

Community Football hero retires

11 December 2023



Christ Church United Football Club is a community club that has been coaching the children of **Epsom** since the early '90's.

□ The club that's always welcomed both boys and girls was set up by the Rvd. Clive Potter over 30 years ago.

□ Now Reverend Potter is due to retire and the club want to thank him for leaving a lasting legacy of real community football in the area.

A popular community football club founder is hanging up his cassock after over 30 years at the St John's Evangelist Church in the Surrey village of Milford. Local Vicar, the Rvd. Clive Potter, also founded the **Christ Church United Football Club** which has been coaching the children of **Epsom** since the early '90's

Having arrived at the parish, Rvd Clive was looking for somewhere for children to play, but the problem was that youth football traditionally takes place on a Sunday morning and this prompted him to start thinking about starting a club.

Having been involved with football all his life he got the idea during a church service one morning to set up a team. He approached the vicar at Christ Church who initially suggested a cricket club instead. However, being an Eastender by birth, with a working-class background, he felt much more comfortable starting a football team.

Current coach, Paul Wilson, takes up the story: "They started in September 1992 with just 12 kids in the first week. At the end of the first session, he asked all the children to bring a friend the following week, saying that if they did and then they all also brought a friend they would get to about 50 children and that would be enough for a club. And that's how it began."

The membership grew to over 100 children, but it wasn't easy. Getting a pitch was the first task. They played at a local primary school, Stamford Green, before growing out of that and moving to Blenheim High School, where the club remains to this day. Like now, the coaching staff was made up of volunteers and he began convincing people to do coaching courses to take the club to the next level.

Rvd Clive then began the missionary work to take the ideas to others in the community. He became a sports advisor for the diocese and encouraged the setting up of many more clubs. Other clubs bought into the opportunity for competition with a Bishop's League, a Bishop's Cup and a Bishop's Shield.

The Christ Church United Football Club was then affiliated with the Football Association with an aim to become professional in style if not attitude. The club still holds its affiliation to the FA and coaches benefit from training on many of its Coaching and Safeguarding courses.

Rvd Clive met Ted Powell, the then England U18 Coach, who came to a presentation evening, and they formed a long-lasting friendship. Rvd Clive got involved with organisations like Christians inSport and the British Sports Trust until, in late 1996, he moved to Guildford and repeated the process.

Speaking about his role, Rvd Clive said: "The vision was always to relate the church to the community, to build a good ethos and to develop friendships. I'm delighted to see the club still running after all this time, it's brilliant for the community."

Paul added: "He was delighted to hear that today's Christ Church United Football Club embraces much of that first ethos. The fees are still affordable and the club is open to girls and boys regardless of ability. Some of our current coaches are kids who were once players at the club and the club is also providing support to the Refugee Network with players being drawn from the Ukrainian community in Epsom. We want to thank Rvd Clive for having the foresight and drive to create the club, and we are hoping for another 30 years and beyond of kids (and their families) enjoying the beautiful game. We're always looking to welcome new members so please get in touch if you are interested."

The club trains at Blenheim High School every Saturday morning during term time, from 9:00-10:30

Paul Wilson

Salts beat County Town, or City?

11 December 2023



Epsom & Ewell 4-3 Guildford City. Combined Counties League - Premier Division. Saturday 9th December 2023.

On Saturday we welcomed Guildford City to our temporary home at Cobham for a first League meeting since 2018 and a bizarre match ensued with our boys just about coming through to secure the points by a score of 4-3.

On a fairly wet and often gusty afternoon that attracted just 72 spectators, despite many local matches falling foul of the weather, I firstly noticed that there were some changes in the dugout. Joint Manager Sam Groombridge was still absent due to personal issues and in view of this, Steve Springett brought in Gwynne Berry and Warren Burton to help him as Coaches. Burton is in fact a former Salt, making a couple of first team appearances in 1993/94 before moving on to greater things, while Berry was formerly with Sutton United amongst other clubs.

