Salts get tangoed!

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)

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

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, 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

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 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

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 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

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 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)

Report Source: www.eefconline.co.uk

Epsom & Ewell FC knocked out by narrow loss

VCD Athletic 1-0 Epsom and Ewell FC. Isuzu F.A. Vase - Fourth Round. Saturday 18th January.

After four home wins in the competition, we departed the F.A. Vase in our first away tie at high-flying VCD Athletic by a goal to nil, which on the balance of play it was hard to disagree with. However, our boys battled all the way in this match, only to be concede midway through the first half and the home side then defended that lead cleverly, showing good organisation and experience to break up the play when necessary and to keep us at arm's length from that point. As a result, the Vickers can be added to a small list of clubs alongside Eastbourne United, Hailsham Town and Long Buckby who have ended our interest in the Vase at the last 32 stage in the fifty years since we reached the inaugural final.

In terms of personnel and from looking at our bench, it looks like we are getting back to full strength, which is just as well bearing our League position and the upcoming challenges we face in that and the other two cups we remain in. Additionally, Dan O'Donovan returned between the posts after completing his suspension. Conrad Essilfie-Conduah, Ethan Nelson-Roberts and Nicolas Bostan returned to the starting eleven after our last match against Berks County, while Craig Dundas moved into a role further forward in place of the cup-tied Jason Bloor.

170 spectators were present on a chilly afternoon at Old Road and both teams opened up with half-chances. Kionte Gillfillian-Waul sent a dangerous ball into the danger area, but it was cleared, while at the other end Bostan made a good block for a corner. In the ninth minute Will Kendall was fouled close to the edge of the penalty area, and as Kendall and Ali Fofahan stood around the ball, I was surprised to see that our Captain Adam Green didn't appear to be involved, but found out soon after as Kendall tapped the ball across to him, leaving him with a more central angle for the shot, but it was blocked and the chance was gone. I appreciate the variety here, but this was a really good opportunity to test the keeper with our first set piece and it just didn't work. As it turned out, this would be the best chance we would get in the match.

We had a scare in the 14th minute when a foul by Essilfie-Conduah out wide gave the home side a chance to deliver the ball in and O'Donovan reached it at full stretch, only to then drop it at the feet of a striker. It happened too quickly for him to react though and the ball struck him and headed goalwards, where Niall Stillwell was well positioned to clear it off the goal line.

We had an opportunity on the twenty minute mark when the VCD keeper Andy Walker sent a clearance straight to Fofahan, who then found Dundas, but from twenty yards he was unable to keep his shot down. Three minutes later though, we were behind after Bostan was adjudged to have committed a foul out wide in the middle of our half, but the free kick seemed to go straight through a crowd of players and was met at the far post by Michael Fenn who smashed the ball into the net off the crossbar. I thought it had stayed out at first, but it was not to be.

This was obviously not good news. Particularly when you realise that we have only come from behind to win on one occasion this season out of the eleven wins we have registered, which took place about a mile away from this ground at Phoenix Sports back in August. This would be a real mountain to climb.

Ollie Freeman was next to try his luck with a stinging shot from close to twenty-five yards out, but O'Donovan pulled off a superb save to fingertip the ball over the bar, while our chances were of a less threatening manner. A Green corner was punched away by Walker straight to Kendall, but his shot flew over the bar from the edge of the area. On another day it might have gone in the top corner, but we were unable to punish them and Bostan had to make another great block at the other end as the home side threatened to extend their lead. We went off at the break trailing by the one goal.

An early opportunity for the hosts just missed our post before we registered our first shot on target in the 55th minute when Essilfie-Conduah's shot took a slight deflection on the way but Walker was able to make the save. We nearly had a chance just after that when Kendall's ball in from the right wing seemed destined to be met by the head of Dundas, only for the VCD Captain

Ben Fitchett to get the faintest touch to it and deflect it away. Fitchett had clearly been detailed to keep an eye on our experienced midfielder and did an excellent job throughout the match.

