

Lost in the fog

22 December 2022



Epsom & Ewell 2-4 FC Deportivo Galicia – Surrey Premier Cup – Second Round – Wednesday 21st December 2022.

A contest that started in farcical circumstances and ended in fairly thick fog ended with our opponents clinching this Surrey Premier Cup tie with three late goals to progress 4-2 in their defence of the trophy in front of a pitiful independently counted attendance of 46.

The most disappointing aspect of this contest was that we had done the hard work to take a deserved lead towards the end of the match, only to then throw it away with some horrible defending.

We were missing a few players from the regular squad in Zach Powell, Oliver Thompson, Johnny Akoto, Aaron Bogle, and Kevin Moreno-Gomez, who were all absent, while Kane Charles came back in between the posts for Kamrun Zain. On the bench we had the returning Mario Quiassaca and also a new debutant in Ryan Dacres-Smith, not to be confused with Ryan Smith, who was back in the starting line up after spending the Dorking Wanderers B match on the bench. This meant that Nick Wilson played in the back four for the first time while Steve Springett played his first match since completing his suspension.

The match was delayed to an 8pm start because the visitors had only eight players at the arranged kick off time of 7.45. Even when the match finally commenced at 8.06 FC Deportivo Galicia took the field with ten men, although an eleventh joined them in the third minute. A full bench of substitutes were named, but only one in playing kit ever appeared there.

And with Matt Chapman in charge due to the absence of our Manager Anthony Jupp, we could and should have gone ahead in the third minute when a poor clearance from the keeper presented Jamie Byatt with a chance, but his shot from 15 yards went wide. Two minutes later we absolutely should have opened our account after a delightful pass from Gavin Quintyne was perfectly in stride for Josh Owen, clean through on goal, but he hurried his shot straight at the advanced keeper, only to then have the ball rebound kindly back to him, yet with an open goal in front of him from 18 yards, he scuffed his shot which was then cleared by a defender and also seemed to injure his groin at the same time, which ultimately led to his replacement just before half time.

All of that didn't seem important at the time though as we took the lead in the ninth minute anyway when a poor clearance went straight to Josh Alder who set up Byatt to bury his shot low into the bottom corner from just inside the penalty area. The visitors, maybe understandably after their difficult journey, looked all at sea, but against the run of play they then equalised in the 12th minute as their right winger was allowed too much space at the far post and his shot from an angle took a wicked deflection off Springett onto Charles' left hand post and across into the far side netting.

Despite the goal, we continued to do most of the pressing and Alder's shot was fumbled before a Springett overlap and dangerous delivery appeared to be sent goalwards by a defender where the keeper made a fantastic double save, firstly from the defender and then secondly to claw the ball away as Byatt lunged for the loose ball.

However, after 20 minutes of dominance the pattern of the match began to shift and the visitors looked the more dangerous as the remainder of the half played out. Springett did well to block a dangerous chance after a Charles clearance had gone to the opposition. They then had another shot at goal, only to hit a team mate and just before the break Charles made a good low save as the shot came in from just outside the box. As the half concluded, Dacres-Smith came on for the limping Owen and it is hoped that the injury is not a serious one.

The second half started with little wisps of mist starting to appear above the pitch which would get worse as the evening progressed but fortunately we were back on top again. In fact a large part of this second half consisted of through balls against a Deportivo high line which our boys would chase, only for the sweeper keeper to kick the ball clear. It wasn't a perfect plan though and Byatt broke the offside trap in the 49th minute, but his ball in was met by an Alder shot that lacked power and dribbled wide. Then it was Byatt's turn to slice wide after Smith had broken through with a well timed run two minutes later, but pressure was building and Quintyne was desperately unlucky to see his shot from 20 yards crash down and away off the crossbar with the loose ball not coming down in time for Byatt who headed the ball wide as he ran in.

The visitors were creating little to this point and Byatt broke through once again, only for his touch to let him down. Charles needed to make a good save after Wilson lost the ball at the back, but by and large it appeared just a matter of time before we took the lead.

Finally it came in the 72nd minute when a corner was headed out to the edge of the box where Quintyne hammered a rocket back past the keeper into the roof of the net. It was a superb strike which deserved to win any match, but maybe our players thought that it was won at this point, because from this point we switched off and four minutes later a close range finish enabled the opposition to draw level out of nowhere.