This "reshuffle" allowed Springett to take his place back on the field in his newly favoured central defensive midfield position after missing the previous two contests and in addition Luke Miller and Ade Batula came back into the starting line up with Tijani Eshilokun, Tino Carpena and George Owusu making way, although the latter two would play a part from the bench. For Guildford, our former Captain Callum Wilson was in the starting line up for a team that had taken

just five points from their last twelve League matches, although they had picked up three of those with a win over Colliers Wood United just three days previously.

We had an early scare in just the fourth minute when our Captain and keeper Harvey Keogh came out to clear a ball, only to hammer it against a visiting player who was trying to close him down, with the rebound luckily heading out for a goal kick. It was a warning that we wouldn't heed later in the match.

We responded well and took charge of proceedings for a while. Ethan Nelson-Roberts and Jaan Stanley were linking well on the left and we took the lead in the twelfth minute with one of the best deliveries of a ball I have seen at this level as Nelson-Roberts pinged the ball diagonally from around 35 yards right onto the head of Thompson Adeyemi who then nodded the ball past Adam Longman from eight yards to open the scoring.

The visitors nearly levelled up soon after this as a ball in from the left was met by a Guildford striker, but he was unable to get his close range effort on target and it almost appeared as if he hadn't expected the ball to reach him. We were soon back on the attack though and a Springett free kick found Adeyemi's head again, although the effort went straight at Longman. Two minutes later though his next set piece caused panic in the defence and the ball was guided into the corner of the net by Niall Stillwell for an own goal. Stillwell was Keogh's PE teacher a few years back and he currently teaches my boy Nathan, so I'm sure words will be had at school next week!

At 2-0 up we were good value for our lead and we nearly made it three on the half hour when Stanley pressured a defender to head the ball beyond his own keeper and although he was then able to clear before our man could get there, the ball didn't go far and was fed back in where Miller's powerful drive was just deflected over the bar at the last minute by our former Captain Wilson.

Unfortunately in the 38th minute the game swung in Guildford's favour when Keogh tried to see the ball out of play for a goal kick and was robbed. Our man then collided head first with the fencing as the ball was fed across goal for Darnell MacDonald to fire into the empty net. We were a long way from the action but there was certainly an argument from people closer than me that he had been fouled. Either way, the ball should really have been sent into Row Z. Keogh appeared to have recovered after five minutes of treatment, but then in the seventh minute of injury time, ironically only being played as a result of his earlier collision, he let a corner slip through his hands and Will May fired in an equaliser.

Clearly our keeper was struggling and he never came out for the second half, leading to a second appearance in goal this season for our midfielder Nick Wilson. In fact the early part of the second half was a bit of a trial for our supporters as Guildford came at us with the momentum they had gained at the end of the opening forty-five minutes and Wilson had to punch away one corner before producing a world class save in the 57th minute as a low right wing ball was met at the far post with a tap in. The away supporters behind the goal were already cheering, only to see Wilson recover to claw the ball away from the line and stop a certain goal. If a striker can score a worldy, then this was the goal keeping equivalent and it turned the game back in our favour.

It was easy to forget at this point that whilst we had lost our keeper, we were not down to ten men and as the half wore on we began to get more of a foothold. Then in the space of two minutes we took charge again, firstly in the 67th minute with a typical powerful low drive across the keeper into the far corner from Miller from just inside the penalty area. Both Wilson and Longman got slight touches to the ball on its way, but couldn't keep it out. Then two minutes later a ball from the right was finished off at the far post by substitute Sirak Negassi who had come on at the break for Keogh.

As we were celebrating behind the goal we realised that Longman was requiring more treatment and he was replaced soon after, leaving us with the very rare occurrence of both starting keepers failing to finish the match! After a small break we continued and Stanley did ever so well on the right wing to chase a lost cause and rob a defender, only to then try an ambitious strike from a narrow angle with two of our players waiting for a pass who were not best pleased! Then Springett was inches wide with a free kick from 25 yards that the keeper wasn't going to reach.