We picked up a couple of yellow cards with Gillfillian-Waul being most upset by the decision, and then made a pair of substitutions with Carl Oblitey and Luke Miller coming on, but we were unable to create much, although we did get one more opportunity when Kendall robbed a defender and set up Essilfie-Conduah, but our man was out wide and was unable to thread the needle; the ball nestling in the side netting instead.

As the game entered the closing minutes we were indebted to O'Donovan who made a good block after a striker had broken through on the left and run in on goal. We were unable to equalise though, which was a shame as any Salts supporter who had seen our penalties in our shoot out victory over Berks County would have fancied our chances. During the last week I cautioned our club against publicising our penalties from that match online, but this was ignored, and it was interesting to see that Walker had his water bottle in the goal covered with penalty notes, and it is to be hoped that our opponents in the two cups we remain in are not minded to look at our "official" social media channels, as for the first time in ages they might see something of relevance! VCD Athletic now have the excitement of a home tie against Hartpury University or Fareham Town in the next round, although I should point out that the previous three teams that knocked us out at this stage of the Vase went out in the last 16, so they will need to buck that particular trend!

Back in 2010/11 we departed the FA Vase at home to the favourites St Neots Town who fought back to lead us 2-1 and then promptly snuffed out the game, giving us very little to work with. This match felt a bit like that, particularly in the second half and sometimes you just have to admit that we were beaten by the better team. They will face harder challenges, but I wouldn't be totally surprised if VCD Athletic were walking out at Wembley Stadium in a few months.

Epsom & Ewell: Dan O'Donovan, Niall Stillwell, Kionte Gillfillian-Waul, Adam Green (c), Nicolas Bostan, Callum Wilson, Ali Fofahan, Conrad Essilfie-Conduah, Will Kendall, Craig Dundas, Ethan Nelson-Roberts

Subs: Luke Miller for Gillfillian-Waul (67), Carl Oblitey for Dundas (67), Jack Torbett for Kendall (90)

Penalty shoot out won by Epsom and Ewell FC

Epsom and Ewell 0-0 Berks County. Combined Counties League Cup - Second Round. Tuesday 7th January 2025. Epsom and Ewell FC won 5-4 on penalties

On a very chilly Tuesday evening at the KGF our boys progressed to the last 16 of the Combined Counties League Cup and earned a first ever trip to Wallingford & Crowmarsh with a penalty win over Berks County, following a goalless draw after 90 minutes. This was the thirteenth penalty shoot out in our history, and it was our sixth win.

The Swords had of course visited us once already this season when we defeated them 3-1 in the F.A. Vase and their friendly keeper Harvey Rackley-Hayes advised that he thought the match would be called off; such was the weather forecast, added to last Saturday's postponement of our landlords' League match. The uncertainty certainly would have put many floating spectators off the idea of making the journey, seeing as the match wasn't confirmed publicly as being on until 5.30pm. As a result, only 55 were present at the ground to witness an attritional battle, but they would be rewarded for their attendance with an exciting ending and a penalty masterclass.

The playing line up was a positive one. Although a couple of regulars were missing, Anthony Nazareth and Carl Oblitey were back amongst the substitutes after injuries with the latter coming on in the second half, while Stefan Aiwone played the full match alongside Callum Wilson who had not been in the line up at Jersey Bulls. Also providing a further attacking threat was Ali Fofahan who had been abroad for a while. From our trip to Jersey Nicolas Bostan moved to the bench, while Tobi Falodi was absent and new signing Nathan Best was cup tied.

The match would follow a similar pattern to the first meeting between the clubs, with our boys looking slightly more dangerous than the visitors, but with possession being only slightly in our favour. We had an early chance, that looking back may have been the best of the night when Kionte Gillfillian-Waul found Will Kendall with a cross field pass, only for our striker to see his shot from twelve yards expertly turned around the post by Rackley-Hayes. It was a good strike and was definitely going just inside the keeper's left hand post and maybe it would have been an easier evening for us had it gone in.

