

“Long-live” the Salts. Crowned with promotion.

7 May 2023



Epsom & Ewell FC 2-1 Wick FC. Southern Combination League – Division One Playoff Final. Saturday 6th May 2023.

Thirty years to the day after our final first team match at West Street, we made our final bow at Fetcham Grove but in much happier circumstances, as our 2-1 win over Wick ensured us of promotion back to Step Five for the first time since the dark days of our Centenary relegation season of 2017/18.

The pressure was on. Our second place finish and subsequent home advantage for the playoffs had made us favourites and we had come through a nervy encounter against Selsey just seven days previously. How would we fare against Wick? Well, it was never going to be a comfortable afternoon for an Epsom supporter (but then, did anyone expect any different!) and the match will only live long in the memory for three things. 1) Two wonderful strikes from Jaevon Dyer. 2) A horrible challenge on Dyer in the closing seconds. 3) The significance of what has been achieved with this result, with a return to the Combined Counties League appearing nailed on and the challenges that will bring, including another trip to face Jersey Bulls.

Of course playoff finals are rarely of high quality; they are all about the occasion and the performance means nothing whatsoever without the result, so our players deserve a lot of credit. After being hauled back to 1-1 and with momentum appearing to be slipping away, they turned the contest around and finished worthy winners in the end.

An attendance of 384; our largest at home since our final League match at West Street in April 1993 when Aldershot Town supplied a large number of the 1,087 present that day, gathered in the pouring rain to see whether we could clinch promotion. The visitors brought a group of people with them who certainly contributed to the atmosphere at the Leisure Centre end of the ground, and how Wick must wish that they followed them on a regular basis!

We took the field with just two changes from our win against Selsey with Kevin Moreno-Gomez coming in for Johnny “Sonic” Akoto and Lewis Pearch starting ahead of Jamie Byatt. The opening exchanges were fairly tame as both clubs settled into the occasion, with the Wick drummer setting a beat for the match which started to take on a carnival atmosphere as the rain began to relent.

The first chance of the match came our way in the 11th minute after a clever pass inside the defender to Pearch who bore down on goal, only to be denied by a fantastic save from Keelan Belcher who just got a leg to the low shot, diverting the ball a couple of feet wide of the goal. Belcher was then required to punch the ball away under pressure from Dylan Merchant seconds later, but the next real action came just after the twenty minute mark with a snap shot from Dave Crouch that Tom Theobald dealt with fairly comfortably.

The game was meandering a little if I’m honest until it all changed in the 31st minute when Athan Smith-Joseph got down the left wing. His cross went beyond everyone but was collected by Dyer, almost out on the touchline and he beat two men, before cutting onto his right foot and drilling the ball, via a faint deflection, low past Belcher at his near post. It was a superb strike and on a wet day, the ball skidded through at quite a pace before nestling in the net and justifying in one instant why I love standing behind the goal we attack, even if it was difficult to hear yourself speak at times, something that doesn’t often happen at Epsom games!

Smith-Joseph tried his luck five minutes later with Gideon Acheampong, making his 100th appearance for the Salts, providing a great overlap, but the shot was weak and wide. The game then seemed to take on a strange pattern with our boys unsure of whether to push forward for a second goal, and Wick then began to hold a greater share of the possession for a while, although were rarely threatening with it until the final seconds of the half when Theobald palmed away a stinging drive from distance from Sam Connolly.

The rain started again as the players came out for the second half, but the pattern of passiveness continued. We didn’t seem to know whether to stick or twist although Moreno-Gomez was notably getting forward more and his perfect centre was missed completely by the incoming Pearch just six yards out just five minutes into the second period! Theobald was out to clear a long ball shortly afterwards but as the half progressed, we seemed happy enough to allow the visitors to retain the ball more; a tactic that is obviously not without risk. Additionally, Acheampong began to see more and more of the ball on his side, but without any help as two players often appeared on his flank and from one of these attacks, we had a close escape when a deep cross was headed over at the far post.

Our Manager Matt Chapman clearly noticed this development and we made a substitution with the ageless Byatt coming on for Smith-Joseph and Pearch moving out to the right, presumably to help out on that flank where required, but before the new plan had really settled in the visitors were level as a harmless looking ball in from the Wick left wasn’t claimed by anyone and Theobald had to come out for the ball and was adjudged to have clipped Aaron Tester in the penalty area. It certainly looked like a penalty to me, but people nearer the incident weren’t convinced. Either way though Connolly stepped up and clinically beat Theobald from the spot in the 66th minute. It’s hard to pin any blame onto any one individual here, especially from eighty yards away, so it’s probably best to describe this one as a defensive miscommunication!

Of course, it is easy to make light of it now, but at the time, this was a concerning development. We had surrendered any

momentum we had built up and would effectively have to go out and win the match once again. Dyer was a constant thorn in their sides though and was clumsily brought down on the edge of the area, but out wide, from where Gavin Quintyne's free kick went straight through the wall and struck the inside of Belcher's right hand post, flying across the six yard box and away. Dyer was continuing to receive some rough treatment and found himself on the deck in the area a few minutes later, but fortunately was able to continue after treatment.

Byatt then struck at Belcher from twenty yards as we began our push for the finish line before the key moment of our season occurred in the 82nd minute. For anyone who had missed the first goal, Dyer kindly produced a carbon copy for his second, collecting the ball out on the left wing, beating two men once again and then cutting onto his right foot before drilling the ball in at the near post. Belcher got a glove to the ball, but to be fair the shot was much too powerful and accurate and we were ahead again, this time to stay.

It was all down to game management now and we saw out the final minutes without any defensive worries, although there was still time for controversy as we caught Wick on the break and Dyer nicked the ball past Marshall Ball, only to find himself the victim of an assault on the touchline with a horrible knee high lunge. Fortunately for Dyer he saw it coming and wasn't bearing any weight at the time of the challenge, or it could have been really serious and I am happy to report that he is fine now. The referee had the red card out within seconds as our players then converged on the scene and the obligatory scuffles followed, during which Nick Wilson received a red card. Both will now receive a three game suspension at the start of the next season, but it does seem harsh that Wilson will receive the same punishment as Ball, because it was a horrible foul; a dark red card, if there was such a thing.

Fortunately, the final couple of minutes were played out without further incident and after nearly six minutes of injury time the final whistle confirmed our success. The players gathered together and blue flares were set off by the players on the pitch as the celebrations began. It was quite a sight!

It's been a tumultuous season with numerous changes to the Management and the squad for a number of reasons, some of which were unnecessary. However, the players pulled us through and Dyer in particular will deserve his own chapter in our club's history as we now get a chance to establish ourselves back at Step Five once again, which was extremely pivotal, maybe even to our entire existence as a club. The promotion means that we will now be entered back into the FA Cup and the Senior County Cup and will hopefully herald the start of brighter times. Many issues remain at our club, but these are all for another day.

Maybe the final word should go to our defender Steve Springett, who has suffered a broken ankle, a broken nose, a badly dislocated thumb and various other injury concerns over his two seasons here, and described this season as "unfinished business" after falling in the playoffs last season. Now at least he can say it is mission accomplished! Well done chaps!

Epsom & Ewell: Tom Theobald, Gideon Acheampong, Kevin Moreno-Gomez, Nick Wilson, Steve Springett, Dylan Merchant, Jaevon Dyer, Gavin Quintyne, Lewis Pearch, Jaan Stanley, Athan Smith-Joseph

Subs: Jamie Byatt for Pearch (64), Rory Edwards for Pearch (84), Thompson Adeyemi for Stanley (84)

Article here about the 30 years since Epsom and Ewell played at the West Street ground.

Playoff penalty points presage Premier promotion?

7 May 2023



Epsom and Ewell win 6-5 on penalties. Southern Combination League - Division One Playoff Semi-Final. Saturday 29th April 2023.

Two good saves from Tom Theobald added to some well struck penalties were enough for us to edge past Selsey and into a home playoff final against Wick next Saturday after a goalless ninety minutes at Fetcham Grove was followed by the lottery of a penalty shootout.

On a sunny and thankfully dry day a crowd of just over 200, our largest for many years were present and it was good to see a large contingent of former Epsom players watching the match. Of the ones I saw, from the 80s we had Mark Norman, the 90s Paul Meredith and Jimmy Dack, while from more recent seasons we had Daryl Cooper-Smith and Rob Hendry along with Dale Hanson-Byatt, Louis Chin and Jerry Antwi. In addition both of our former Managers from earlier in the season Anthony Jupp and Liam Giles were also present. We almost had more players on the sideline than we had on the pitch!

It's only fair to say that it was a very nervous and underwhelming contest at times. The match seemed to follow a regular pattern for much of the game with our boys holding most of the possession but failing to really threaten Syd Davies in the visitors goal. Selsey attacked from time to time, but not with the same frequency and the decision to give Johnny "Sonic" Akoto the job of marking their danger man Shane Brazil out of the game was the main reason the visitors carried so little threat, switching over with Gideon Acheampong whenever he switched wings. In fact, he's probably still marking him now!



As with most weeks we rotated the squad once again; at the back Sonic and Dylan Merchant came in for Lewis Pearch and Alex Penfold, both of whom dropped to the bench. Nick Wilson came in for Rory Edwards, while Jaevon Dyer also returned to the starting eleven at the expense of George Owusu and Jaan Stanley also started ahead of Thompson Adeyemi. It was a strong looking line-up, but it was also a strong looking bench too and they would be needed as the match went on.

We started brightly with Stanley putting Athan Smith-Joseph through in the seventh minute, but his attempt to score against the same opponents for the fifth successive game was well blocked for a corner. Next to try was Jamie Byatt whose shot was also deflected wide. We won a lot of corners in this match, but we were lacking a bit of height in the penalty area and we very rarely looked like having success from the set pieces against a well-marshalled Selsey defence. In fact we only really had one opportunity when Stanley met a Steve Springett corner with a downwards header that was cleared by a defender standing on the goal line right by the post.

Both Smith-Joseph and Dyer were asking a lot of questions of the visiting full backs, but there was very little in the way of real service for Byatt to take advantage of. To be fair though, we were looking equally solid ourselves and when Akoto broke down the left wing Brazil brought him down, earning the first yellow card of the match, although we would eventually see two issued to each side.

Just after the half hour a lovely crossfield ball was taken in stride by Smith-Joseph, although his attempt to nick the ball over Davies was blocked out for a corner and the closest we came in the half was when Akoto's deep cross caught everyone out and bounced out for a goal kick off the Selsey crossbar.

The pattern of the first half continued into the second and Dyer sent a header over the bar before Smith-Joseph sent a shot goalwards for Davies to gather. But these were only half-chances really. In the 65th minute we had our first really good opening after Stanley broke down the left and put in a superb cross. Davies had anticipated this and came out of goal to cut out the cross, but it was so good that he was out of the picture, although the incoming Dyer then missed his kick from eight yards with the goal gaping!

Selsey sent a reminder that they were still in this match with a low shot from Rocco Gamblin that went into our side netting, but at this stage it was becoming a question of whether we would score or would have to go to penalties. With just two minutes of normal time we should have rendered penalties redundant as substitute Lewis Pearch beat a man on the right wing before running at goal and pulling the ball back nicely for Smith-Joseph, but he too then missed his kick from just ten yards out! Five minutes of additional time couldn't separate the teams and so we went straight to penalties.

This was our eleventh shoot out in club history (with just four wins from the previous ten) although it was our first since the Covid affected season of 2020/21 when we had two in three days. This one was to be held at the Leisure Centre end, which caused people a little surprise and led to a number of us having to get to the other end of the ground in rapid time! We went first in the shootout, but it looked like that advantage wouldn't count for much as Rory Edwards' kick was saved comfortably by Davies. Fortunately, Dillon North also produced an average penalty and Theobald went to his left and kept it out.