Then in the 83rd minute we conceded again as Wilson shouted to claim a corner, only for the ball to sail over his head where it was nodded in from close range. This led to quite a nervy ending, especially when the referee advised the replacement visiting keeper that we were going to see an extra seven minutes, but we saw them out with minimal worry, although Wilson made another superb save with a low block from close range in the final minute of normal time. We nearly scored a fifth goal when Negassi sent the ball over for Tino Carpena, only for his shot to be deflected inches wide.

The final action came in the 98th minute when Nick Inwugwu was fouled as the visitors were chasing an equaliser, only for Owen Sims to vent his frustration about the decision to the referee who sent him straight to the sin-bin for his comments. He must have been sat down on the bench for ten seconds at most when the final whistle blew anyway.

This was a strange encounter that had a few turning points. We looked well in control for a large part of the match, only to be pegged back, and effectively we had to go and win the match a second time. This was an important victory to take us further away from the bottom two clubs, and more relevantly, it was a well-deserved one too. Hopefully we can extend our winning run to two matches when we visit Colliers Wood United next Saturday.

Epsom & Ewell: Harvey Keogh (c), Nick Inwugwu, Ethan Nelson-Roberts, Steve Springett, Reece Tierney, Nick Wilson, Luke Miller, Thompson Adeyemi, Ade Batula, Rory Edwards, Jaan Stanley

Subs: Sirak Negassi for Keogh (HT), George Owusu for Miller (75), Tino Carpena for Batula (75)

Report Source: www.eefconline.co.uk

Salts fail to clear foggy condition

11 December 2023



Alton 2-0 Epsom & Ewell FC. Combined Counties League – Premier Division. Saturday 2nd December 2023.

"Sorry you had to see that" said our young Captain Harvey Keogh as a dejected Epsom team came off the pitch after competing against an Alton side who were in all honesty, no better than we were, but found a way to score twice midway through the second half to claim the points on offer.

The irony of his comment was that most of the spectators really didn't see that much of the match, as the foggy conditions made the contest look like a throwback from the old pre-war days when fog was the only reason you would ever get a match postponed for. The conditions were no one's fault of course, but as a result of them, the contest was lacking something in the way of atmosphere and this seemed to project onto the players too, as it must have felt like they were playing a match in an empty ground, even though the attendance was a very respectable 142, despite the bitterly cold winter's afternoon. Ultimately though, our first visit to the redeveloped Anstey Park since May 1977 ended exactly the same way as our last did with a 2-0 defeat.

With Ollie Thompson joining Tommy Williams on the suspended list for this one match, Nick Wilson found himself playing in the back four, just a week after he had taken positions both in midfield and in goal! Ethan Nelson-Roberts moved into the back four in place of Ethan Brazier for whom George Owusu came in further forward. Finally, Jaan Stanley started ahead of Luke Miller who would join the action later.

I have to be honest here and apologise to our opponents. My report, as our regulars will be aware, is compiled from behind our goal so it was really hard to see, let alone describe many of Alton's attacks, although it's fair to say that in the first half there weren't many by either side. Nick Inwugwu was first to try his luck for us as he advanced towards the edge of the area, but after having made good progress with his right foot, he struck well wide with his weaker left foot. In response the home side sent a shot straight at Keogh in the 16th minute and another effort wide from a good position five minutes later. A further strike from a decent position also failed to trouble our keeper and the teams went off at the break with just one shot on target between them to show for their work.

Clearly our Manager Steve Springett had seen enough by the break as just seven minutes into the second half he replaced our entire front three, so Miller came on alongside Sirak Negassi and debut boy Yannick Modeste Monga Ebwa. To be fair though, these three had a similar lack of success against an Alton team that were very well drilled at the back. Negassi sent a shot wide from a half cleared Rory Edwards free kick, but as we reached the hour mark it looked like this match was going to end with the goalless draw it deserved.

