung from end to end, while Gillfillian-Waul was also swinging an opponent away by his arm after he had been fouled. Both the offender and our man picked up cards for the incident, but Gillfillian-Waul was clearly enjoying his advanced role and in the 87th minute he broke on the left and sent in a superb ball for Kendall, in space and not far out, but he took too long to get the ball under control and his shot was blocked. A minute later the two players combined once again and Kendall chested the ball down and struck it on the half volley, but couldn't keep the shot down from around twelve yards.

At the other end we blocked another shot for a corner that Kardel had to punch clear, while Waugh missed his chance to get a second goal when he sent a shot from a good position tamely wide in injury time. The final chance of the match came from a Reading corner which was met by a thumping back post header, but fortunately it went straight at our keeper.

The penalties took place at the brighter end of the ground which was handy, and a large segment of the crowd, mostly home supporters, gathered in anticipation behind the goal. Green stepped up first, only to see his kick diverted onto the post and away by O'Sullivan, leaving the home crowd happy for a few seconds before Baines then saw his kick parried away by Kardel, diving to his right.

With both Captains having been denied, it was down to the supporting cast and whilst the penalties were not quite as clinical as in our previous League Cup tie with Berks County, Callum Wilson, Dundas, Anthony Nazareth and Luke Miller all netted, while the opposition did the same to leave the score at 4-4 after five penalties. We had a brief scare when Dundas sent his spot kick just inside the post, only to see it come back out after hitting one of the supporting stanchions, similar to those we had trouble with a few years ago at Chipstead. Fortunately, the officials were able to see that it had

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gone in, but it really is time for clubs to stop using those goal frames and use a different design, as they cause no end of trouble!

Kardel had got a hand to the Reading fifth penalty, and then Niall Stillwell stepped up and also scored “via the keeper”, to put us 5-4 up, only for the hosts to level it up again at 5-5. Finally, Kendall stepped up to take the seventh penalty, which was surprisingly low in the order when considering he had been in the first five for our previous penalty lottery. However, he calmly tucked the kick away and when Luke Donville sent his attempt to Kardel’s right, he made the save and we were through 6-5 on penalties!

So Kardel becomes the first Salts keeper to play in two winning penalty shootouts in the same season, although he is not the first Epsom keeper to take part in two wins as Conor Young was on the winning side for two of the three that he faced. Having said that, Kardel has a 100% record and who knows, there may even be more shootouts to follow this season as we remain in two cups.

Epsom & Ewell: Kevin Kardel, Niall Stillwell, Kionte Gillfillian-Waul, Adam Green (c), Anthony Nazareth, Callum Wilson, Luke Miller, Craig Dundas, Will Kendall, Sean Anderson, Ethan Nelson-Roberts

Subs: Stefan Aiwone for Anderson (80)

Epsom and Ewell FC strike back for draw

1 April 2025

Sheerwater 2-2 Epsom and Ewell. Combined Counties League – Premier Division South. Saturday 1st February.

Two second half goals enabled us to earn a 2-2 draw and break a five game losing sequence to Sheerwater. For those who love a stat, it also ensured that we remained unbeaten away from home on this day since 1969! A poor first thirty minutes had allowed our opponents to build a deserved two goal lead at the Eastwood Leisure Centre, but we kept plugging away and a change in formation helped us fight back in a match where all four goals were in the same net!

Defensively we remained unchanged from our attritional 1-0 win over Spelthorne Sports eleven days previously, although we made three changes further forward with Craig Dundas coming in for Conrad Essilfie-Conduah. Further forward, Carl Oblitey came in for Will Kendall and Ali Fofahan returned at the expense of Ethan Nelson-Roberts, although the both on the bench and would come on to good effect later in the match.

We would have been pleased to see that the match was on the artificial surface at Sheerwater after encountering that bumpy surface at the KGF, but found ourselves a goal down in just the seventh minute when a foul in midfield resulted in the ball being delivered into our danger area from where we didn’t clear the danger and Elliott York saw his first shot blocked back to him, before guiding the ball around Kevin Kardel and into the far corner from around 15 yards out. Kardel made an excellent block from Byron Mitchell to keep the score down to 1-0 soon after this, but we conceded another in the 16th minute when a low delivery from the left was forced in at the second attempt by Kareem Foster. It almost got worse and we required a brave headed intervention from Anthony Nazareth just as it looked we might concede a third goal. I was already beginning to think of what my report headline might be at this stage, certain that it would be including the word “limp” within it! It truly was an awful start against a team that we had a terrible recent record against.

We were looking unable to find our front men, while our hosts looked like they could score at any time, but around the half hour mark the balance of play began to change and chances began to be created. Nathan Best sliced one shot horribly wide, while Oblitey made a good run, only to see his shot blocked. Still it looked like we were going to struggle to actually find the net and this was summed up by a free kick from over thirty yards from Fofahan, that could best be described as ambitious and resulted in an easy catch for their keeper Fabio Suarez, although he did need to make a couple of good punches to clear some dangerous balls into his six yard area just moments before the break.