Stanley was the second man up and if I'm honest, his spot kick wasn't the greatest either. Davies went down to his right to save, which he did, sending the ball flying up into the air. However, it hadn't finished yet and it came down and spun over the goal line just out of reach of the frustrated keeper! We took full advantage of this piece of fortune and wouldn't let that lead slip. Superb penalties from Gavin Quintyne, who had an excellent game, Kevin Moreno Gomez and Wilson meant that we had scored four of our first five. However, Selsey also scored all of their remaining penalties so we were locked at 4-4 and went to sudden death. At number six Dyer stepped up as the only member of the sixteen players on show to have scored a penalty for us this season and his strike was unstoppable, although this was then answered equally emphatically by Dale Hayes.

Captain Acheampong stepped up to put us 6-5 ahead with a solid penalty, leaving the pressure all on James Henton to follow suit, and in truth his wasn't a bad penalty, straight down the middle, Theobald originally went to his left but reacted brilliantly to stick out a right leg, diverting the ball up onto the bar and away. We were through to the Playoff Final!

In summary, over the course of the match we were the better side and we deserved the win, even if it had to go to penalties before we could achieve it! Our final opponents this season will be Wick, who, like Selsey were beaten twice by us in the regular season and were on the end of a 6-1 hiding at Fetcham Grove back in September. Something tells me this next encounter will be a little closer!

So on Saturday 6th May we will say farewell to Fetcham Grove and hopefully also to Step Six football after five seasons at this level. I know some important chap is getting a crown put on his head the same day and good luck to him, but seriously, where would you rather be next weekend, the Abbey or the Grove?

Epsom & Ewell: Tom Theobald, Gideon Acheampong, Johnny "Sonic" Akoto, Nick Wilson, Steve Springett, Dylan Merchant, Jaevon Dyer, Gavin Quintyne, Jamie Byatt, Jaan Stanley, Athan Smith-Joseph

Subs: Lewis Pearch for Byatt (68), Kevin Moreno-Gomez for Akoto (79), Alex Penfold for Springett (80), Rory Edwards for Penfold (86)

Report Source: www.eefconline.co.uk

“Is it promotion you’re looking for?”

7 May 2023



Back to back away victories for Epsom and Ewell FC win 2nd place in the league and home front play-offs for promotion. Richard Lambert reports on both matches:

Chessington & Hook United 1-2 Epsom & Ewell -Southern Combination League - Division One - Thursday 20th April 2023.

For the second match in a row we let a lead slip, but fought back to take all three points with a late winner, this time a close range 83rd minute header from Nick Wilson as we maintained our grip on the top playoff spot with a 2-1 victory over Chessington & Hook United at Chalky Lane.

The win maintained an extremely odd sequence of results between the clubs. At home we have only won one of our last eight matches against Chessington & Hook United, but at Chalky Lane it is a different story as we have only lost once in sixteen visits there! And in the end I felt we were worth the points, although there were times when I worried that it wasn't going to be our night as we spurned a number of good chances to make the game comfortable.

We made four changes from our win against Selsey with Athan Smith-Joseph rested after tweaking his hamstring on Saturday, while Alex Penfold and Rory Edwards came back into the starting line up at the expense of Steve Springett and Gavin Quintyne. Finally, further forward, Thompson Adeyemi came in for Jaan Stanley as we rotated our squad with one eye on another match coming up at Billingshurst in less than 48 hours.

We got off to a flying start with our first attack down the right wing where Adeyemi sent a low ball across goal and it was swept home clinically at the far post from twelve yards by Lewis Pearch in the 3rd minute to give us an early lead. Adeyemi then saw his shot blocked and also a follow up from Edwards as we tried to double our lead from a corner.

In the 13th minute it was Adeyemi again who tried his luck from twenty yards but found Chessington and Hook keeper Andrew Osei equal to the strike. The home side responded by forcing a couple of corners but we dealt with the deliveries into the box well enough and were soon on the attack again with Jamie Byatt seeing his shot tipped wide by Osei and then Dylan Merchant sending a header back across goal from a deep corner, only to see the ball cleared.

We had an excellent chance in the 41st minute when a defender's error let Pearch through on the right and his ball across goal was perfect for Adeyemi, but his left foot contact wasn't as secure as his right and a defender was able to clear the ball away from the goal line. Then Byatt had another try just before half time but his shot was straight at Osei and the last chance of the half also fell to Byatt whose twenty yard strike was far stronger than the one he netted with against Selsey on Saturday, but as a result it just didn't come down in time, clearing the bar by about three inches!

We should have been further ahead by the half and it is always a concern when chances aren't taken. Tom Theobald made a good block with his feet after a defensive slip, but we were back on the attack soon and a foul on Jaevon Dyer allowed us to float a free kick into the box, only for Osei to punch clear. The game was starting to get a little niggly, as is so often the case when these two teams meet and just after a bit of a scuffle the home side equalised with a ball in from the right that was collected by Joe Avery who cut inside Gideon Acheampong before firing the ball past Theobald at his near post from ten yards for the equaliser in the 55th minute.

This was ever so disappointing and we would have to go again. But we did. A Dyer run and pass to Wilson was hacked clear by Osei just ahead of our man who was then adjudged to have fouled the keeper. Stanley came on for Adeyemi and as we entered the final quarter of the match Dyer set up Pearch for a similar chance to the one he had scored from earlier, but this time he scuffed his shot wide of the post and then it was Dyer's chance to miss a good chance after great interplay between Stanley and Byatt had left him in space, but his touch let him down and Osei's leg was able to dispossess him.

Five minutes later Dyer robbed a defender and broke through on goal, drawing the keeper before flicking the ball on to Byatt, but instead of rolling the ball into the empty net from the edge of the area, he hesitated and a defender closed down the chance which then rebounded into Osei's arms! We made a couple of substitutions in the 77th minute with Springett and Quintyne entering the fray for Penfold and Byatt before we then had the second multi-player scuffle of the day, following a foul by Johnny Akoto, who was then kicked while on the deck. The refereeing could have been stronger in this match and although a card was issued to both sides here, it looked like the home team maybe ought to have seen red.

However, the main event occurred in the 83rd minute. Stanley was released down the right, although his ball across goal was just ahead of Wilson and just behind Dyer, by now operating on the left wing. He retrieved the ball though and sent a superb deep cross to the back post where Wilson met it with a solid downwards header just a couple of yards out from goal, giving Osei no chance to save it.

We played five minutes over the ninety which was about fair and managed the game well in that period with much of the time being spent near the corner flag and there were large celebrations from the away support and the players when the whistle blew for full time and the points were well deserved, even if we had required the late intervention to get all three of them.

So where does this leave us? Well, barring a seven goal swing in our final matches we will now finish in the top playoff spot, ensuring home matches throughout our participation in them. We are now level on points with second place Dorking Wanderers B whose goal difference is three goals better than ours. It is not impossible to catch them and if we could do that it would be the first time we had finished in the top two since 1984. As it is, third place is our highest finish since 2014 and represents a decent campaign, but concerns remain about our consistency as we approach the real business end of the season. A good showing against Billingshurst on Saturday is important to keep building any momentum before we return to Fetcham Grove to close out our season over hopefully the next two weekends.

Epsom & Ewell: Tom Theobald, Gideon Acheampong, Johnny Akoto, Nick Wilson, Dylan Merchant, Alex Penfold, Jaevon Dyer, Rory Edwards, Jamie Byatt, Thompson Adeyemi, Lewis Pearch

Subs: Jaan Stanley for Adeyemi (65), Steve Springett for Penfold (77), Gavin Quinyne for Byatt (77), Kevin Moreno-Gomez for Dyer (86), George Owusu for Pearch (88)

Billingshurst 1-3 Epsom & Ewell Southern Combination League - Division One - Saturday 22nd April 2023

Cast your mind back to 1984. Lionel Richie was Number 1 with Hello, Margaret Thatcher was Prime Minister and our boys had just clinched promotion to the Isthmian League Premier Division with a late 2-1 win at Farnborough Town that secured second place as we waited in the clubhouse for our Secretary to get confirmation of other results on the one phone they had there.

How times have changed, but if you are under the age of 40, you'll just have to trust me on this one. It was the last time we had finished as high as second place in any division. I'll be honest, I wasn't expecting it as I thought Dorking Wanderers B would win at Mile Oak and we would fall just behind them on goal difference, but a late equaliser for the Oak enabled us to pinch the runners-up spot (and presumably individual medals for our boys?) against the odds.

We made four changes to our starting line up following our win at Chessington & Hook United some 42 hours earlier with Steve Springett coming in at the back for Dylan Merchant who was unavailable. Gavin Quinyne and George Owusu came in for Nick Wilson and Jaevon Dyer who dropped to the bench, while Athan Smith-Joseph who came back in up front ahead of Jamie Byatt. Or so we thought! As it turned out Johnny "Sonic" Akoto was injured in the warm up and so Byatt came back in with Lewis Pearch drawing the short straw and finding himself moving from up front to the right back position with Captain Gideon Acheampong moving over to the left.

But despite the rotations, we scored a goal in the opening ten minutes for the third match in a row. Smith-Joseph got away down the left and fired a cross in. The ball was palmed away by Ollie Courtney but fell kindly to George Owusu who guided his volley over everyone and into the far corner for a smart finish in just the fourth minute.

Unfortunately for the third week in a row we let that early lead slip as the hosts drew level just seven minutes later. Pearch tried to clear the ball under pressure in his unfamiliar position and the ball rebounded kindly for Sam Jobbins who had time to guide the ball beyond the reach of Tom Theobald into the far corner from just inside the penalty area.

We continued to make chances, particularly on the left, although the end product from Smith-Joseph was proving more of a threat to the trees behind the goal instead of the Billingshurst keeper. A Pearch chance deflected wide for a corner and then Owusu found Byatt but he was well marshalled and unable to get a powerful shot away.

We had one scare when a deep free kick was sent into our penalty area and no one took responsibility, leaving Robbie Tambling unmarked to volley the ball goalwards, but fortunately he was unable to keep the ball down and we went in at the half ahead on points, but not on the scoreboard.

We thought we had taken the lead early in the second half when Smith-Joseph's cute through ball found Owusu who netted from a narrow angle, but he was denied by the Assistant's flag. Then at the other end we had danger after Alex Penfold lost the ball, but pulled the striker down to take one for the team. It was an obvious yellow card with Acheampong covering so no further penalty would follow and the free kick was easily gathered by Theobald. Our keeper was active again as he had to dive to his left to keep a powerful shot out and another shot went just wide of our goal as we looked a little wobbly at this stage.

However, we made three substitutions in ten minutes and Dyer then restored our lead within seconds of joining the fray; cutting in from the left and striking a shot at goal which took a deflection off a defender's outstretched leg and looped somewhat harshly over Courtney into the net in the 73rd minute.

We then had another chance when Dyer's initial cross was blocked back out to Smith-Joseph whose ball in to the near post was blazed over the bar by Wilson as the ball bobbed on him just four yards out, but fortunately just a couple of minutes later in the 79th minute we gained some breathing space when Smith-Joseph tried his luck with a strike that Courtney had covered, only for the ball to hit him squarely in the hands and just drop apologetically over the line for our third goal!

The hosts were looking visibly tired by now after matches on Tuesday and Thursday and with Dorking Wanderers leading at this stage, I was aware that two more goals would give us second place even if they held on to win. As it happened though, we wouldn't need them as the Mile Oak result went our way. It was all good, although there were a couple of injury concerns as Springett picked up a broken nose and then in the final minutes Penfold went down having pulled his

groin, which threatens to put a premature end to his season. The injury gave Jack Porter a rare run out for the final moments, becoming to my knowledge the first person in club history to take the field with a number 21 shirt!

The result and the late drama elsewhere in our favour was reminiscent of that spring evening in 1984 and may well live as long in the memory. Back then of course, second place guaranteed us automatic promotion, while now we have to win two playoff matches to secure it, but unlike last season we go into these contests with as much momentum as anyone after compiling a run of five matches unbeaten with three straight wins. One of those was a 3-2 victory over Selsey who we now host just two weeks after they last visited and the hope is that we can repeat that victory this coming weekend. To paraphrase Lionel Richie, "is it promotion you're looking for?"