But the home team had other ideas and took charge. In the 61st minute they had an attempt headed off the line by an Epsom defender, but we didn't heed the warning and two minutes later, a ball in from the right was converted at close range by Perry Coles. Three minutes later it was game over as a right wing cross was headed low past Keogh from a few yards by Pat Cox.

Very little happened in the final twenty minutes with exception of a Tijani Eshilokun header from a Nelson-Roberts cross and a speculative Wilson attempt from

twenty-five yards that went high and wide. We had a glimmer of light six minutes from time when an injury to an Alton player left them down to ten men, as they had used all five of their substitutes, but the player returned after a few minutes on the sidelines and the chance was gone. In fact, the home side were denied from extending their lead by a low injury time save from Keogh.

It is fair to say that whilst conditions were awkward and our opponents difficult to break down, this was one of our weaker performances in recent weeks and I would imagine our boys would probably agree with that assessment. Certainly our Manager felt that way as evidenced by the triple substitution just after the halfway mark. Additionally, we are now on a run of just one win and one draw in seven matches. However, we have an intriguing and winnable set of fixtures coming up against teams in the lower half apart as we approach Christmas, including the pivotal trip to Colliers Wood United, and we need to start getting a few more points in the near future. Performances, particularly from an attacking standpoint will need to improve, but no one watching this match will be surprised to read that.

Epsom & Ewell: Harvey Keogh (c), Nick Inwugwu, Ethan Nelson-Roberts, Thompson Adeyemi, Reece Tierney, Nick Wilson, George Owusu, Tijani Eshilokun, Tino Carpena, Rory Edwards, Jaan Stanley

Subs: Luke Miller for Owusu (52), Yannick Modeste Monga Ebwa for Carpena (52), Sirak Negassi for Stanley (52)

Report Source: www.eefconline.co.uk

Penalty shoot out in normal time....

11 December 2023



Abbey Rangers 2-1 Epsom & Ewell. Combined Counties League – Premier Division. Saturday 25th November 2023.

In a match decided by three penalties and some rather odd officiating, we were extremely unfortunate to fall to a 91st minute defeat in a match where we were the equal of our top four opponents on their own patch at Addlestone Moor.

We made three changes to the starting eleven following our narrow defeat against AFC Croydon Athletic. Manager Steve Springett didn't select himself for this match and Tommy Williams was suspended, so Nick Inwugwu and Ethan Charles-Brazier came in at the back while Nick Wilson came in for his first start since returning to our club and Jaan Stanley moved to the bench.

The opening exchanges were very even. An early bout of head tennis in our penalty area resulted in a header going just wide of the post, while in reply Rory Edwards produced a good run and low finish that was only a yard wide of the post from just outside the penalty area. Reece Tierney put an Edwards free kick over the bar, but in reality the first half hour contained little in the way of goal threat.

That changed in the 32nd minute when a clever little flick through from an Abbey Rangers player reached their number 15 whose close range volley was excellently kept out by Harvey Keogh and he then made another superb close range block a few minutes later from former Salt Daryl Cooper-Smith to keep us on level terms. We would take full advantage of this by earning a couple of corners and from the second of these, the ball fell back towards Ethan Nelson-Roberts who showed quick feet to elude his defender who brought him down in the area. The referee delayed his decision for a while and for a moment I thought it wasn't going to be given, but finally the whistle blew and Wilson tucked away the penalty high to the keeper's left in the 41st minute.

The half time lead was probably a little harsh on our opponents who had given as much as we had in that first half, but for a top four team, they had threatened us only rarely. They are in the top four for a reason though, and in the 50th minute Abbey pressed for an equaliser and got it when Ollie Thompson brought down Cooper-Smith from behind, picking up a yellow card. King put the penalty down the middle, but Keogh had already moved to his left and we were level at 1-1.

Just before the hour we had a fantastic opportunity as Nelson-Roberts, playing further forward this week, delivered a dangerous low ball into the six yard box, but from only a yard out Tijani Eshilokun was unable to get the ball over the line as the Abbey Rangers keeper made a fantastic stop from close range and then gathered the ball.