“Two-nil is a funny scoreline” Suarez said to us at the break, and I always wonder about comments like that, almost as if they are subconsciously thinking that they were going to be less adventurous and try to stick with what they had. Indeed Suarez had already produced a couple of “Pickford flops” towards the end of the opening forty-five minutes. This is always a dangerous tactic at this level as I think it actually inspires the opposition and the second half would be largely in our favour as the fightback started.

We also made a substitution at the break with Nicolas Bostan coming off and being replaced by Callum Wilson. It’s not clear whether this was injury related or tactical, but we also changed our shape at the break and went with three at the back, giving us the opportunity to put more players forward; definitely a gamble worth trying after that opening period. Sheerwater appeared to struggle with this and we nearly got a goal back in the 49th minute when Nazareth’s ball into the channel looked like it was going through to Suarez, but as the keeper came out to collect the ball, a defender stuck out a leg and diverted the ball to Luke Miller, only to see his ball across goal just evade the incoming Fofahan with Suarez stranded in no man’s land.

Best then sent in a good delivery, but Oblitey couldn’t get the header on target. It would be Best’s final contribution as he

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was replaced by Nelson-Roberts. Within two minutes and with the clock ticking on to the hour mark we pulled a goal back. It was a strange one really as Fofahan's corner floated over Suarez and although a defender cleared the ball away with a smart volley, the Assistant was absolutely certain that the ball had crossed the line. I'll be honest, I wasn't convinced, but despite being just two yards from the ball, my angle obviously wasn't as good (or as important!) as the man in black and the goal was awarded. Having now seen the video, it looks like I may have been the one who was correct here! The home side were understandably annoyed about this, with some seeming to claim the ball hadn't crossed the line, while others were claiming that Suarez was fouled. There was certainly some contact on him, but I think the officials got it right and we were back in it. In fact, you could argue that this was the turning point in the match.

However, it was the least we deserved. We had been doing the bulk of the work for a while now and kept pushing for an equaliser against a by now subdued looking Sheerwater team. Miller sent in a good ball from the right wing that was just ahead of Oblitey and Nelson-Roberts sent his header over the bar from a very wide angle, so it would be hard on our substitute to class this as a good opportunity. Our opponents sent a volley from a long throw into our side netting but their threat was becoming less and we sent Kendall on for Fofahan in the 76th minute as we tried to salvage something from this match. And four minutes later it came when Miller's deep corner was headed back across goal by the recently introduced Kendall, where Wilson headed the ball goalwards and Dundas applied the finishing touch from less than a yard to get it over the line. This was a crucial intervention from our experienced midfielder as Wilson's header on its own would have been cleared by the defenders on the line, so you could class this as a typical poacher's finish.

Strangely enough, after being extremely quiet for the bulk of the second half, Sheerwater suddenly woke up. Kardel made a flying save for a corner and Wilson needed to head a shot away from the goal line. We still made chances of our own though, and at the other end Miller volleyed the ball at goal; while Suarez just reached it, he was a little slow getting down to it and only managed to palm the ball up into the air where Oblitey was just able to climb high enough to nod the ball over the line, but the celebrations were short lived as the flag was immediately raised for offside. Then in the closing minutes a Miller corner was sent wide by an unmarked Oblitey who will have been disappointed to miss the target by so much from the position he was in, but if you had told me after half an hour that we'd get anything from this game, I'd have laughed, as we were very much second best at that stage. This was an excellent point at the end of the day.

The draw also pushed us up a spot to sixteenth, while Sheerwater dropped a place to thirteenth, but the point did neither of us any harm in the grand scheme of things as we pulled further away from the bottom two. We now have a cup match in midweek before the final landlord v tenant derby against Corinthian-Casuals coming up on Saturday.

Epsom & Ewell: Kevin Kardel, Niall Stillwell, Kionte Gillfillian-Waul, Adam Green (c), Nicolas Bostan, Anthony Nazareth, Luke Miller, Craig Dundas, Carl Oblitey, Ali Fofahan, Nathan Best

Subs: Callum Wilson for Bostan (HT), Ethan Nelson-Roberts for Best (58), Will Kendall for Fofahan (76)

Report Source: www.eefconline.co.uk

Epsom and Ewell's 11 to 9 win 1 to 0

1 April 2025



Epsom and Ewell 1-0 Spelthorne Sports. Combined Counties League – Premier Division South. Tuesday 21st January 2025.

It was hard not to feel sorry for the visiting Spelthorne Sports team on Tuesday evening at the KGF. Well aware of their precarious league position, they battled throughout the match and held their own for much of the contest, only to have to replace their keeper due to injury and end up with just nine men after a pair of dismissals, yet it took a 96th minute goal from Craig Dundas to finally end their resistance as we defeated them by a goal to nil in an attritional encounter at the KGF.