Epsom & Ewell: Tom Theobald, Gideon Acheampong, Lewis Pearch, Rory Edwards, Steve Springett, Alex Penfold, George Owusu, Gavin Quintyne, Jamie Byatt, Thompson Adeyemi, Athan Smith-Joseph

Subs: Jaan Stanley for Adeyemi (62), Nick Wilson for Edwards (72), Jaevon Dyer for Byatt (72), Jack Porter for Penfold (92)

<http://eefconline.co.uk/>

Vital points for local football team

7 May 2023



On Saturday **Epsom and Ewell FC** secured an extremely important three points against promotion rivals Selsey, defeating them by the same score line of 3-2 that we had in deepest Sussex back in March. As with that match, this encounter contained some twists and turns but ultimately went our way due to another late winner, this time from **Lewis Pearch**, whose first goal for our club may turn out to be one of the most important of the season.

Going into this contest, we already knew that two wins from our remaining three matches would guarantee us the second playoff spot, barring a very unlikely swing of goal difference, but we also knew that Selsey still had aspirations to qualify themselves, so this was always going to be a tight encounter. With current Manager Barry Gartell away, Matt Chapman again took charge and we made just one change to the starting eleven from Wednesday's draw against Mile Oak with Steve Springett coming in for the absent Kevin Moreno-Gomez. However, Springett was not played in his regular left back slot in this match, instead playing in the centre of defence with Gideon Acheampong reverting to right back and Johnny "Sonic" Akoto moving over to the left, maybe as a design to try to use his speed to keep visiting danger man Shane Brazil as quiet as possible, and the pair of them had a decent battle today.

We needed a good start and for the first time in weeks, we got one in the ninth minute. A superb interchange of passes between Jaan Stanley and Jaevon Dyer on the right resulted in a ball across the edge of the penalty area to Athan Smith-Joseph, who took a touch, headed back across to the right before suddenly drilling the ball back across Syd Davies into the Selsey net from 18 yards.

Unfortunately that would prove to be the extent of Smith-Joseph's involvement as he aggravated his hamstring a few minutes later and limped off, to be replaced on the left wing by Pearch. Hopefully he will not be out for very long as it was clear that our replacement didn't really carry the same threat in a position that admittedly isn't his primary one.

Another injury would also prove pivotal in the 28th minute as a couple of our players went up with Davies for a right wing cross and Stanley collided with the keeper, catching him around the knee. I'll be honest, it looked fairly innocuous at the time but despite treatment Davies would require another bit of work with the physio shortly after and was strapped up for the remainder of the half before being replaced at half time by Ryan Matlock.

At this point, I was hoping that our players would get a chance to test him out with a couple of shots, but the visitors were actually getting back into the match and kept the ball away from him for a while. Then things got worse for us as they equalised from a harmless looking free kick over on the Selsey left wing in the 40th minute as Corey Burns nipped ahead of Tom Theobald to reach the near post delivery and flick it past him from close range, although it would have been nice to have seen a defender somewhere near him!

However, before half time we were back in front. Jamie Byatt collected the ball around twenty yards out in the third minute of injury time and decided that he did indeed want to test their limping keeper out, striking a beauty from twenty yards that just sailed over the rather stationary Davies. It was a superb piece of opportunism and of all the 40, yes 40 goals Byatt has now scored for us in under two seasons, this was probably the one that was from the furthest distance!

We were arguably a little fortunate to be ahead at the half, but it was irrelevant soon after anyway as the visitors equalised in the 51st minute. We had already had a scare when Brazil's shot had gone wide of the goal, but from a corner shortly afterwards, Theobald tried to punch the ball clear, only to knock the ball straight onto the shoulder of Bradley Vaughan from where the ball rebounded into the net.

At 2-2 this match really could have gone either way. We wobbled for a few minutes and Theobald redeemed himself with a superb double save after a Selsey shot had rebounded back to a striker off the foot of his right hand post, blocking the

subsequent header and then a follow up shot which he turned wide for a corner.

With the clock on 68 minutes we brought on Thompson Adeyemi and Rory Edwards to give us fresh legs and Adeyemi set up Dyer who crumpled under a challenge from Matlock, even though there was no contact and was fortunate not to be booked for simulation, although Burns did pick up a card for Selsey around the same time for a handball.

As we started to enter the closing stages though, we began to get a little more possession and Springett sent a thirty yard free kick just wide of the post. With George Owusu already on for Dyer, Alex Penfold then came on for Nick Wilson with Springett moving over onto the left wing and releasing Pearch to a more central position alongside Byatt. This tactical move would prove pivotal in the 91st minute as a deep Penfold free kick was only headed half clear by Bradley Higgins-Pearce under pressure from Adeyemi and the ball fell to Pearch, standing just beyond the penalty spot and he guided his header over everyone and into the net for what proved to be the winner.

At the end there was a lot of celebration from our players, perhaps too much when considering that we still have much work to do to gain promotion. However, part of this probably came from the relief of winning a match that looked like it was turning against us and also guaranteed us a playoff spot, so it was understandable. Now we have to make sure that we get three more points to ensure that this home match wasn't our last ever at Fetcham Grove. We're not quite ready to leave just yet!

Epsom & Ewell: Tom Theobald, Gideon Acheampong, Johnny Akoto, Nick Wilson, Dylan Merchant, Steve Springett, Jaevon Dyer, Gavin Quintyne, Jamie Byatt, Jaan Stanley, Athan Smith-Joseph

Subs: Lewis Pearch for Smith-Joseph (17), Thompson Adeyemi for Stanley (68), Rory Edwards for Quintyne (68), George Owusu for Dyer (78), Alex Penfold for Wilson (85)

Surrey FA young mascot search is on

7 May 2023



Young Surrey residents will get the chance to walk out with the finalists of this year's Surrey Senior Cup final - thanks to Specsavers.

In partnership with Specsavers, who sponsor the competition, Surrey Football Association will offer the opportunity for children to be a part of this year's team of Surrey mascots. The lucky winners will walk out with both teams competing in the final of the Specsavers Surrey Senior Cup.

In addition, they will also receive a brand-new kit to wear on the day of the final and a free set of tickets for their adult or guardian to attend the game.

The final is scheduled to take place on Wednesday 3 May 2023 at Meadowbank Football Ground, home of Surrey FA and Dorking Wanderers Football Club.

Closing on Sunday 23 April, the online competition invites adult guardians to enter on behalf of a child aged four to twelve years. To be in with the chance of winning, the child needs to answer this very simple question:

"What is your most memorable moment either playing or supporting football?"

Specsavers stores across Surrey have been lead sponsors of the Senior Surrey Cup for over five years. Its network of local opticians and audiologists across the county share a common mission with Surrey FA, to better the health of those within their local communities.

Epsom and Leatherhead Retail Director **Mihaela Ovadiuc** comments: 'Grassroots sports plays such an important role to instil healthy, active living across all age groups. It's why all the Specsavers stores across the Surrey region have come together to invest in the Surrey FA. We want to ensure they can keep going for many years to come and keep that passion for football alive and kicking across the county.'

Parents and guardians representing their child can apply to enter the competition here:

<http://bit.ly/3nKR2LO>

Representatives of Surrey FA will directly contact winners. Terms and conditions apply.

All level after quick return

7 May 2023



Epsom & Ewell 1-1 Mile Oak. Southern Combination League - Division One. Wednesday 12th April 2023

For the first time since 2006 we played consecutive fixtures against the same team when Mile Oak visited Fetcham Grove on Wednesday evening for their return fixture, following a disappointing goalless draw back in March. It was only the eighth time in club history that we had played both League matches on a Wednesday against the same team, and stats like that will tell you that I have very little to write about this latest encounter, a 1-1 draw!

For those who are interested this was our 101st ever League match played on a Wednesday, but it won't live long in the memory as the visitors led through a harsh looking penalty only to equalise before the half, although only rarely did we really threaten to take the lead. On another day we might have pinched the points, but ultimately both teams had to settle for just the one.

This match nearly didn't take place, due to further torrential rain and it is to the club's credit that they delayed the match inspection in the hope that the pitch was able to deal with the water in time for kick off. It is amazing how many people don't seem to understand that the weather we are facing is the worst we have seen since the 2012/13 season and sometimes you have to take a chance to get the games played.

In terms of personnel, Nick Wilson came into the starting eleven ahead of Rory Edwards, while Kevin Moreno-Gomez returned for the absent Alex Penfold and Johnny "Sonic" Akoto came in and moved Gideon Acheampong over into central defence in place of the missing Chris Boulter. Up front Athan Smith-Joseph returned after a couple of games away while Lewis Pearch moved to the bench.

We nearly scored in the opening minutes of the match when Jaan Stanley's strike was blocked, before a quick episode of pinball took place in the Oak six yard area, but the danger was cleared. Jamie Byatt then sent an Akoto cross goalwards, but the offside flag was raised and it wouldn't have counted.

In the 17th minute the visitors scored with their first attack on goal. A low left wing cross was blocked by Akoto who was adjudged to have used his arm in the process. It looked harsh, but I was a long way from the action and Marriott tucked away the penalty a minute later. We nearly produced an immediate response when Smith-Joseph sent a ball in from the left where Byatt was there to knock the ball in from close range, only to see the offside flag raised in his direction once again.

Mile Oak headed a free kick wide before Smith-Joseph dragged a shot across goal and then on the half hour Byatt was brought down on the edge of the area but Wilson sent the free kick over the bar. We were getting closer though and in the 38th minute Smith-Joseph weaved his way along the edge of the penalty area before unleashing a powerful shot that was met by a top drawer save from Stenning who was then well-placed to deny Wilson as he headed Stanley's subsequent corner goalwards.

Fortunately though we didn't have to wait much longer for the equaliser which came in the 39th minute when Stanley produced a slide rule pass across goal from the left which was met by a close range shot under Stenning from Jaevon Dyer. The final threat of the half came from a harshly awarded free kick against us, but our defensive wall did its job and we went in at the break level.

We were a little better in the second half as the visitors appeared to lack a bit of ambition. Byatt saw his header from a Stanley free kick blocked before Smith-Joseph dragged a shot across goal from a good position. However, the game began to meander and very little of note happened until Byatt lost his defender who then pulled him down from behind to earn a yellow card. Wilson's free kick was then well saved by Stenning who also made a good save to keep out Akoto's angled drive a couple of minutes later.

We then made a rash of substitutions, but this seemed to kill the momentum we had been building and although one of these, Lewis Pearch nearly earned us a penalty when he appeared to be brought down, the spot kick wasn't given and his lack of real protest told me that it had been the right decision. A couple of yellow cards for Wilson and Steve Springett followed in injury time before the match ended with the anti-climax of a 1-1 draw.

The draw is not a disastrous result and we know that two wins from our three remaining matches at home to Selsey and away at Chessington & Hook United and at Billingshurst will be enough to secure a home run in the playoffs, but we will have to play a lot better than this if we are to actually come out of those playoffs with any glory.

Oddly enough though, for all the importance of the result there was a bigger story quietly advised in the match programme which was that Leatherhead have terminated their ground share agreement with us after applying a break clause. Why we would have agreed to a clause that could leave us vulnerable to such a short notice termination is beyond me, but it would appear that we will be looking for a new ground to play at in 2023/24. This is especially problematic as any move back eastwards could end with us being moved into the Southern Counties East League if we failed to gain promotion, which I do not imagine we'd want to do. It is hoped that the club will announce something on this urgently.