We then had one of the most bizarre incidents I have seen in a year or two and guess what, yes, the referee was being assessed! Our keeper was actually penalised in the 62nd minute for the crime of holding the ball for too long!! Leaving aside the fact that he hadn't been holding it for that long, insult was then added to injury after he threw the ball away and received a yellow card and after further discussion he was then sent to the sin bin! With no substitute keeper on the bench Wilson went between the posts, not for the first time in Epsom colours as he had been in goal last February at Hailsham Town when Toby McKimm had been harshly dismissed. Fortunately, the ten minutes passed uneventfully enough and Keogh was soon back on the field. Wilson joins a rare group of people who have scored a goal and played in goal in the same match, the last of which was Nathan Ayling at Frimley Green back in April 2014.

As we approached the closing stages of the match Thompson Adeyemi tried his luck from twenty yards with his left foot, requiring the Abbey keeper to make a good save low to his right. However, Abbey then broke away and in the 89th minute one of their players rounded Keogh and struck at goal. It was blocked on the line by Thompson, but what by? Obviously I was a long way from the incident, but the Assistant, standing some forty yards away and on the far side of the pitch was certain that he had seen something and following consultation with him, the referee issued a straight red card in our man's direction. Murdoch tucked away the penalty low to Keogh's right for what proved to be the winner in the 91st minute, but was it the right decision? According to Thompson as he walked past us just after being sent off, the ball hit him squarely on the forehead. Assuming this to be the case, it is really hard to accept the Assistant's view, particularly as it was from so far away. Thompson will also serve a one match suspension for this alleged offence.

There was time for the Abbey Rangers 7 to be sent to the sin bin after complaining about receiving a yellow card for a foul as we pushed for an equaliser, but we only had a minute left for play and were unable to take advantage of the ten v ten situation before the final whistle blew.

So Abbey Rangers extended their unbeaten run to twelve games and it has to be said that they certainly didn't deserve to see that run end here. However, compared to some of the other teams we have played recently like Farnham Town, Knaphill and AFC Croydon Athletic, Abbey didn't hurt us nearly as much and I felt we were well worth a draw from this match. To lose it in such disappointing circumstances is cruel, but I see some more points being picked up soon if we keep playing this way.

Epsom & Ewell: Harvey Keogh (c), Ethan Charles-Brazier, Nick Inwugwu, Nick Wilson, Reece Tierney, Ollie Thompson, Ethan Nelson-Roberts, Thompson Adeyemi, Tijani Eshilokun, Rory Edwards, Luke Miller

Subs: George Owusu for Miller (79), Jaan Stanley for Nelson-Roberts (81), Tino Carpena for Edwards (84)

Report Source: www.eefconline.co.uk

Stella servant to local football passes

11 December 2023



Stella Lamont, Club President of **Epsom and Ewell FC**, passed away on Armistice Day 2023 at the age of 95. Born on September 1, 1928, Stella’s association with the club spanned over fifty years. A devoted supporter since 1973, Stella initially joined the Committee in 1979, contributing significantly to the improvement of the Match Programme.

Throughout the ’80s, she served as Press Secretary, and in 1993, under her guidance, the club won the prestigious “Special Category” programme award. Stella’s dedication was further acknowledged in 1998 when she received a voluntary service award for 25 years of involvement with the Epsom and Ewell Boys League.

In 2003, Stella became the President of Epsom and Ewell FC, a position she held with pride. Despite facing health challenges, she remained actively engaged, taking on roles such as Membership Secretary and contributing to the match programme. Her lasting legacy includes her impact on local Boys football and the informative programmess she crafted with meticulous detail.

Stella’s commitment endured, even as she faced declining health. In 2016, she received a long service award from the Surrey Football Association, a testament to her enduring influence. Stella’s final years saw her contributing articles to the club’s programme, showcasing her unwavering dedication.

Beyond her football involvement, a peculiar note in her history involved an appearance in a pop video, “We Stand Around” by I Ludicrous, filmed at the club’s old ground. This charming anecdote reflects Stella’s unexpected and lighthearted presence in the club’s rich history.