Brad Peters flicked a low corner towards goal, only to see the ball cleared off the line, but Charles was forced to tip a powerful shot over the bar as Deportivo began to fancy their chances of pinching the match and on the break that's exactly what they did after an 86th minute shot was originally blocked before the loose ball was forced in. Six minutes later another ball in from the right wing was tapped in at the far post to make the final score 2-4.

We had a couple of chances in the closing minutes with Quiassaca forcing two good saves out of the visiting keeper, but in the end we had to admit defeat and face the fact that we have just sixteen league fixtures remaining in our season now, assuming that we can avoid the need for the playoffs. However, on this performance, that looks unlikely and a massive improvement will be required before we face Chessington & Hook United on Tuesday; a team we have only beaten once at home in our last seven meetings.

Epsom & Ewell: Kane Charles, Gideon Acheampong, Steve Springett, Ryan Smith, Nick Wilson, Brad Peters, Ben Bauchop, Gavin Quintyne, Jamie Byatt, Josh Alder, Josh Owen

Subs: Ryan Dacres-Smith for Owen (44), Athan Smith-Joseph for Alder (66), Jaevon Dyer for Acheampong (71), Mario Quiassaca for Byatt (74)

Report Source: www.eefconline.co.uk

World Cup injury time knocks Epsom and Ewell out of local cup

22 December 2022



Dorking Wanderers B 2-1 Epsom & Ewell FC – Southern Combination League Division One Cup – Second Round – Saturday 3rd December 2022.

A controversial 97th minute winner from Ben Aubrey secured passage through to the Quarter-Final of the Division One Cup for Dorking Wanderers B and denied our boys the chance to repeat their run to the Final from last season.

I'm not sure what it is about these two teams, but they seem to bring out the worst in each other! Although a neutral might well have enjoyed this match; played at speed, full of commitment, heavy challenges and erratic refereeing, this was a frustrating encounter to witness as an Epsom supporter.

To me, it seemed like these teams always cancel each other out and this contest had very few real chances of note within the ninety minutes before the home side scored a late winner, that numerous sources told me was offside in the build up.

It was clear from the starting line up that our Management had chosen to give a few of our regulars some time off for this cup tie. Before this match three players had taken part in all of our previous twenty matches, yet none of them even took the field for this contest. Both Ryan Smith and Zach Powell missed their first starts of the season, with Powell not even on the bench and Brad Peters also sat this one out with the subs. I had posed the question in my preview as to how important this match was, and the answer was clear, and understandably so. However, it was important for Camrun Zain who finally made his debut in goal after performing well for us in pre-season. He also became the first player in our club history to have a surname beginning with Z!

That said, there was still enough quality on the field to win this match. Josh Alder started ahead of Jamie Byatt, while Ben Bauchop, Oliver Thompson and Kevin Moreno-Gomez made their first starts for the club and all contributed well. We then got off to a fine start in the tenth minute when Jaevon Dyer's square ball in from the right was well dummied and Alder ran onto it and smashed the ball low past Joshua Wilson from twelve yards, although there was doubt about the goal for a few seconds as an old issue re-appeared.

Back in December 2018 we scored three goals in four matches where the ball had hit the diagonal stanchion supporting the post and bounced back into play. It had never happened before or since. Until now! At first it wasn't clear that the goal had been spotted by the referee or his Assistant, but thankfully common sense prevailed and the goal was given. Seriously though, who designs goals like this!

Anyway, Alder's goal against his former club had us in control and we continued to hold the balance of play as the half progressed. Bauchop's free kick was blocked before Alder went down in the area, only to then pick up a yellow card for simulation, which, judging by the lack of complaint from the players, appeared to be the right decision.

Alder's shot was saved easily enough by Wilson and Bauchop's next free kick was a couple of feet wide of the post. As we approached the half Alder got a toe to Dyer's ball in, but was at full stretch and was unable to direct it on target. In response the home side showed little except for a couple of long range strikes, one of which Zain had to palm away just before the break.

What we really needed in the second half was to retain a bit more control in the middle of the park, but gradually we found ourselves holding less of the possession and Dorking were level in the 55th minute after a harmless enough looking ball was played in to Mark Soares, who then lobbed the advancing Zain who watched the ball drop down and bounce up into the net for the equaliser.