Epsom & Ewell: Tom Theobald, Gideon Acheampong, Kevin Moreno-Gomez, Nick Wilson, Dylan Merchant, Johnny Akoto, Jaevon Dyer, Gavin Quintyne, Jamie Byatt, Jaan Stanley, Athan Smith-Joseph

Subs: Thompson Adeyemi for Stanley (72), Lewis Pearch for Byatt (77), Hamoud Salum for Dyer (77), Steve Springett for Moreno-Gomez (85), Theo Lukyamuzi for Smith-Joseph (90)

Goalless draw a relief from 4 goal defeats for both sides.

7 May 2023



Mile Oak 0-0 Epsom & Ewell. Southern Combination League – Division One. Wednesday 29th March.

On Wednesday evening two teams came together, both low on confidence and nursing 5-1 defeats from the previous Saturday, and they battled each other to a standstill with a competitive, but goalless draw.

I asked in my Arundel report just exactly who is in charge and we got our answer a couple of hours before the match as it was advised that our newly appointed Director of Football Anthony Jupp had left the club. In addition, Assistant Manager Matt Chapman was no longer in charge, but was still in the dugout while Vice-Chairman Barry Gartell took over again as Manager. Some may recall him having a successful stint following the dismissal of Sam Morgan in August of 2021, although these were different circumstances, as last time we were sitting near the foot of the table. The club finally advised that it was “still looking for a new long-term Manager” which tells me that they are not looking to advertise the position, or you would think they’d have said so!

On a heavy pitch we finally managed to get the match underway at the fourth time of asking, following three previous postponements, and as usual we had changes to our line up. Gartell decided that the midfield needed changing up, so club Captain Ryan Smith and Nick Wilson started on the bench, having been replaced by Rory Edwards who made his first start for the club, while Jaan Stanley came back in on the left wing in what appeared to be a slightly different formation with Athan Smith-Joseph still absent. At the back Chris Boulter and Alex Penfold came back into the line up in place of the absent Kevin Moreno-Gomez and Oliver Thompson, both of whom had failed to complete the match at Arundel.

We started brightly enough and had the majority of the possession in the first half. An early Penfold cross was met by a Jamie Byatt header, but it was a tough chance and he was unable to get the ball on target. The ball stayed mainly in the Mile Oak half as the predicted heavy rain began to come down, sheeting across the ground and the home side then had a couple of chances, firstly when a free kick was headed over from close range, but then in the 25th minute when a right wing cross was met by the head of Zak Kladis who directed his header back across goal. Tom Theobald made a great diving save to divert the ball on to the post and then as it bounced back towards him, he clawed the ball away before it crossed the line. It was a fantastic save and one that ultimately would earn us a point.

Gavin Quintyne saw his shot deflected wide for a corner and Jaevon Dyer produced a low shot that was well saved by the foot of Aaron Stenning in the Oak goal before he had to be alert to parry a Stanley free kick to safety. Stenning also had a slice of luck as the pitch bobbed on him and he produced an air shot, just getting back in time to save a corner. As the half ended Quintyne was only just over the bar from twenty yards, so you could argue that it was a fairly respectable first half from an Epsom perspective as the teams went for their half time break.

Regrettably the second half was nowhere near as interesting from an Epsom point of view. Mile Oak had a header at goal in the early stages which was deflected over and Theobald then had to make a low save on the hour mark. He had a lucky escape in the 66th minute when he came out to clear a ball near the edge of the penalty area but missed it. Fortunately we had defensive cover.

For our part, we seemed to be restricted to sending long balls up to Byatt, who tried his best with the limited service he had. In the 68th minute a nice one-two with Lewis Pearch gave him a shooting opportunity, but he dragged his shot beyond the far post from twelve yards and our best chance of the night had gone.

As so often happens with tight encounters, a little bit of niggles started to enter the contest and after Kladis had been fouled, he then clattered into Gideon Acheampong who reacted; both players earning yellow cards for their trouble, following the obligatory player scuffle. However, the game was beginning to deteriorate by this stage and our threats were becoming less and less. Dyer and Stanley became non-factors on the wings, although Dyer nearly pulled a moment of magic out in the 86th minute with a good run and powerful strike that missed the far post by inches.

In truth though we were beginning to lose the game in midfield as the home side kept pushing us back and it did seem odd that on such a heavy surface we waited until the 88th minute before making a substitution. We appeared to be crying out for fresh legs in the middle of the park, yet with two players that could do just that job on the bench, Wilson would only get on in the fifth minute of injury time, while Smith wouldn’t take the field at all. We did nearly pinch a winner when a long throw bounced up, but I don’t think Byatt expected the ball to reach him and he only managed to get the faintest of glances to the ball literally two yards out, which Stenning still caught anyway.

In reality the longer this game went on, the more it looked like Mile Oak would pinch the win, but ultimately neither team really did enough to deserve all three points and we had to settle for the goalless draw.



These dropped points mean that the opportunity to finish in second place is now no longer exclusively in our hands, with both Wick and Godalming Town now three points behind us and holding a game in hand. Godalming also now have a better goal difference than us and are clearly in a better run of form, although they have a tough finishing schedule so there is still hope if we can win our final four fixtures. Who do we face this Saturday? It's Mile Oak again!!

Epsom & Ewell: Tom Theobald, Gideon Acheampong, Alex Penfold, Rory Edwards, Chris Boulter, Dylan Merchant, Jaevon Dyer, Gavin Quintyne, Jamie Byatt, Lewis Pearch, Jaan Stanley

Subs: Musa Beegun for Pearch (88), George Owusu for Stanley (91), Nick Wilson for Edwards (95)

Salts give Mullets taste for big victory

7 May 2023

Team	P	W	D	L	F	A	Diff	Pts
Shoreham	27	18	7	2	71	24	47	61
Dorking Wanderers B	29	17	5	7	53	28	25	56
Epsom & Ewell	27	17	3	7	59	36	23	54
Godalming Town	27	15	7	5	57	29	28	52

Arundel FC 5-1 Epsom & Ewell FC. Saturday 25th March.

Arundel, nicknamed the Mullets, secured their first ever competitive victory over us in comprehensive circumstances at Mill Road on Saturday afternoon with a 5-1 drubbing, and make no mistake, we could have no real complaints here.

Top of Southern Combination League Division One

We made some changes once again from our narrow but comfortable win over Montpelier Villa two weeks previously. Jaan Stanley and Athan Smith-Joseph were not available and originally Jaevon Dyer was listed as a substitute, due to a breakdown on route to the picturesque ground. Fortunately he arrived in time and was then added to the team sheet at the expense of Steve Springett who dropped to the bench. Alex Penfold also joined him there, while Lewis Pearch came in for his first start and we had another new centre back pairing of Dylan Merchant and Oliver Thompson with Kevin Moreno-Gomez also returning to the starting eleven alongside them.

On a blustery day we made an awful start and went behind in the eleventh minute as a harmless enough attack on the left suddenly turned dangerous with a ball across goal that was turned into the net by Carl Brown. Six minutes later Tom Theobald made a decent punch clear of a looping header and appeared to be fouled in the process, yet a corner was awarded and in the 18th minute the inswinging delivery caught Theobald out in the swirling wind and he dropped the ball over the line for Arundel's second goal.

We had created little to this point although Jamie Byatt fashioned a half chance a couple of minutes after the goal, only to see his shot blocked by a defender. Dyer then made decent progress down the right flank but his pull back was behind both Byatt and Pearch.

Regrettably we then went three nil down in the 33rd minute as a clever pass floated over the top of Moreno-Gomez where Brown was waiting to drill the ball into the net from an angle and it nearly got worse six minutes later when James Crane then hit the bar as we were carved open again. The half ended with the home side having another good chance from a corner but the unmarked Harry Russell headed over the bar.

This was a horrible first half to watch and whilst you always feel that a good start to the second half could spark some sort of comeback, it really looked as though the only win we were likely to celebrate at Arundel was when long-serving supporter John Bonner won a crate of lager in the club raffle!

The other item of note at the half time break was the sight of our entire Management team standing outside the dressing room as the players clearly had some sort of discussion without them. Whatever was said, it seemed to work for a while. We made two substitutions with Rory Edwards and Springett coming on for the limping Smith and Moreno-Gomez respectively and nearly scored straight away as a Springett corner was flicked just over the bar by Nick Wilson. Next up with a decent chance was Gavin Quintyne who tried his luck with his weaker foot and sliced the opportunity wide. However, he made amends in the 50th minute when he weaved his way across the edge of the penalty area before threading a pass through to Byatt, who guided the ball back across Oliver Howley in the Arundel goal from twelve yards which then crept in off the far post to get us back in the game.

Another Springett corner caused trouble as Merchant headed the delivery towards Thompson, whose header was just over the bar, but our only period of superiority in the match was about to end. Thompson limped off with an injured knee and whilst it was good to see Johnny "Sonic" Akoto returning after a few weeks out, his introduction required a defensive reshuffle. Whether this had a bearing on the next Arundel goal in the 63rd minute is hard to say, but a harmless ball in from the right was struck at goal by an unmarked player, and whilst Theobald made a good save from the first shot, Will Breden was also in acres of space and he drove the loose ball home from a few yards out with our defence absolutely nowhere in sight.

In the 72nd minute it got worse still as a low ball in from the right was tapped in at the far post for a fifth goal by Breden once again, and we were lucky not to concede more with Wilson being our latest sin-bin visitor around this time, while Byatt and Quintyne both picked up yellow cards for fouls to go with the first half issue to Smith. Our afternoon was then summed up when Dyer put substitute George Owusu through on goal ten minutes from time, only for him to tread on the ball in the act of shooting!

Now that ten man Shoreham's victory over East Preston has virtually guaranteed them the title, it is imperative we cling on to second place to guarantee the home playoff matches. The players kept trying in this contest, even at the end and I'm aware that some more new signings are likely as we approach the transfer deadline on 31st March, but if we don't get back to winning ways on Wednesday at Mile Oak, we could slip out of that position. We cannot make any more mistakes now.

This is not just about us though. We didn't play well but full credit should also go to Arundel who played with a lot of energy and just appeared to cover a lot more ground per player than we did and will no doubt chase Selsey all the way for that final playoff spot, in which case we may well see them again before the end of the season. However, this is a massive reality check for us. Are we actually good enough to go up? We'll probably find out the answer to that question on Wednesday as we face a Mile Oak team that have also lost 5-1 this weekend.

Epsom & Ewell: Tom Theobald, Gideon Acheampong, Kevin Moreno-Gomez, Ryan Smith (c), Oliver Thompson, Dylan Merchant, Jaevon Dyer, Nick Wilson, Jamie Byatt, Gavin Quintyne, Lewis Pearch

Subs: Steve Springett for Moreno-Gomez, (HT), Rory Edwards for Smith (HT), Johnny Akoto for Thompson (58), George Owusu for Byatt (76)

Report Source: www.eefconline.co.uk

Epsom and Ewell FC form rising

7 May 2023

Pos	Team	P	W	D	L	F	A	Diff	Pts
1	 Shoreham	25	17	7	1	69	22	47	58
2	 Epsom & Ewell	26	17	3	6	58	31	27	54
3	 Dorking Wanderers B	27	16	4	7	51	27	24	52
4	 Wick	26	16	3	7	52	36	16	51

Epsom & Ewell FC 2-1 Montpellier Villa. Southern Combination League - Division One. Saturday 11th March 2023

Some days they go in and some days they don't! Saturday's meeting with Montpellier Villa definitely fits into the latter category as we dominated proceedings throughout almost all of the match, creating a number of chances. However, only two of those were converted and it led to a bit of a nervy ending before we were able to properly celebrate clinching all three points.

With no information released by the club since Anthony Jupp resigned as Manager, but was then appointed Director of Football, it is still unclear whether Matt Chapman has the job now, or whether the club still intend to advertise for a replacement, or maybe have someone in mind. Either way, Chapman was in charge again for this match and despite the occasional flat period, we were good value for this win. Tom Theobald returned in goal, while Steve Springett came in at left back making his 50th appearance in place of the absent Kevin Moreno-Gomez. In fact we had three new defenders this week as Chris Boulter and Ollie Thompson were not available either, so Alex Penfold and Nick Wilson came in at the back and both looked solid there, even if Wilson would be somewhat harshly penalised later when being adjudged guilty of a foul in the penalty area.