As we bid farewell to Stella Lamont, her name will forever be remembered among those who shaped Epsom and Ewell FC into a close-knit family club. Rest in peace, Stella.

Salts succumb to athleticism

11 December 2023



Epsom & Ewell 2-4 AFC Croydon Athletic. Combined Counties League – Premier Division. Saturday 18th November 2023.

A rather harsh 4-2 home defeat to AFC Croydon Athletic in our latest League match should have been the big story of the day, but regrettably we had another to report as a couple of hours before the match it was announced that our long-serving Club President Stella Lamont had passed away seven days previously at the grand age of 95 having completed twenty years in the role, having been appointed at the Annual General Meeting in 2003. As you would expect, the minute’s silence (far more appropriate for a Committee member or supporter than applause) was impeccably observed and the focus returned to the football.

Our opponents had of course already won once at our ground this season when turning around a 3-1 deficit into a 4-3 League Cup victory and had strengthened since then with the addition of striker Louie Theophanous, who scored five goals a couple of weeks ago against Sheerwater. We made just the one change with Ethan Nelson-Roberts coming back into the line up at the expense of Nick Inwugwu. Despite no Premier League action taking place and many other matches being postponed it was disappointing to see an attendance of just 79 counted at the ground, particularly as we have been playing better in recent weeks.

Maybe we were affected by the sombre occasion at first, but either way we were a little slow out of the blocks in this match, although there was little of real danger for Harvey Keogh to deal with either. A couple of dangerous crosses into each box whizzed out the other side after failing to reach their intended targets before we lost the ball coming out of defence in the 12th minute. Fortunately the left wing cross into the danger area was then sent well over the bar by Olalekan Osideko from a good position.

It was a bitty start from both teams, with the visitors in particular struggling to keep the ball on the pitch, but we grew into it and Luke Miller was only just beyond the far post with a fifteen yard header as he met Jaan Stanley’s cross, before Nelson-Roberts struck at goal, only for his powerful looking strike to hit team mate and Manager Steve Springett and rebound away to safety! Rory Edwards was next to try his luck from around fifteen yards and the ball took a slight deflection before David Boateng stuck out a leg and diverted the ball only just over his own crossbar from six yards. We were pressing for an opener at this stage with debutant AFC Croydon Athletic keeper Toby Fisher being kept busy, although Keogh had to make a low save on the half hour to keep out a shot from Osideko.

Regrettably, just as we were going into first half injury time a pass through our defence found Theophanous in space and he ran in and slotted the goal past Keogh from close range to open the scoring.

If that half time scoreline looked harsh, things then got worse in a hurry as we conceded two more goals in the 48th and 51st minutes to leave us facing a mountain to climb. The goals came in a similar manner with dangerous balls in from the right wing and close range finishes, although it transpired that the first of these goals was actually knocked in by one of our defenders with Brandon Pierrick registering their third goal. Keogh then made a low save from an angle with his feet as the visitors threatened to run away with things.

We made some substitutions, only for one of them, Nick Wilson to spend just five minutes on the pitch before he was sent to the sin bin for disputing an extremely harsh yellow card that had been brandished in the direction of Eshilokun. This appeared to be poor officiating and I was waiting to hear the comment from someone that “he’s being assessed” which of course he was!

The ten men made a fight of it though and Eshilokun made a good run, only to drag the shot wide with teammate George Owusu in a better position, but I don’t blame any of our strikers when they want to have a shot if they are in a good position. We then had another scare when Keogh was robbed and nearly conceded a fourth goal, but it came anyway in the 73rd minute after Pierrick received the ball on the left and his pull back was struck home by Newbay Haile with the aid of a slight deflection.

At 4-0 things were getting desperate. We pushed for a goal and Edwards appeared to be clattered in the penalty area before Owusu then threw himself to the ground, picking up a yellow card for simulation as a result. However, he redeemed himself two minutes later after a Springett corner was flicked on by Eshilokun and the loose ball found its way through to Owusu who scooped the ball into the net from four yards out to reduce the deficit in the 78th minute.