Instead, the match contained a succession of half-chances, mostly for us. Jason Bloor set up Fofahan who twisted and turned, but fired just a yard away from the top corner, while a good piece of interplay between Gillfillian-Waul and Bloor resulted in a chance for Adam Green, but his low shot was wide of the mark.

We thought we had taken the lead in the 30th minute when a good ball over the top from Niall Stillwell was guided beyond Rackley-Hayes into the far corner by Sean-Michael Anderson but the offside flag was raised against him. At the other end Kevin Kardel was a lot less busy than in his Jersey debut and dealt well with the few chances that came his way, most notably after the visitors had got down the right wing and pulled the ball up for a strike in goal, but it didn't have the power or direction to cause much concern.

Kendall saw his shot deflect wide off a defender for a corner before Green was brought down on the edge of the area out on the right wing, but the free kick was blocked. Finally a Kendall looping header from a corner was claimed comfortably by Rackley-Hayes and we went in for the break goalless.

Nothing appeared to change in the second half. Gillfillian-Waul was getting forward quite frequently in this match and he latched on to a Fofahan pass, although his shot was well blocked for a corner. Anderson limped off after a foul on him that earned Lawson Jones a yellow card and Ethan Nelson-Roberts took his place; interestingly playing out on the right wing for the remainder of the match for the first time as far as I can recall. Kardel made another comfortable save and we looked like we were the only team that would be scoring, but as time ticked down everyone knew that one error either way could decide it. We continued to make the better chances and Fofahan saw another shot deflected wide before Kendall then struck a shot against a defender on the ground from just ten yards and was maybe surprised to see the ball come back to him as he then skied the second chance.

in the closing minute Green was not far away with a strike from distance, while Wilson also saw his shot on target gathered by Rackley-Hayes before their keeper dropped the ball under pressure from Kendall, but we were unable to reach the loose ball and after four minutes added time we went to penalties.

We first faced a penalty shoot-out at the start of the 1983/84 season, yet it wasn't until our fourth spot kick lottery in 2010 that we would win one! Since then our record has been fairly even. However, this would be only the third time in our history that we scored all of our penalties. As most normal people would expect, I'm not going to give away much detail about our penalties while we remain in three cup competitions, but Green, Wilson, Craig Dundas, Kendall and then Fofahan stepped up bravely and netted emphatically in that order. To be fair, the visitors did exactly the same with their first four penalties, but the fifth from the Captain Dan Money came at a good height and Kardel guessed right to parry the ball to safety and ensure a 5-4 win!

In summary the conditions and playing surface were better than I thought they would be, but they were certainly not perfect and two teams at the wrong end of the table who are used to having to compete, battled each other almost to a standstill. We were the better team and did deserve the win, but apart from the penalties which were superb, it was just one of those matches where you chalk up the victory and move on. To our credit, that's what we did!

Epsom & Ewell: Kevin Kardel, Niall Stillwell, Kionte Gillfillian-Waul, Adam Green (c), Stefan Aiwone, Callum Wilson, Sean-Michael Anderson, Craig Dundas, Will Kendall, Jason Bloor, Ali Fofahan

Subs: Ethan Nelson-Roberts for Anderson (63), Carl Oblitey for Bloor (70)

Report Source: www.eefconline.co.uk

New Year less cheerful for Epsom and Ewell football

Jersey Bulls 5-1 Epsom and Ewell FC. Combined Counties League - Premier Division South. Saturday 4th January 2025.

A trip to the Channel Islands for a meeting with the Jersey Bulls is never an easy fixture, and so it proved once again as we lost our third straight match there by a score of 5-1, although at least we broke our scoring duck this time!

This week our club referred to "A big away day to Jersey" as if it was an exciting fixture to look forward to, which, in fairness, it should be, but nobody seemed very keen to make the journey, as we were very poorly represented, apart from a few Committee and, yes, two regular supporters!