Up front we were almost the same as for the Godalming match with one notable exception; Jamie Byatt coming into the starting eleven for the absent Mario Quiassaca and although Quiassaca had played fairly well on Tuesday, we just do not possess another goal scorer like the ageless Byatt. It is no surprise that he was part of the reason why we were able to cause so many threats in this match as everyone knows where he will be!

The match started off in a rather odd fashion when Penfold picked up the ball, explaining to the referee that he thought it was damaged! Luckily the referee saw common sense and the game restarted once the ball had been checked!

We pushed the visitors back in the early stages and the concern on the visitors bench was clear with many instructions being given out. Athan Smith-Joseph worked a clever one-two with Byatt, but his final delivery was beyond his incoming teammates. This was followed up by a good run from the right by Jaevon Dyer who set up Jaan Stanley for a low strike that was fairly comfortably saved.

However, we took the lead in the 18th minute in rather "Sunday League" circumstances as a long ball from (I think) Theobald straight up the middle was chased by Smith-Joseph who just got a toe to the ball ahead of the advancing Toby Gardner in the Villa goal, diverting it into the path of Byatt who finished off into the open net from inside the six yard box. The Villa Management tried to gee their young team up, but seven minutes later we doubled our lead and this came from the wing play of Dyer who beat his man and cut in before laying the ball back to Stanley, who flicked the ball on for Smith-Joseph to tap in from a yard.

A tactical substitution followed for the visitors in an attempt to stop the damage and in the 29th minute they were back in the game, admittedly against the run of play when Wilson was adjudged to have brought down a striker. Mayckoi Sabino tucked away the penalty, giving Theobald no chance and it was 2-1. If someone had told me at that point that we'd already seen all the goals for the day I'd have been extremely surprised, but that is how it turned out.

It wasn't for the want of trying though. Stanley saw his shot from Byatt's pull back well saved by Gardner and then in injury time Dyer's ball in was inches away from a full stretch Byatt.

The second half also started with a strange incident as Sabino was grappling with Gideon Acheampong for the ball. It was a physical battle and our man ended up on the deck with a free kick awarded in our favour, but for some reason the yellow

card was waved at Sabino, when I really couldn't see any reason for it.

In the 56th minute after some more pressure Dyer just got his toe to the ball ahead of a challenge which then took him out in the penalty area, but he then blotted his copybook by sending the penalty Harry Kane style, just over the bar to the keeper's right! Byatt then headed over from eight yards before a much better downward header forced Gardner into a smart near post save with his legs.

After 68 minutes he gave way to new signing Lewis Pearch and the new man had a good opportunity in the 74th minute when a clever pass put him through, only for his shot to hit Gardner's right hand post with Ryan Smith striking the loose ball into the side netting from a wider angle.

Despite the chances being missed, we were still well in control and just needed to see the game out sensibly, which made it all the more frustrating when Gavin Quintyne spoiled his good performance with a comment to the referee that earned him his second visit to the sin bin in five matches. This was worrying because we absolutely couldn't afford to drop any points in this fixture, particularly after being so much in the ascendancy. Luckily we were still well in control through this period and Stanley was really unlucky to see his piledriver from over thirty yards just dip over the bar, clipping the top of the netting.

We added George Owusu and Owen Higgins also came on after some time out, although Higgins was guilty of a clumsy foul just outside the penalty area in the 92nd minute, which was a concern until Sabino sent it flying over our crossbar. Stanley, by now playing at left back after an injury to Springett had forced him off, and our final sub Theo Lukyamuzi both picked up yellow cards for time wasting and you wondered whether these would have happened had we scored a third goal earlier in the match. Lukyamuzi forced a final decent save out of Gardner in the 98th minute and finally after eight extra minutes we were all able to breathe a collective sigh of relief. Everyone in the ground knew we had been the better team and we were more than worthy of the win, but it was one of those matches where you just couldn't quite relax until it was all over!

Six matches, or more likely eight matches remain as we continue to aim for promotion and with Shoreham remaining four points ahead and holding a game in hand with a far superior goal difference, we have to be sensible here and accept that second place is a more realistic target. Still, we kept on course for that spot and on another day we might have substantially boosted our goal difference. Maybe next time!

Epsom & Ewell: Tom Theobald, Gideon Acheampong, Steve Springett, Ryan Smith (c), Alex Penfold, Nick Wilson, Jaevon Dyer, Gavin Quintyne, Jamie Byatt, Jaan Stanley, Athan Smith-Joseph

Subs: Lewis Pearch for Byatt (68), George Owusu for Dyer (86), Owen Higgins for Springett (91) Theo Lukyamuzi for Smith-Joseph (93)

Epsom draw from the jaws of defeat

7 May 2023

Epsom & Ewell 2-2 Godalming Town. Southern Combination League - Division One. Tuesday 7th March 2023.

On Tuesday evening Epsom and Ewell and Godalming Town played out their first ever draw as we fought back from two goals down to force a share of the points on a chilly evening at Fetcham Grove.

We made three changes from the dramatic win at Selsey three days earlier with Toby McKimm getting a second game for us after his first was curtailed wrongly and prematurely at Hailsham Town, whilst Chris Boulter and Mario Quiassaca returned to the starting eleven at the expense of Nick Wilson and George Owusu who were on the bench but would both get involved later.

The first few minutes were in our favour, but in the seventh minute Jaevon Dyer gave away a needless free kick out wide. The original ball in was half cleared but was fed back in and Ollie McAleese was there to head the ball into the net from close range. We nearly equalised in the 15th minute when Athan Smith-Joseph's ball across goal took a deflection and almost bounced along the goal line, inches out of reach of the incoming Dyer.

There weren't many chances in this half really though, and the only other real items to note were a rather strange booking for Smith-Joseph, who appeared to be blocked by a defender, and then in the 35th minute when Ross Cheek was sent to the sin bin. We pushed a little more after that, but a Quiassaca ball across goal was behind Dyer and this summed up the first half really. As the teams went off at the half there was no disguising the fact that this was a fairly flat performance to this point, but a match that could still be won if we could improve. However, in the 58th minute a ball over the top of our defence was collected by Tom White who just got to the ball ahead of McKimm and lifted it over him and just below the bar despite attempts to clear by our defenders.

At 2-0 down we hadn't actually had a shot on target and I couldn't see a way back into the match. However, fairly fresh in the memory was the loss of a two goal lead at Selsey and our players clearly felt that if we could lose one there, we were just as capable of rescuing one too. However, a large amount of credit goes to our Assistant Manager Matt Chapman for making a triple substitution on the hour and changing the shape of the team. From this point we presented a much greater threat.

The next turning point in the match came in the 71st minute when we earned a corner which was met by a great header from Boulter which needed a good punch from Ryan O'Sullivan in the Godalming goal. However, the ball was recycled and fell to Boulter once again, standing on the eighteen yard line and he unleashed a fantastic volley into the top corner of the goal. Trust me, you won't see a better one in the Premier League this weekend, and what a way to score your first goal for

the club!

At 1-2 down we had a sniff, particularly with Jamie Byatt now on the pitch and true to form he would have his say. Just before our equaliser though, Quiassaca had a shot blocked at close range after good work from Dyer, but in the 81st minute we saw some silky skills from Gavin Quintyne who took the ball out of defence and then sent the ball over the top of the Godalming back four for Quiassaca to chase. For some reason O'Sullivan had felt the need to come out to try and reach the ball first, but was nowhere near it and Quiassaca simply squared the ball for Byatt to finish into the vacant net from ten yards.

In the final seconds of the match we also saw a yellow card pointed in the direction of the Godalming bench and a final chance created by Wilson who set up Quiassaca, only for the ball to get caught up between his feet before being cleared. Still it was an entertaining final third of the match and a vastly more entertaining spectacle after the break than it had been before. Disappointingly though, only 64 were present to witness this match between two of the league's top five, although our club advertised the attendance as 91!! It is not clear why they feel the need to invent supporters and this constant fictional work embarrasses them as they are tampering with club history. Maybe they should treat the supporters they have a little better and they might actually pass the word! It's also about time they made a decision on the Manager, seeing as it's nearly a week since they announced that news would follow "soon". For what it's worth, Chapman and his team did their cause no harm in this match, should they be looking for the role.

I wrote a couple of weeks ago that if we could take seven points from this difficult three match stretch, we would be in pole position for the second place spot and that's exactly what we got! Whilst this draw does provide leaders Shoreham with some more breathing space at the top, we do look the most likely right now to claim that runners-up position with no clubs left to play in the top five now, assuming we can keep the standard up when we play the lower sides in the table.

Epsom & Ewell: Toby McKimm, Gideon Acheampong, Kevin Moreno-Gomez, Ryan Smith (c), Ollie Thompson, Chris Boulter, Jaevon Dyer, Gavin Quintyne, Mario Quiassaca, Jaan Stanley, Athan Smith-Joseph

Subs: Nick Wilson for Smith (62), Steve Springett for Thompson (62), Jamie Byatt for Stanley (62)

Late winner points Epsom's way.

7 May 2023



Selsey 2-3 Epsom & Ewell FC. Southern Combination League - Division One. Saturday 4th March.

Ultimately Saturday's League match at Selsey was decided by, and will be remembered for a 90th minute goal that should not have stood, but over the ninety minutes I felt we had done enough to secure the points and we were in fact cruising to a comfortable victory at one point. However, two goals in quick succession from the home side made reinvigorated the match as a contest and set up an entertaining finish, with the points going back up the A24 to Epsom.

I was told before the match that we had ten players out, although only two changes were made from the eleven who started our victory over Dorking Wanderers on Tuesday evening as Chris Boulter and Mario Quiassaca were missing, and they were replaced by George Owusu and Ryan Smith with Nick Wilson showing further versatility this week and playing alongside Ollie Thompson in the back four. We did look a little weaker on the bench though, with five named, although one was our other keeper Toby McKimm, and another was Jamie Byatt who wouldn't be participating due to injury.

With our Assistant Manager Matt Chapman taking charge of the side following the departure of Anthony Jupp, we made a bright start to proceedings, although the first real chance did fall to the home side when a corner was headed just over Tom Theobald's crossbar on the quarter hour mark. Following this, we went straight up the other end where Jaan Stanley delivered a peach of a cross from the left and Owusu met it with a side footed volley that crashed off the underside of the bar and out again.

Selsey had the ball in the net in the 17th minute, but the flag was up for offside and they had another shot on goal which was blocked by one of our defenders before Ollie Thompson picked up a yellow card that was more clumsy than malicious. From this point though we began to take control and Gideon Acheampong made a good run on the right to earn us a corner. From that Smith corner on the half hour Wilson flicked it on and Thompson met it four yards out with a bullet header that gave Syd Davies in the Selsey goal no chance whatsoever.

Owusu, Jaevon Dyer and Athan Smith-Joseph were asking a lot of questions with their direct running on a playing surface that was very much to their liking while Stanley buzzed around to good effect, just a day after his 21st birthday. Dyer was next to show with a run and strike that Davies parried to safety and we went in at the half with a deserved lead.

We started the second half well. Kevin Moreno-Gomez made tracks down the left before laying the ball back to Smith-Joseph whose curling shot was just tipped over the bar by Davies, although the corner was cleared. However, he wouldn't be denied on his fiftieth appearance for our club and after a spell of good pressure, the ball was fed across to Smith-Joseph again and he beat a man before casually clipping the ball just inside the far post from a step or two inside the penalty area in the 52nd minute. He was at it again a few minutes later with a delicious diagonal pass to Owusu who had beaten the offside trap, but with just Davies to beat, he took a really heavy touch and the ball ran through to their keeper.



Next to cause trouble was Stanley who blocked a Davies clearance, but the ball rather luckily rebounded to a defender and was cleared.