It was interesting to see Kevin Kardel back in goal for the Salts, seeing as he had only tweeted his goodbyes to our club four days previously, but an injury to Dan O'Donovan required him to return and he had a fairly quiet evening, which leaves his stats for the club currently standing at an impressive 66.7% of clean sheets! We made three other changes from the VCD match and welcomed back Anthony Nazareth and Luke Miller to the starting eleven along with Nathan Best, who had been unavailable for the last two matches because he was cup-tied. Nazareth was involved in the first nervous moment of the match for supporters who collectively held their breath for a minute when he appeared to bring a Spelthorne striker down in the area, but the referee was happy that no foul had been committed and play went on.

The remainder of the first half was played out mainly in midfield. Conrad Essilfie-Conduah struck from distance, but it was an easy save for Henrey Podle in the Spelthorne goal. At the other end Adam Green picked up a yellow card for upending a visiting player near the edge of the penalty area, but the free kick was sent over Kardel's crossbar.

The only real chance of any kind in the first half came almost by surprise as Best tried his luck from long range. His attempt to lob the keeper didn't appear to be working as the ball actually landed in front of him, but it bounced up and the keeper missed it completely with the ball just grazing the face of the crossbar on its way out for a goal kick. It would have

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been an embarrassing way to concede, but the teams went in goalless at the break. Here's a quick stat for those of you who like such things; we have not scored a League goal in the first thirteen minutes of any match all season!

The second half opened up with a scare as the visitors fashioned a good chance just two minutes into the second period, but screwed the shot across the face of goal when they really should have hit the target. It looked like that would cost them in the 53rd minute when the match took a turn in our favour after one of our players was tugged in the area as we tried to reach a right wing Miller delivery. No one really appealed, yet the referee awarded a penalty and then gave their defender Shaun Preddie a second yellow card, to go with the card he had picked up early in the match. Kendall stepped up but scuffed the spot kick straight at Podle who made the save. We have just one goal from a penalty all season, which came back in August at Phoenix Sports.

The drama wasn't over though as Podle appeared to injure himself in making the save and required treatment. Although he continued, he went down again a few minutes later after keeping out a Green volley and was replaced on the hour. Despite the addition of Dundas from the bench and a strike from Kendall that was deflected just wide, it didn't stop the visitors from making a good fist of things and a mêlée in our penalty area concluded with a shot just wide of Kardel's left hand post. All of a sudden we had some defending to do and Nicolas Bostan headed a dangerous ball away with Kardel having to punch the next delivery clear. Then a free header bounced kindly in front of Kardel from fairly close range.

This was becoming a little embarrassing. To find ourselves pushed back by the team rooted to the foot of the table despite holding a man advantage was concerning. We were holding more of the ball, but passes kept going astray and although the surface was not great, we created little, although a high ball in from Green was headed just beyond the far post out of a crowd of players.

In the 88th minute our left back Kionte-Gillfillian-Waul was brought down by Daniel Watts and although the referee allowed our advantage, he soon had to stop play as it became apparent that the two players were clearly not happy with each other, to put it mildly. Then we saw something I don't believe I've ever seen before as our man picked up a yellow for the "afters" only to then see the referee say quite clearly to Watts that he was getting one booking for the foul and one for the afters. A double yellow card! The visitors couldn't quite believe it and we would be up against nine men for the remaining period of time, which turned out to be nearly eight minutes of added time.

And in the sixth minute of that time we finally broke through. A high ball in from the right hand side that may have been delivered by Bostan was knocked forward by Kendall where Dundas reached the ball ahead of the replacement keeper. People who were a little closer than I advised that our man may have controlled the ball with his hand as it bounced up, but then with his next touch he fired it into the roof of the net from a couple of yards for the winner.

The visitors certainly appeared on the receiving end of most of the rough decisions in this match, but I suppose that's what happens when you are at the foot of the table. I don't believe that either team really did enough to say they deserved the win, even though we held the balance of possession, particularly after the first dismissal, and it could be argued that if Spelthorne play with that sort of spirit for the rest of the season then they may stay up, but they also failed to take the chances that they had and sit well adrift now. I cannot see a way back for them this season.

From a playing perspective, the commitment was definitely there and I'm sure people will point to the playing surface, but we wouldn't have found a way past most of the teams in our League on this performance. The good news is that we moved up a couple of places to sixteenth as a result of this win and are just two points away from Sheerwater in twelfth with five games in hand! More relevantly we are now 17 points clear of Spelthorne Sports and 12 clear of Balham with two games in hand. It's going to take a massive turnaround for either of those clubs to catch the lower midtable pack, which I'm sure will be a relief to a number of those clubs, including ourselves!

Epsom & Ewell: Kevin Kardel, Niall Stillwell, Kionte Gillfillian-Waul, Adam Green (c), Nicolas Bostan, Anthony Nazareth, Luke Miller, Conrad Essilfie-Conduah, Will Kendall, Nathan Best, Ethan Nelson-Roberts

Subs: Craig Dundas for Essilfie-Conduah (62), Tobi Falodi for Nelson-Roberts (81)

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