We also had new signing Nathan Best, who joined from Colliers Wood United where their very informative website advised he had scored thirteen goals in twenty-five appearances for the midtable Step Six team. Kardel really received a baptism of fire, while Best looked like a younger Jaevon Dyer by way of appearance and if he can be as good then he will prove to be a fine addition. Unfortunately his touch let him down a couple of times, never a good look when wearing sky blue boots!

We kicked off towards the St Helier end of the ground, or, if you've sat in the stand there before, we played from right to left, and started breezily enough, as was maybe appropriate when considering the bitter wind chill and freezing rain that was unpleasant enough for us, let alone the home crowd who were even less used to this sort of weather. We earned an early pair of Adam Green

corners and it was also Green who provided the first shot of the day following a good run from Kionte Gillfillian-Waul, although it was wide of the mark.

Kardel was called into action with a low save from an angled shot by Rai Dos Santos before the ball in from the subsequent corner was sent over the bar from close range. It was a lucky escape but the hosts went ahead in the 23rd minute when a corner from Dos Santos was met a couple of yards ahead of our near post with a flick on by Toby Ritzema which eluded everyone and nestled in the far corner of the net.

The hosts were monopolising possession by this stage and we were struggling to get out of our half, although Will Kendall was challenging for everything, while Jason Bloor looked dangerous with the ball at his feet, but he was often a long way out from goal and we were just unable to get the numbers forward to help. Bloor picked up a yellow card for a clumsy challenge on Luke Watson and not long after that we had a small flash point that resulted in bookings for Green and Jersey's Luke Campbell.

However, from the Jersey free kick, the ball to the far post was knocked in first time where Dos Santos was waiting to head the ball in off Kardel from close range in the 39th minute. Kardel kept the score at 2-0 with a good low save but we were definitely second best at the break, with the two goal lead being a fair one.

We seemed to have a little more ambition in the second half and Green saw his shot on target easily gathered by Euan van der Vliet, although this shot on target was our first one in Jersey after we had even failed to do that on our two previous visits. We continued to press and a Niall Stillwell free kick to the back post was headed across goal by Kendall at which point there was a collision which resulted in four players hitting the deck, but no penalty was awarded and probably rightly so.

A deep cross was volleyed wide by the hosts but then things got interesting as we pulled a goal back. Green sent a clever pass down the right for Best to cut in and his pass resulted in a low shot from Anderson which was not held and a corner was conceded. From the 63rd minute Green corner, it was Stillwell who was able to time his run perfectly to head the ball in from close range. The hosts felt there was a foul on their keeper and they might have had a case, but Stillwell's first goal for our club, and of course, our first on either of the Channel Islands, threatened to make things interesting.

For just three minutes, as it turned out, as a ball across goal was met with a superb strike from Ritzema that gave Kardel no chance from around the edge of the penalty area. His first goal could have been questioned as to whether he meant it, but there was no doubt about this one!

We tried to fight back but with no real success. Watson picked up a yellow card for a foul after he stumbled before making a challenge on Best. Some of the Jersey players were saying it wasn't even a foul, but it was reckless and whilst accidental, left our new guy on the deck for a while, although he would recover to complete the ninety minutes.

Jack Torbett came on for the tiring Bloor while it was also good to see Stefan Aiwone back on the field as he replaced Tobi Falodi, but in between those replacements we conceded twice; in the 77th minute when a right wing cross was headed in unmarked by Karl Hinds and three minutes later when a simple straight pass caught us out and Dos Santos cleverly guided the ball underneath the advancing Kardel to make it 5-1. If it hadn't been all over at 3-1, it was now!

Aiwone made a superb block to keep the hosts out and after four extra minutes the final whistle blew to signify our fifth loss in a row to the Bulls. It wasn't pretty, but the guys who were present tried their best and if there is fault to be apportioned from this match, it should be aimed at the absentees.