In the 66th minute Theo Lukyamuzi joined from the bench for his debut, coming from Peterborough and the 49th player to play for us this season showed some good touches and pace in his spell on the left wing in relief of Owusu.

Moments later though we had our first scare for a while when a slide rule pass set Cian Griffin-Tilley through on goal, although Theobald stood up well and blocked his shot from close range. It was a great save but it clearly provided the home side with a spark as they began to up their work rate and force us back. Shane Brazil on the right wing was starting to give us a few issues with his clever wing play, and in the 77th minute Selsey had a goal back with a deep left wing cross that was met with a strike from James Henton from fairly close range. This was disappointing as we had looked like we'd be good for another clean sheet, but before we'd got our breath back a loose defensive header went straight into the path of Griffin-Tilley and he sent the ball under the advancing Theobald to level the scores up just two minutes later.

At this stage the home side had the momentum and Theobald had to make another save from Brazil's low shot before the controversial ending, which came in the 90th minute.

With the clock ticking down Davies in the Selsey goal had the ball at his feet and for some reason appeared to want to waste time and hang on for the draw which I thought was a bit odd after all they had done to get back in the game. However, Dyer was in to nick the ball away from him, although the ball then went out of play by about a foot before Dyer quickly knocked it back across the goal line. Davies appeared to look over for the Assistant at about the same time I did, only to see him around forty yards up the field, clearly anticipating that Davies had been going to pick the ball up and kick it downfield. He was in no position to see whether the ball had crossed the line and in that instant Dyer had turned to face goal and sent the ball towards the empty net from twenty yards. It wasn't totally clear if the ball was actually going in, but Thomas Blamire had no idea if there was someone behind him and he tried to block the shot, although he only succeeded in diverting the ball straight into the empty net.

The goal itself was hugely controversial though, as it should not have stood in the first place and with no time left for Selsey to recover the final whistle went soon after. We had taken all three points; a little fortuitously in the end due to the actual circumstances of the winning goal, but I felt we were the better side for much of the match and totally deserved our result against a team that had defeated leaders Shoreham in midweek. We now sit five points behind the leaders as a result of this win and have another difficult match against in-form Godalming Town on Tuesday, although it is worth noting that this will be our last match of the season against a current top five club. Shoreham's run-in is significantly more challenging with trips to Godalming, Dorking Wanderers B and a visit to Selsey. Maybe the title race isn't over just yet.

Epsom & Ewell: Tom Theobald, Gideon Acheampong, Kevin Moreno-Gomez, Ryan Smith (c), Ollie Thompson, Nick Wilson, Jaevon Dyer, Gavin Quintyne, George Owusu, Jaan Stanley, Athan Smith-Joseph

Subs: Theo Lukyamuzi for Owusu (67), Kofi Quartey for Smith-Joseph (92)

Epsom and Ewell FC wandering to top table?

7 May 2023

Team	P	W	D	L	F	A	Diff	Pts
Shoreham	24	16	7	1	63	21	42	55
Epsom & Ewell	23	15	2	6	51	26	25	47
Dorking Wanderers B	25	14	4	7	44	26	18	46
Wick	24	14	3	7	49	36	13	45

Epsom & Ewell FC 1-0 Dorking Wanderers B. Southern Combination League - Division One. Tuesday 28th February.

As a supporter, it is sometimes easy to forget after an awful performance that the players are hurting too and on Tuesday evening they were able to consign that East Preston defeat to history with a fine 1-0 win over a Dorking Wanderers B team that we had failed to defeat since November 2018, courtesy of a Jaevon Dyer penalty that he earned himself midway through the first half.

And without doubt, despite much improved performances across the board, Dyer was the star turn in this contest, threatening on the attack and even putting in a good defensive shift when he was without the ball.

Dorking Wanderers B came into this match on the back of claiming thirteen points out of the fifteen available since the Christmas fixtures; a run that started at our expense at the start of January. However, this result enabled our boys to leapfrog them into second place and we were given an added bonus when unbeaten leaders Shoreham slipped up at home to Selsey the same evening, ensuring that they are not yet completely out of sight in the race for the title.

There were a number of changes from Saturday's defeat. Captain Ryan Smith was absent, while Kevin Moreno-Gomez and Oliver Thompson came back into the defence at the expense of Alex Penfold and Dylan Merchant-Simmonds who were on the bench. Dyer came back into the starting line up alongside Mario Quiassaca and the surprising re-appearance of Jaan Stanley, as the club had announced this week that he had been recalled by Raynes Park Vale! With these two on the field we appeared much more of a threat and started the game brightly.

Stanley's left wing cross was clawed away from danger by Jacob Teddy the visiting keeper as early as the third minute and although chances were limited in this period, the balance of play was well in our favour and it looked like if any team were going to score, it would be us. And so it proved when Athan Smith-Joseph made tracks on the left and his low ball in deflected upwards. As a defender went to clear the ball, Dyer got in front of him and was promptly brought down in the

penalty area, picking himself up to score a confident penalty in the 26th minute; his first spot kick for the club and his first goal since finding the net against Billingshurst in October.

Dorking's only real opportunity of the first half came with a low shot that was deflected just wide of our post but the corner was cleared and we went in at the break without any more concerns.

We clearly weren't prepared to settle on that single goal lead as we came out for the second half and took the match to our opponents in search of that second goal. Smith-Joseph sent a low shot in after good work from Dyer but Teddy made an easy save and Dyer turned provider for Quiassaca a few minutes later, although again Teddy wasn't really tested when the shot came in.

We then fashioned a pair of really good chances and Smith-Joseph will be wondering how he didn't take one of them if not both. In the 61st minute Dyer made another great run on the right wing and his low ball across goal found our striker just six yards out, but his shot struck the post and went out for a goal kick. Then four minutes later Dyer again stretched the full back before laying the ball back to Gideon Acheampong to deliver to the far post where Smith-Joseph somehow sent his header wide from six yards!

This was a shame as we certainly deserved a second goal and the absence of one ensured that the final ten minutes would be a little more nervy than they needed to be, although we had one more good chance in that closing period when a clever flick from Quiassaca set Stanley through and he set up Dyer whose shot was well blocked.

Ultimately, Dorking Wanderers failed to carry a real threat on goal in the absence of their main striker Ben Aubrey and so our first half goal would prove sufficient to claim the points and gain a measure of revenge for our late loss there by the same score in January.

It seems odd to be talking about the Shoreham defeat on the same evening, when they remain eight points ahead of us with a far superior goal difference, even though we do hold a game in hand, as we have some very difficult matches ahead of us, not least Selsey on Saturday who will be flying after handing the leaders their first defeat of the season and where around 200 largely partisan supporters will be present to ensure their good form continues. However, we just need to focus on our own form and we'll see where that takes us. In the meantime, credit is due to our players for finally defeating a team that have given us a lot of trouble in recent seasons.

Epsom & Ewell: Tom Theobald, Gideon Acheampong (c), Kevin Moreno-Gomez, Nick Wilson, Chris Boulter, Ollie Thompson, Jaevon Dyer, Gavin Quintyne, Mario Quiassaca, Jaan Stanley, Athan Smith-Joseph

Subs: Rory Edwards for Dyer (86), George Owusu for Quiassaca (92)

Epsom and Ewell pressed on.

7 May 2023



Epsom & Ewell 1-2 East Preston. Southern Combination League - Division One. Saturday 25th February.

Whatever happened to Fortress Fetcham Grove? Last season we won eleven in a row and this term we opened up with five straight wins. Yet nowadays, we are lucky if we can win any at all. Our win against ten man Arundel was the only one we have won since late October and our latest loss on Saturday against East Preston regrettably was almost identical to our last Saturday home match against Oakwood where our play was slow, lacking urgency and was completely toothless up front, allowing the opposition to believe they might have a chance, which they then took.

In terms of personnel there were further changes from the midweek win over Arundel and most notable was the absence of our prolific striker Jamie Byatt, who had of course scored the winner on Wednesday. Dylan Merchant-Simmonds came in for his first start and paired up with Chris Boulter at the back with Ollie Thompson moving to the bench, while Nick Wilson returned to the starting eleven after missing the Arundel match in place of the absent Thompson Adeyemi. George Owusu came in for his first start in place of the battered and bruised Jaevon Dyer who was placed on the bench in the hope that he would be able to have ninety minutes off before Tuesday's match against Dorking Wanderers, but he would also be forced into action as we chased the game in the later stages.

Finally, Tyreke Leslie came in, although due to the absence of Byatt he was placed in a more central position to that where we would previously seen him play and it didn't appear to suit him. It is strange that we have tried a number of players in that role from Josh Owen, Jubril Adamson, Josh Alder, Byatt, Dyer and most recently Jaan Stanley who was absent for this match, yet the guy who played there successfully in pre-season still hasn't been given a run at centre-forward in competitive action and so Athan Smith-Joseph instead lined up once again on the wing instead, although he was on the right for this match to accommodate Owusu on the left and this rendered him less effective than usual too.

The encounter settled into a fairly clear pattern as we held the ball most of the time, while the opposition relied on occasional counter attacks. Our first chance fell to Owusu in the tenth minute, but he hooked the ball over the bar from fairly close range and also struggled to stay onside in the first half. Leslie was on the end of a flick on, but his shot was deflected wide, according to the referee at least, as clearly the entire East Preston defence didn't agree, and regrettably



the erratic officiating in this match would be another factor in this frustrating encounter.

We had forced a couple of corners and looked generally in control in these early stages, although a miscommunication between Alex Penfold and Merchant-Simmonds allowed Jack Collins to get through on goal. Fortunately, some good recovery defending ensured that their player was unable to get a shot away, however, this appeared to give the visitors some belief and they fizzed another ball across our six yard box before taking the lead in embarrassing circumstances in the 25th minute. I hope Gary Jarman got this one on his video as the players should watch it back again and again. Quite simply, a long throw was flicked on to the far post where Matthew Wilson was standing completely alone and seemed to have ages to guide his header past the helpless Tom Theobald from about six yards. It was the sort of goal you see conceded in the park on a Sunday morning and was horrible to witness from a club at our level.

We responded well and were back on level terms within three minutes as a Ryan Smith corner was blocked almost on the line and Owusu was there to tuck away the loose ball from a few yards out. In first half injury time both teams had an opportunity, first when Collins fed the ball through to Morgan Day, but his hooked volley went straight at Theobald, then at the other end Smith-Joseph produced one of his trademark mazy runs before unleashing a shot that was well tipped over by Maciek Kason, although Smith's corner then went straight out of play, which sort of summed up the first half.

Unfortunately the second half was an equally disjointed and dispiriting affair if you were an Epsom supporter. We had hardly been playing six minutes when we had a shout for a foul that wasn't given, but Gavin Quintyne felt the need to say something to the referee and ended up in the sin-bin as a result. His absence didn't materially affect the pattern of play and the scores were still level when he re-joined the contest, but it was ten minutes wasted as we created little in that period. Just after the hour Leslie was withdrawn and replaced by the returning Kofi Quartey and the visitors had another opportunity when a half cleared free kick was blazed over from the edge of the penalty area. A couple of bookings followed, firstly for Ryan Harvey and then extremely harshly for Wilson, who didn't even commit a foul as far as I was concerned.

We sent in another corner where a Boulter header was blocked not far short of the goal line before Quartey had the chance of the afternoon after being put through one on one, but he overran the ball a bit and by the time he got the shot away, Kason was out to block. We would regret this ten minutes later when in the 86th minute a hopeful right wing cross appeared to be flicked on by one of our own defenders and fell kindly for the unmarked Harvey to fire a smart volley past Theobald from around ten yards. It was a good finish but the absence of any marking made the job somewhat easier.

Two minutes later and despite having previously seen Quintyne sin-binned, Boulter decided to also say something to the referee and predictably then found himself on the bench meaning that we would play the last two minutes and eight further minutes of injury time with ten men. I have referred to indiscipline in this team frequently this season, but to lose two "experienced" players for ten minutes each, was inexcusable. Yes, the refereeing was poor and yes, he looked out of his depth in this match, particularly in the second half, but our players have to be a bit more accountable for their own actions.