The visitors sent a left wing cross over that clipped our bar on its way out, but we were getting on top now and Wilson was fouled as he broke away, earning a yellow card for his assailant before Owusu received a pass from Miller, but instead of returning the pass he chose to shoot and Fisher was untroubled by it. We did get a second goal in the 87th minute after a deep Edwards free kick resulted in a couple of collisions. Reece Tierney went up with Fisher and although there was contact, the referee felt there was no foul and with the visiting defence almost frozen, expecting a whistle for a foul, Nelson-Roberts nodded the loose ball over the line from a yard to make the score 4-2.

It was a grandstand finish as Owusu saw his next shot deflected just wide by Fisher’s leg, before their new keeper made a fantastic save with his left foot to deny Edwards his first goal for the club and Thompson Adeyemi then sent his header over from a corner before Owusu then celebrated a “third” goal only to see the flag raised for offside.

We had finished quite strongly and in many ways it was a completely opposite ending to our previous meeting, but AFC Croydon Athletic had enough in the bank to see them over the line with that 4-2 score line and probably did deserve the points over the course of the ninety minutes, mostly for that blistering start to the second half when we had no answers, but football was of secondary importance to our club on this sad day.

Epsom & Ewell: Harvey Keogh (c), Tommy Williams, Ethan Nelson-Roberts, Steve Springett, Reece Tierney, Ollie Thompson, Luke Miller, Rory Edwards, Tijani Eshilokun, Thompson Adeyemi, Jaan Stanley

Subs: George Owusu for Stanley (54), Nick Wilson for Thompson (54), Nick Inwugwu for Williams (58)

Report Source: www.eefconline.co.uk

Madness at the Meadow

11 December 2023

Sandhurst Town 4-4 Epsom & Ewell. Combined Counties League - Premier Division. Tuesday 14th November 2023.

A superb advert for the Combined Counties League took place on the excellent artificial surface at Bottom Meadow; the home of both Sandhurst Town and their larger neighbours Bracknell Town, as two fully committed teams shared eight goals in an all out attacking encounter that unfortunately spilled over at times and led to a pair of red cards as a result.

We made just the one change to the starting eleven from our win at Tooting & Mitcham United and this was enforced as Ethan Nelson-Roberts had issues reaching the venue. Luke Miller stepped up from the bench, while amongst the substitutes was the returning Nick Wilson, who was a part of our successful promotion side last season.

The home side opened proceedings with an early shot into the side netting but we were soon attacking at the other end with Tijani Eshilokun going close with a shot from the edge of the area after good work from Miller on the right. Miller then sent over a teasing cross that the extremely tall keeper Henry Pidgeon was just able to reach at the second attempt before Harvey Keogh then made the first save of the night as he was down well to make a stop that was then cleared. His next save in the 15th minute was an even better one as the referee played an excellent advantage and allowed Jose Sani to break through on goal but Keogh stood up well and blocked the shot from fairly close range.

However, Sani would only have to wait two minutes before opening his account as a left wing break was followed by a cross to the far post that was knocked in by the unmarked player from close range. We then had another worry when a dangerous ball was played in and Nick Inwugwu turned the ball out at the far post for a corner, although his clearance was about a foot wide of the post which was a little too close for comfort!

At the other end, Miller was fouled on the edge of the area, although Steve Springett's free kick was just inches over the bar from a central position. We were building pressure though and a wayward back pass caused Pidgeon to concede a corner. From Springett's touch back Eshilokun delivered a near post delivery and Thompson Adeyemi's deft header from eight yards out went across Pidgeon and into the far corner to level things up in the 34th minute. We then took the lead just three minutes later when a ball towards the edge of the area was reached by Jaan Stanley, just ahead of the advancing Pidgeon. He nodded the ball past the keeper and was just able to get to the ball ahead of covering defenders to clip the ball over them into the net from a couple of yards out to register his fourth goal for the club, but his first in open play.