Hopefully we'll have many more players available for our two upcoming big Cup matches, starting on Tuesday, weather permitting, when we are due to welcome Berks County in a League Cup tie.

In summary, and as the only Salts supporter to have attended all four of our matches in the Channel Islands, it's fair to say that a trip over can be both a blessing and a curse. The islands are lovely and the welcome from the locals is great, but it is a bit of a slog with the early start and the cost involved, not to mention the risk of the whole thing being postponed at short notice due to weather conditions, as was the case when we were first due to visit Guernsey back in 2012/13, eventually getting over at the third attempt. Based on this match, it may well be that we've had our last trip to Jersey for a while, as we've met all the top teams now, many of them twice, and I make the still unbeaten islanders clear favourites right now to finally reach the Isthmian League this season after a few near misses.

Epsom & Ewell: Kevin Kardel, Tobi Falodi, Kionte Gillfillian-Waul, Adam Green (c), Nicolas Bostan, Niall Stillwell, Sean Anderson, Craig Dundas, Will Kendall, Jason Bloor, Nathan Best

Subs: Jack Torbett for Bloor (77), Stefan Aiwone for Falodi (80)

Epsom and Ewell FC get marching orders from Sandhurst

Epsom and Ewell FC 1-2 Sandhurst Town. Combined Counties League - Premier Division South. Tuesday 17th December 2024.

Following our defeat at Chipstead in November I advised that we regularly seemed to struggle to produce a good performance against any of the teams below us in the League. Although that trend was bucked with a good win at Alton, we were back to our old ways as a starting eleven that was unchanged from our Vase victory over Burnham failed to keep their intensity up and slipped away in the second half to a 2-1 defeat at home to Sandhurst Town, allowing them to claim a League double over us and leapfrog us in the table too.

We were a little slow out of the blocks and Mark Holley produced a good early run that ended with a shot that was sliced wide. However, we began to get back into the match and Conrad Essilfie-Conduah sent a header over the bar from an Adam Green free kick, although our man was offside in any case. Our next chance came from a great crossfield pass from Will Kendall that was perfect for Sean-Michael Anderson, but his strike on target was closed down immediately by a defender.

We started to push our visitors back a little more from this point and took the lead in the 19th minute, when a Green corner was missed by the Sandhurst keeper Harry White and then appeared to strike the thigh of Elliott Miles, rebounding into the net from a couple of yards out. It was at first suspected that our defender Anthony Nazareth had got a touch, and he certainly celebrated as though he had done, but it was later confirmed by a couple of sources that this would go down as our fifth own goal of the season, which was a shame really, as a goal just before Christmas from Nazareth would certainly have been appropriate!

Ethan Nelson-Roberts was next to try his luck from 18 yards, but his powerful strike was just over the bar. Then suddenly, it nearly all went pear shaped as a pinpoint crossfield pass from our opponents put Shane Qolori through on goal, only for Dan O'Donovan to make a superb save with an outstretched leg to keep them out. They also struck another warning shot just over our crossbar in injury time after a good move. We went in with a lead, but by no means a secure one.

And so it proved early in the second half. With Sandhurst kicking towards the Tolworth end, Qolori had an opportunity. It looked at first as though his team mate had got in the way, but he retained the ball, and then drew a couple of defenders before drilling the ball low into O'Donovan's left hand corner from fairly close range in the 52nd minute to level the scores.

We had a brief shout for a penalty when Kionte Gillfillian-Waul just reached the ball ahead of a defender and nodded the ball past him before going to ground, but in all honesty, I felt that there wasn't quite enough there to award the spot kick and the referee felt the same way.

The match began to meander and we were no longer as dominant as we had been in the first half. Then we started to make errors. Firstly, Nazareth miskicked a clearance just a matter of yards out and the visiting striker saw his shot well blocked by O'Donovan with Nazareth himself able to recover to make a block from the next shot. Our defender was then clattered into by one of the opposition and although he recovered a little after treatment, he limped off a few minutes later and was replaced by Callum Wilson.