So East Preston won their fourth match in a row and deserve some credit for sticking around in the match that we should have finished off earlier, but let's make no bones about this, both teams were poor in this match and it was a fairly disappointing advert for Step Six football. No wonder there were only 75 there to see it.

With just ten matches remaining, time is running out now and we have three far more difficult looking fixtures coming up against teams that are notably better than a limited East Preston. We face a difficult trip to Selsey at the weekend, and either side of that we host two in-form teams in Godalming Town and of course, our nemesis, Dorking Wanderers B coming up next. In my view (and hey, it's my report!) we are very much at a crossroads here in our season. Which direction will we take? The path to second place in the table that we will surely claim if we are able to secure at least seven points from these next matches, or will we stumble erratically through the rest of the season before losing an away playoff match like we did last season. As a supporter, well aware that the club is spending a lot of money that is running out, I at the very least want to see better than what we witnessed here. Promotion to Step Five is still comfortably achievable, but not with performances like this. It has to stop now.

Epsom & Ewell: Tom Theobald, Gideon Acheampong, Alex Penfold, Ryan Smith (c), Chris Boulter, Dylan Merchant-Simmonds, George Owusu, Nick Wilson, Tyreke Leslie, Gavin Quintyne, Athan Smith-Joseph

Subs: Kofi Quartey for Leslie (62), Jaevon Dyer for Owusu (68), Steve Springett for Penfold (77), Ollie Thompson for Smith (89)

Mulletts salted in table top match

7 May 2023

Team	P	W	D	L	F	A	Diff	Pts
Shoreham	22	16	6	0	61	18	43	54
Dorking Wanderers B	24	14	4	6	44	25	19	46
Epsom & Ewell	21	14	2	5	49	24	25	44
Godalming Town	22	12	5	5	46	26	20	41
Wick	22	12	3	7	45	36	9	39
Arundel	21	9	7	5	39	32	7	34

Epsom & Ewell 3-2 Arundel. Southern Combination League - Division One. Wednesday 22nd February.

In an important battle at the top end of the table, our boys came through a tense and tight encounter to take all three



points from visiting Arundel, courtesy of a late winner from the evergreen Jamie Byatt in front of a disappointing crowd of 70, despite this Wednesday night match being one of very few played in the area.

Byatt, who surely will become the final Salts player to have been born before I started watching Epsom back in October 1981 rolled back the years and in his twenty minute cameo might have resulted in two goals, but an earlier effort was denied by a smart low save.

However, the real story here is that we have now recorded consecutive wins for the first time since October and this result against a team in good form and who drew with leaders Shoreham just four days previously is an indication that maybe our poor form over December and January can now be placed in the rear view mirror. Maybe though we should wait until our next two home matches against East Preston and our recent nemesis the Dorking Wanderers B team before we can be sure.

Sometimes though you just have to get the result, regardless of the performance and going into this match I felt it was important that we take at least a point against Arundel (*nickname the Mulletts*) to keep them at arm's length in the play off race. The visitors probably also felt that a draw would have been a good result, but they will be kicking themselves for the way this match turned out, as they led and missed a few other chances before the match swung in our favour just before half time.

We took the field with two new debutants Tom Theobald in goal and Chris Boulter, the vastly experienced player slotting in at the back. Gideon Acheampong returned to the starting eleven after injury while Alex Penfold made his first start since returning to the club. The players missing out were the suspended Toby McKimm and the absent Steve Springett, Kevin Moreno-Gomez and Nick Wilson.

The opening encounters were fairly even. The visitors had the ball in the net in the fifth minute with a looping header, although the offside flag had already been raised. Then Ollie Thompson made an important clearance for a corner but from the resultant delivery in the fifteenth minute, Harry Russell marked his comeback for Arundel after suspension with a close range header that gave Theobald no chance.

In response Athan Smith-Joseph put in a dangerous low cross but we had no one gambling enough to attack the ball and it fizzed past everyone and out the other side of the six yard box. However, the visitors then had a great chance when the dangerous Carl Brown broke through on the right, but with just our keeper to beat, Theobald stood up well and eventually blocked the shot before the danger was cleared.

Jaevon Dyer was asking a few questions of the Arundel defence, but found himself on the receiving end of some fairly brutal treatment, firstly from Steve Herbert and then from Jordan Dudas who scythed him down with a two footed tackle that angered many of our players, although only resulted in a yellow card.

Penfold picked up a slightly harsh yellow as Brown seemed to throw himself at our man and then to the ground, but the real twist came in the 43rd minute. We started to put a little pressure on and from the edge of the penalty area Gavin Quintyne struck low into the corner; the ball grazing a defender's boot on the way in. This came as a bit of a surprise as the visitors had fashioned most of the chances to this point, but luck then turned our way too in the final minute of the half when a loose ball was picked up by Jaan Stanley and his shot was parried by Andy McCarthy, only to see the ball then strike an incoming defender and dribble over the line! This was the second time this season we have scored in such circumstances after Smith-Joseph's strike at Oakwood and like that goal, this will have to go down as an own goal, regardless of the club's rather hasty announcement that Stanley had scored. He will have to wait a little longer for his first goal in Epsom colours.

Most importantly and despite a fairly average forty-five minutes, we had turned this match around. A big second half was coming up although we'd need to do it without Penfold who was replaced at the break by Dylan Merchant-Simmonds with Gideon Acheampong moving over to left back. However, we seemed to look more solid with Brown providing much less of a threat in this half, and the ball spent much of the time in the middle of the park as the game became a little bit tighter. Harrison Mott then picked up a yellow card for Arundel following a high foot, although the referee appeared to indicate that it was for an accumulation of fouls.

We had a chance on the hour after good work from Smith-Joseph who pulled the ball back for Stanley, but his shot was blocked and cleared. Stanley had another chance when put through in the 66th minute and rode a high tackle which resulted in him being forced out wide and our bench demanding a free kick which may well have been followed by a red card as the player concerned was the last man back. Maybe our player was too honest and should have gone to ground, but the chance had gone.

Byatt joined the fray in the 68th minute for Smith-Joseph with Stanley moving out to the left to accommodate our fit again striker. However, we then had a major scare as an Arundel right wing cross was headed straight at Theobald who couldn't hold on to the ball and Tom Jefkins blazed the loose ball over from close range in the 69th minute. This was a real let off.

Dyer found himself on the deck once again after a blatant body check from Rob Madden which earned him a yellow card, and just three minutes later he was on the ground again after a collision with Mott off the ball. The Assistant clearly had a good view of the incident and flagged vigorously, advising the referee of what had happened, whereupon Mott then received a second yellow card. This incensed the visiting Management team and one of them was then the recipient of a straight red card as a result of his reaction. Dyer was the victim of some fairly unpleasant challenges in this match and it is hoped he is fit enough to go again on Saturday.

However, as we proved at Hailsham Town, you don't necessarily pack up just because you go down to ten men and from a free kick awarded some twenty-five yards out, Herbert curled a peach of a strike into the top corner of our net to level things up at 2-2 in the 80th minute.

With ten minutes to play the visitors appeared to be wanting to settle for a draw, as they slowed the game down a bit, but in the 83rd minute Stanley produced a good delivery for Byatt, whose shot was half blocked and then gathered by

McCarthy almost on his goal line. You felt that a fully match fit Byatt might have given the keeper no chance, but he was there again two minutes later on the end of a great crossfield pass from Quintyne and his downward shot beat McCarthy at the near post and crept into the net to put us ahead for good. Theobald had one more shot to deal with, but he kept it out and after nearly seven minutes of injury time the whistle blew for full time.

A lot of people were very happy after our Hailsham win, particularly in view of the harshness of the early red card, but Hailsham were in a low position in the table and I felt that this match would provide a much better indicator of where we were. If you'd asked me at half time whether we had really turned the corner, I'd have said no, even though we had just taken the lead, as the first half wasn't great from an Epsom point of view. However, by the end of the match I felt we had done just enough to claim the three points, although you can't help but wonder what might have happened if the visitors scored a second goal when they were in the ascendancy. I'm sure they will have been wondering that too as they make the long journey home.

Epsom & Ewell: Tom Theobald, Gideon Acheampong, Alex Penfold, Ryan Smith (c), Chris Boulter, Oliver Thompson, Jaevon Dyer, Gavin Quintyne, Jaan Stanley, Thompson Adeyemi, Athan Smith-Joseph

Subs: Dylan Merchant-Simmonds for Penfold (HT), Jamie Byatt for Smith-Joseph (68), George Owusu for Dyer (80), Musa Beegun for Adeyemi (86), Tyreke Leslie for Stanley (86)

10 man away win a turning point?

7 May 2023



Hailsham Town 2 - 4 Epsom & Ewell FC. Southern Combination League - Division One. Saturday 11th February.

Cast your mind back to the 19th of November. It was the day we made our last visit into Sussex when we made the journey to Wick and came away with a 2-0 win. That was also the last time we won a match, so it's pleasing to report that we now have another positive result to our name after this 4-2 win at Hailsham Town.

What made the result even more impressive after this chaotic week at the club is that there were more new faces on show, replacing others who had departed, including a new keeper in Toby McKimm. However, he was harshly sent off after just 27 minutes of his debut and the ten men, including emergency keeper Nick Wilson managed to produce the goods when we really needed it.

Pos	Team	P	W	D	L	F	A	Diff	Pts
1	 Shoreham	21	16	5	0	60	17	43	53
2	 Dorking Wanderers B	23	13	4	6	40	24	16	43
3	 Epsom & Ewell	20	13	2	5	46	22	24	41
4	 Wick	22	12	3	7	45	36	9	39
5	 Godalming Town	20	11	5	4	41	23	18	38

http://www.scl.org.uk/tables.php?comp_id=2

McKimm was not the only player making his debut this week as new signing from Raynes Park Vale Jaan Stanley played up front and later on George Owusu from Sutton Common Rovers would come on to score on his first appearance.

We were missing Gideon Acheampong, Jamie Byatt and Johnny Akoto who were all advised as injured, while Josh Owen became the latest player to leave the club. Also on the bench was the returning Alex Penfold; a decision which surprised me, but will have annoyed other supporters, given his sending off and subsequent suspension and release from the club last season. I have always found Alex to be a decent chap, but bearing in mind the tumultuous events of the previous match against Oakwood, his arrival just in time for the next one could definitely have been timed better.

With Steve Springett coming in for the released Aaron Bogle, Kevin Moreno-Gomez retained his position at left back, while Wilson played at right back for the first time, although of course, not for that long as it turned out and later on the spot would be filled by another unlikely full back in Jaevon Dyer.

Another knock to our club history and traditions occurred when we took the field in our red third kit, seeing as our club colours have been blue for 105 years, and on a pitch likened by one of our supporters to a crumpet, the ball took a number of odd hops and bounces so it was clear that passing football was not going to be the order of the day. We would have to be a little more direct. We had a little scare on the quarter hour mark when the home side sent the ball in from the right, but the striker failed to make a decent contact and it drifted wide of McKimm's goal. A Ryan Smith corner was headed on, but over the bar by Springett at the near post before Ryley Tate picked up an early booking for a cynical trip on Athan Smith-Joseph with just eighteen minutes on the clock.

Two minutes later we nearly went ahead in bizarre circumstances. The referee allowed a good advantage and Smith-Joseph attacked down the left wing, with his low ball in being deflected onto the post by George Whitley and then out for a

corner. However, from the corner in the 21st minute we went ahead anyway after Smith's corner was met by the giant Adeyemi and his header landed at the feet of Stanley who simply laid it back for Ollie Thompson to poke the ball into the opposite corner from around six yards out to register his first goal for our club.