The home side sent a free kick wide but we were soon back on the attack and just after the hour Alder was put through again. He cut back onto his right foot and sent a curling strike towards the far corner where Wilson made an excellent save at full stretch to tip the ball over. From the corner Dyer shot wide after the original delivery was punched clear and we then brought on Byatt and Athan Smith-Joseph in an attempt to force the win.

In reality though, neither were able to stamp their authority on proceedings and a succession of injuries and niggly fouls ensured that the contest would become broken up and lead to quite a few minutes being added on. And in the seventh minute of injury time with penalties looming, a crossfield ball over to the right wing was squared low into the six yard box where Aubrey was there to knock the delivery past Zain. There were protestations from our boys over the offside claim and the game ended with a lot of heated discussion between players and even Management as some from the home team had run on to the pitch after that late goal.

But it was too late to do anything about it and it is Dorking Wanderers B that now progress to a Quarter-Final at home to Arundel, while we still haven't won a competitive match at the new Meadowbank Stadium in six attempts. We will of course have another chance soon as we return here on 2nd January for a far more important League match.

Epsom & Ewell: Camrun Zain, Gideon Acheampong (c), Johnny "Sonic" Akoto, Nick Wilson, Aaron Bogle, Oliver Thompson, Jaevon Dyer, Ben Bauchop, Josh Alder, Gavin Quintyne, Kevin Moreno-Gomez

Subs: Athan Smith-Joseph for Quintyne (73), Jamie Byatt for Alder (73), Josh Owen for Bauchop (84)

Top teams level at the end

22 December 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 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

22 December 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 ascendancy 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 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?

22 December 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 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

22 December 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 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

Chelsea supports footie expansion next-door

22 December 2022



Cobham Football Club will get major upgrades to attract more women into football after councillors gave the green light following support from Premier League giant **Chelsea**. Several other organisations showed support for plans, which include a new spectator stand and new floodlights, saying the club helps support those with disabilities and could help in bringing more women and girls to the game.

Councillors said the football club was an asset to the community in an area where a lot of facilities were privately owned, voting for the changes with only the meeting chair abstaining. A meeting of **Elmbridge Borough Council**'s planning committee approved the application from the club, which was brought to the meeting on Tuesday (October 18) for a decision because the land is owned by the authority.

Support for the new 3G artificial pitch came from **Chelsea FC**, in a letter which highlighted the Premier League club having worked in the area for many years and said it would like "first refusal" on possible future community projects. These were listed as possibly including supporting the growth of women's football and running a development centre for 7- to 15-year-old girls as well as supporting grass roots clubs looking to get girls into competitive football.

Chelsea's Cobham Training Centre is in nearby Stoke d'Abernon and many former players including Frank Lampard, John Terry, Petr Cech, and Eden Hazard have lived in the area.

As well as this there was support for the application from **Surrey FA**, **Surrey Soccer Schools**, **Cobham Link**, a day service for adults with learning disabilities and autism, and **Leatherhead Primary Care Network**, representing a group of GP practices in the area.

Councillor **Alistair Mann** (Conservative, Cobham and Downside) said he hoped the committee would get behind the application because the club was there to promote "sport for all, football for all". He said: "The outstanding feature of Cobham Football Club is its community basis. It's there for the community."

Concerns raised around the application included the loss of Cypress trees at the club's eastern edge, to be replaced with holly hedges, as well as the noise impact on neighbours of the facility. Councillor **Laurence Wells** (Liberal Democrat, Cobham and Downside) said the installation of an artificial pitch would mean more playing time available, important in making sure sport was accessible to all and particularly in an area with a lot of private facilities. He said he thought conditions on the application regarding light and noise would deal with issues as best as they could but added: "Whether a noise management plan can effectively deal with swearing at 10 o'clock at night, we will wait and see but I think it's covered off as best as possible." He called for the pitch to be recycled at the end of its ten-year lifespan, saying it was equivalent to 1.5million plastic bags.

ENDS

Joust in Lancing drawn

22 December 2022



Montpellier 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.

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 Montpellier 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

22 December 2022



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 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

22 December 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.

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

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 Acheampong (88)