We then picked up another injury after Niall Stillwell was caught by a high foot that earned Morgan Elliot a yellow card, and again, he would limp off a few minutes later for debutant Tobi Falodi from Guildford City to take his place. We then had our best chance of the half after Gillfillian-Waul sent in a long throw that was flicked on by Craig Dundas for Green to strike, although White did well to parry the strike away to safety. Another opportunity followed after Green had split the defence with a pass to Kendall, but although he was through on goal, the defender chasing him probably did enough to force him into an earlier shot than he would have liked and he put the ball wide from only twelve yards out.

The visitors could have been 3-1 down in that time, but they weren't, and began to grow in confidence as the game reached its closing stages. They had a great chance in the 88th minute when a ball through on goal looked harmless enough until O'Donovan sliced his clearance on the bobbly surface, leaving Frazier Osunkaya with a good opportunity from an angle, but the contact wasn't the greatest and our keeper was able to reach the ball just before it crossed the line. We failed to heed the fairly large warning though and just a minute later Holley finished the game in a similar way to how he started it; with a good run from left to right, although this time he produced a much more accurate strike that O'Donovan could only palm into the goal from twelve yards.

Ultimately, this proved to be the winning goal and although I don't believe we deserved to lose over the ninety minutes, we hadn't really worked hard enough to win it either and if I'm honest, we probably should have done from the position we were in. It would

be easy to say that this wasn't a very important League match, and it's true that we've had many more pivotal fixtures this season. However, this was another flat performance, particularly in the second half and will become a concern if repeated too often.

Epsom & Ewell: Dan O'Donovan, Niall Stillwell, Kionte Gillfillian-Waul, Adam Green (c), Nicolas Bostan, Anthony Nazareth, Ali Fofahan, Conrad Essilfie-Conduah, Will Kendall, Jason Bloor, Ethan Nelson-Roberts

Subs: Callum Wilson for Nazareth (65), Luke Miller for Anderson (68), Tobi Falodi for Stillwell (83)

Report Source: www.eefconline.co.uk

League victory takes Epsom & Ewell up 3 places

Cobham 1-2 Epsom and Ewell. Combined Counties League - Premier Division South. Saturday 16th November 2024

Momentum is a funny thing! At times this season, we have found ways to lose matches that we ought to have taken points from, yet on Saturday we managed to take three points from high flying Cobham on their own ground, when we probably didn't deserve them. However, last week's Vase win has given the players some confidence and this may have been the difference in our 2-1 win.

This second win in a row, and our first in the League for eight matches dating back to September was achieved despite a continual rotation of our squad in recent weeks, with three more players making their debuts in this contest. Callum Wilson came in for Toby Young at the back, while Conrad Essilfie-Conduah came in for Craig Dundas who had an afternoon spent mostly on the bench. Will Kendall came in for Oblitey and looked much more his old self in this one, scoring the winner with one of the worst free kicks you'll witness!

We took the field at the Reg Madgwick Stadium in our yellow kit and kicked towards the main entrance end, which we didn't do that often in our season as tenants here, so I assume we lost the toss. Either way though we made a fast start and Kendall fed Luke Miller, only to see our tricky winger's shot on target well blocked by a defender, before Adam Green also saw his shot blocked and cleared in the opening ten minutes. We were doing most of the attacking, although our hosts forced Dan O'Donovan into a good low save soon after, with the follow-up shot blocked by Anthony Nazareth, playing against his old club.

We continued to press and an Ali Fofahan cross was just reached by Ryan MacLean in front of his keeper and the ball was cleared. Our boys were looking the more dangerous of the two sides at this stage and approaching the half hour a Fofahan corner was met by a glancing header from Kendall that hit the post and went away, with only our man ending up tangled in the net instead.