Unfortunately celebrations were short lived as just four minutes later a harmless enough long ball led to a miscommunication between Thompson and McKimm and under pressure from a Hailsham striker an arm struck the ball just outside the area, for which McKimm would receive his marching orders a couple of minutes later. However, the view I was given by a number of people nearer the incident than I advised that the Hailsham player pushed Thompson into the ball where his arm then knocked the ball. Either way, it appears that McKimm was harshly dealt with and Wilson then took over between the posts; a job I'm told he had done before at Croydon in similar circumstances. Our defenders would protect him fairly well in this match, but he did well when called upon.

The resultant free kick was deflected off our wall for a corner amidst some appeals for a penalty and the corner was then cleared to Smith-Joseph, standing just inside his own half, from where he promptly ran fifty yards at goal from an angle down the right wing and from about twelve yards out literally lashed the ball as hard as he could past Ed Cooper and into the roof of the net for our second goal with 29 minutes on the clock. It was a fantastic strike and provided that little cushion a team needs when it is low on confidence and down by a player. The game continued in a fairly stop start fashion until the break with the only notable item to report being a yellow card awarded to our Manager in the 41st minute, presumably for something he said.

As the second half got going Adeyemi picked up an early yellow card for a handball, but the match settled into a pattern, with the home side trying to break through, but not having much success. Wilson was forced into a decent save in the 67th minute from a shot out on the right, with the rebound bouncing up a little too far for the incoming striker who couldn't keep the shot down from close range.

In the 73rd minute though, we saw another brilliant goal as Smith-Joseph fed Dyer on the overlap and his cross was met by a stunning scissor volley from Adeyemi which flew into the roof of the net from fifteen yards to become the second Epsom player in this match to register his first goal for the club and put us three - nil up.

And another would follow as Owusu forced in a great low Smith-Joseph cross six minutes later after only being on the field for nine minutes. However, in between these strikes Hailsham had pulled a goal back through Tate after the ball reached him a few yards out after Wilson and / or a defender had done well to keep the original threat out, with a little help from a post in the 77th minute.

The final words went to the home side as Luca Bish, better known to younger supporters as a partner of footballer Michael Owen's daughter Gemma on TV's Love Island in 2022, but this time he did manage to score! It was another decent strike from just inside the area and gave Wilson no chance, although with the clock already showing the third minute of injury time, there was to be no further fightback and the match ended in a 4-2 victory to maintain our perfect record at the Beaconsfield of four wins from four visits dating back to 1993.

This result may just re-start our season on the field and may prove to be one of the most important results of the year when we look back.

Epsom & Ewell: Toby McKimm, Nick Wilson, Kevin Moreno-Gomez, Ryan Smith (c), Steve Springett, Oliver Thompson, Jaevon Dyer, Gavin Quintyne, Jaan Stanley, Thompson Adeyemi, Athan Smith-Joseph

Subs: Alex Penfold for Moreno-Gomez (51), George Owusu for Stanley (70), Musa Beegun for Adeyemi (81)

Poor play spoilt by “Cantonesque” antics

7 May 2023



Epsom & Ewell FC 1-2 Oakwood, Southern Combination League - Division One. Saturday 4th February 2023.

Ten weeks to the day since we last had a League contest on a Saturday and nearly five since we had a match of any kind, we emerged from our hibernation with an absolute shocker of a performance as we lost 2-1 to Oakwood; a team we had beaten by five clear goals on their own ground in August and who were sitting in the bottom four of the table. This was our fifth defeat in a row, which represents our worst run of form since 2019 and our first defeat on this date since 1995 after six previous straight wins.

Unfortunately, this awful performance is only one half of the story as our club's name was sullied further by a frightening incident at half time when one of our players chose to leave the field of play to “have it out” with a spectator, who just happened to be the father of our goalkeeper Kamrun Zain. He was then promptly and correctly sent off by the referee whilst both were actually standing in the main body of terracing on the clubhouse side of the ground; a quite bizarre sequence of events quite unprecedented in our club's history.

But back to the start. The club had heralded the arrival of three players in the last few days, yet none of them were in the squad, while our Coach Jack Porter was named as one of the subs, which, with no offence to Jack, usually happens when we are short. The irony here was that only one man actually made his debut in the starting eleven, Thompson Adeyemi



and the club hadn't ever mentioned him joining! Our Manager Anthony Jupp was unavoidably absent for this match so Matt Chapman and Kevin Espinosa took charge in the dugout.

Despite our healthy league position and the fact that we had been without competitive football for so long, only 84 were present on a perfect day for football and it was a shame that there was so little of it on display. The club described the figure in their brief report as "good", but on a day when mid table Selsey registered 192, and with title rivals Shoreham getting 182 at home the week before, I would beg to differ. We were missing our main striker Jamie Byatt, Ben Bauchop and Johnny "Sonic" Akoto while Ryan Smith took over the armband, following the departure of Brad Peters to Step Five Broadbridge Heath, where according to our Chairman's programme notes he is now playing Step Four football! There was no Josh Alder to take Byatt's place after he joined Alfold and so Josh Owen took on the central striker's role.

The first half was without doubt, the worst forty-five minutes supporters will have witnessed at this club this season as we failed to impose ourselves in any way against a team that were extremely limited in their ambitions at first, and understandably so, following our August win and a 6-0 drubbing last time they visited us. However, it became apparent after around fifteen minutes that we were only able to play one way; sideways, followed by balls down the flanks to either Athan Smith-Joseph or Jaevon Dyer, both of whom failed entirely to create a single delivery of note for Owen. With few other midfielders appearing willing to join the attacks, they were seen off with relative comfort.

Nick Wilson sent a powerful shot over the bar after Dyer's pull back to the edge of the area, but in the 23rd minute the visitors took the lead from a completely innocuous free kick way out on their left flank. The ball in looked like it would reach Zain, but Adil Raman nipped in front and poked the ball past our keeper from eight yards. Whose fault was this? It's hard to know for certain, but the absence of the commanding presence of Peters was instantly noticed as no one took charge of the situation and we paid for it.

This was concerning. Neither team had really looked like scoring to this point and it was a horribly frustrating half of football to watch as passes went astray. Oakwood were no better, but for a team like ours with substantial experience of playing at a higher level it was extremely disappointing to witness nobody really taking control of the situation. The referee was also being a bit fussy by this time and Wilson and Owen both received warnings for complaining about decisions before the latter picked up a petulant yellow card for raising his boot to try and block a goal kick; the sort of thing you learn not to do in kids football.

The whistle blew for half time and the crowd began to conduct its own post-mortems. However, something was going on in the opposite corner of the ground to me. It transpired that a spectator had been loud and abusive throughout the first half, so much so that it could be heard on my side of the pitch by some spectators. Most of the abuse being given out was in the direction of Aaron Bogle, and it was from our keeper's father who was clearly upset with some of the communication Bogle was giving to his son between the posts. As the players went off for the break it spilled over and although Bogle was originally escorted away from the area, he returned and confronted the spectator on the terracing with an altercation between them resulting right in front of a number of our supporters, some of whom feared for their safety.

Almost out of nowhere the referee appeared and he had no alternative but to send our player off for this atrocity. There is no excuse for leaving the field of play, even under provocation and we await further news of what further actions will follow, once the referee's report is studied.

The second half commenced, quite probably with many people being completely unaware of what had actually happened while they had their half time pints! Strangely, despite being a man down we were actually better in the second half, although admittedly that wasn't hard to achieve! Smith-Joseph was much more prominent in this period and was involved in most of the attacking threats we created, setting up Dyer for a low shot in the 50th minute which was just wide. A corner shortly afterwards was met by an Owen header that was well tipped over by the Oakwood Captain, Andrew Graves and then Smith-Joseph's ball in was only punched clear to Adeyemi in space just fifteen yards out, but his powerful strike at goal flew inches over the crossbar and hit the fascia of the Bernard Edwards stand instead.

Almost immediately we paid for this miss as the visitors scored a second goal, when from just short of forty yards Darrell Agyemang spotted Zain a little off his line and struck the ball over him and into the net in the 65th minute. It was a superb goal and the absolute highlight of a match of such low quality. In response, we threw on Musa Beegun for his debut and Gavin Quintyne and in the 76th minute we had a goal back as Beegun and Dyer linked well before threading the ball to the advanced Gideon Acheampong. His deep cross caught Graves out and looked like it may go in on its own, but the ball was bundled over the line by Smith-Joseph who admitted after the match that it may have gone in off his arm!

Our winger almost scored again after a wild defensive pass went straight to him in the 86th minute, but his shot was well blocked and cleared. The Oakwood bench made it quite clear to their player what they thought of the wayward pass as it had nearly cost them two points, but apart from a late Wilson header that just missed the far post, we were all out of ideas and Oakwood claimed all three points to give them an excellent chance of escaping relegation.

I wrote after the Chessington defeat that we had worked hard to get up the League, but that another poor performance would not receive such a forgiving report. Quite simply this one was completely unacceptable to our extremely patient supporters and bearing in mind that our visitors are one of many clubs in this league without a playing budget, our players should be handing their wages back after this one. There was not a single redeemable feature to take from this match, yet worryingly, this was not the worst part of the day.

So what happens now? Well, for starters I can advise that our keeper has chosen to leave the club, as a screenshot of his message saying so was put out on social media in the last 24 hours. Maybe this is not a surprise, but either way, our Manager will have his hands full finding replacements in time for our trip to Hailsham Town next weekend. Be clear of one thing though. Promotion from the play offs is not the biggest disaster, particularly as Shoreham are now way clear of us at the top. However, further performances like this one will see us start to slip out of the playoff positions, which would not be acceptable to supporters.



What happens to Aaron Bogle is less clear as I write this some twenty-four hours after the event. Our club have belatedly put out a statement advising that the incident was unacceptable and will be dealt with accordingly. You would therefore draw the conclusion from this that he is to be released, but it is bizarre in the extreme that this hasn't happened yet. It is easy to think back to December 2021 when the club's decision to release Alex Penfold was publicised within a couple of hours of that match being abandoned, yet in my opinion, this Cantona-esque episode was worse and can only result in his release and subsequent long period of reflection from the sidelines. Concerningly, and as evidence of the club's disjointed Media policy, there is no appearance of the statement on the club's "official" website, and literally just one sentence in its match report covering the half time fracas, almost as if the club want to bury things and pretend they didn't exist. Our club seem quite simply unable to grasp the situation and the number of times they have "read the room" wrongly is embarrassing in the two and a half years since the "new regime" and its new culture came in.

At a time when our club is about to ask for help from its supporter base with reference to its plans for the Hook Road Arena sporting hub, this club cannot afford to have such a situation hanging over it. Supporters at the game genuinely feared for their safety and I have had a number contacting me to express their disgust and explaining how the matter could have been handled better. Rather oddly I have also seen one occasional supporter has commented along the lines that the club could do no more at this time than to issue what was a vague and poorly written statement. That is their opinion, but I vehemently disagree with it. The Surrey FA will be watching and waiting for an extremely quick response here as charges will surely follow and our club's reputation needs to be protected. We need to be doing something and should have done this already.

This horrible incident at what tries to portray itself as a family and community club could and should have been prevented by its officials. Committee members advised supporters that they had not heard the extremely loud abuse going on during the first half, but this is hard to believe as evidenced by people hearing it across the other side of the ground. Then, when it all happened, the player was removed from the area rapidly enough, but the supporter was not. In fact, he then wandered to the other side of the pitch. The person concerned was finally escorted from the ground by our Vice-Chairman Barry Gartell midway through the second half, but the moment he walked away from the entrance, the supporter just walked back in and watched the remainder of the match.

Epsom & Ewell: Kamrun Zain, Gideon Acheampong, Kevin Moreno-Gomez, Ryan Smith (c), Oliver Thompson, Aaron Bogle, Jaevon Dyer, Nick Wilson, Josh Owen, Thompson Adeyemi, Athan Smith-Joseph

Subs: Musa Beegun for Adeyemi (72), Gavin Quintyne for Owen (72)