Elijah Simpson then got through, winning a one on one with Nazareth, but O'Donovan was out to smother the opportunity quickly. It also transpired that our defender had only been beaten to the ball as he had been injured a few minutes previously and his replacement at the back was Nicolas Bostan, who had joined us from Hampton & Richmond Borough in the last 24 hours.

However, by the time of that substitution we were already ahead, as another Fofahan corner required an intervention from Conrad Knight, who tipped the ball over his crossbar but from the next set piece, Fofahan sent the ball over to Ethan Nelson-Roberts on the left wing, and he cut inside onto his right foot before drilling the ball straight between the legs of MacLean and completely wrongfooting Knight as it flew into the bottom corner of the Cobham net from about twelve yards in the 39th minute.

Unfortunately, we held the lead for just five minutes before Cobham drew level with a good run down the right and delivery to the near post, where Derick Hayford was able to head the ball powerfully into the net from a few yards out via the crossbar. It was a proper centre-forward's header and they always seem to look more spectacular when they go in off the frame of the goal!

We went in at the break level, but within 55 seconds of the second half played Kendall was sitting on the bench as a result of something he said. The hosts clearly saw this as an opportunity and began to push us back. We had a lucky escape when Patrick Murray struck the ball wide from close range and had to make some timely defensive blocks, but Kendall came back on after serving his ten minutes and at that point I thought we would take control again.

But it didn't really work out that way. Cobham remained the more dominant of the two teams and at this stage it looked like a matter of when, not if they would take the lead. Wilson made a couple of great blocks and the game started to get broken up. That wasn't helped by O'Donovan needing a couple of sessions of treatment for an injury that had earned Charlie Alexiou a yellow card earlier. There would clearly be a fair amount of injury time required! Before that though the home side continued to press and a ball in from the right bounced straight into the path of a Cobham player who smashed the ball at goal, only for O'Donovan to make an astounding save to deflect the ball over the crossbar from close range.

Blessing Hombessa, late of Knaphill, joined the fray as a substitute ahead of Miller, but his first contribution was to lose the ball in midfield, leading to a Cobham counter attack that earned a corner. Fortunately though it came to nothing and his second contribution was far better as his pass put Kendall through with just MacLean to beat, and the defender brought him down on the edge of the penalty area, earning a card of his own. As Adam Green lined up to take the set piece in the 85th minute, Will Kendall ran in and smashed the ball straight at the wall instead, at what you might like to call "upper groin height"! Nine times out of ten this free kick would be blocked by the wall, but on this occasion it parted like the Red Sea and Knight was once again left with no chance as the ball flew into the net.

There were nine minutes of injury time, during which Cobham pushed for an equaliser, but their attacks came to nothing. Kionte Gillfillian-Waul picked up an injury in the closing stages and was replaced by Jack Torbett, who became the third player to join us from Langley, but apart from one close range effort that went just over our bar it wasn't a particularly nervy ending and the final whistle confirmed that the points were heading to Epsom. For those who love a stat, this win was our first ever League win on this day at the ninth attempt in the last hundred years!

This victory also lifted us up three places in the League and helps to reinforce most people's belief that we are too good to go down. However, despite our performance, we had been struggling to pick up the points, so these were most welcome even if we have played better before this season and lost. We now visit Chipstead in pursuit of what would be our first ever League "double" against them. They go into our meeting having lost 7-0 at AFC Whyteleafe, but I'm sure that was just one of those days. Let's hope we can keep our momentum going against the Chips as our tour of former landlords continues on Tuesday.

Epsom & Ewell: Dan O'Donovan, Niall Stillwell, Kionte Gillfillian-Waul, Adam Green (c), Anthony Nazareth, Callum Wilson, Luke Miller, Conrad Essilfie-Conduah, Will Kendall, Ali Fofahan, Ethan Nelson-Roberts

Subs: Nicolas Bostan for Nazareth (40), Blessing Hombessa for Miller (74), Craig Dundas for Fofahan (83), Jack Torbett for Gillfillian-Waul (93)

Report Source: www.eefconline.co.uk