As we approached the break Keogh made two fantastic saves. Firstly, he got down well to save a powerful thirty yard free kick that threatened to zip past him on the wet surface and then in injury time he reacted well to tip a dipping shot over the bar at full stretch. We went in at the break with a narrow 2-1 lead but the knowledge that we would surely need more goals if we were to win this match.

We opened up the second half well and Eshilokun's free kick deflected over the bar for a corner. From the Edwards delivery Pidgeon jumped to claim the ball, but Adeyemi jumped in front of him and nodded the ball just inside the post from three yards out to give us a 3-1 lead in the 48th minute. Things got better still six minutes after that as Stanley made a run on the left and sent over a delightful far post cross that Miller controlled before smashing the ball low and back across Pidgeon from six yards; the ball going in off the Sandhurst far post to make it 4-1!

However, there has hardly time to advise the description of the goals on Twitter (@EEFCONline) before the hosts pulled a goal back as Keogh's clearance went straight to Dylan Ive who lobbed our keeper with a speculative effort from twenty-five yards that dropped over everyone into the far corner of the net in the 57th minute.

Despite being 4-2 up you could never say we were comfortably ahead, although the eleven men would probably have held on and maybe scored more. However, the match turned against us in the 63rd minute when Tommy Williams brought down Logan Coles just outside our penalty area and near the touchline. It was hard to see exactly what went on from a hundred yards away, but it looked as though there was a reaction from Coles and Williams retaliated to it, leading to our man receiving a red card and Coles getting a yellow. Unfortunately as it is the second dismissal of the season for Williams, he will face a four game suspension for this action.

Most concerningly the whole incident was unnecessary as we were leading at the time and this gave the home side added impetus. Despite a couple of substitutions with Ethan Charles-Brazier making his debut and Wilson coming on for his first Epsom action of the season, the deficit was halved in the 70th minute when substitute Harvey Seeman volleyed in an equaliser from a low right wing cross. Keogh then made another close range save but the home side were rampant at this point and Seeman broke the offside trap to slot past Keogh to level the scores at 4-4 just five minutes later.

However, there was no denying that the match had become a little bit niggly and a Sandhurst substitute was fortunate not to see a red card for a horrible foul on Adeyemi; the referee determining that the yellow card was sufficient. Then in the 88th minute Wilson sent in a powerful long range free kick that Pidgeon did well to parry away and as Miller battled for the ball with Coles out wide, the Sandhurst man brought ours down and then attacked him. This was surely the easiest decision of the night for the referee, and to be fair the red card was raised very quickly in the direction of Coles. The match would finish as a ten v ten contest.

The final chances of the match took place in our penalty area as Keogh made a couple of important blocks before their final chance of the night was headed wide and after five minutes of injury time had been played, the final whistle blew and everyone was able to take a breath again. Well, except for those who had to leave immediately to get their cars out of the nearby car park that was due to close in a matter of minutes!

This was a breathless and pulsating end to end contest; one of the best Epsom matches I have watched in many years, and whilst you could look at this from a perspective of never wanting to lose a three goal lead, it has to be said that Sandhurst were well worthy of a draw over the ninety minutes and a point isn't such a bad position to be in as it takes us five points clear of the bottom club Colliers Wood United and with two matches in hand. Remember, regardless of tables you may see showing two clubs going down, only one club will be relegated this season, due to size increases to the Step Four Leagues for 2024/25. The two Management teams may not have enjoyed the openness of the play when a bit of control was needed to slow the game down, but it was a fantastic match for the neutrals!

Epsom & Ewell: Harvey Keogh, Tommy Williams, Nick Inwugwu, Steve Springett, Reece Tierney, Ollie Thompson, Luke Miller, Rory Edwards, Tijani Eshilokun, Thompson Adeyemi, Jaan Stanley

Subs: Ethan Charles-Brazier for Stanley (63), Nick Wilson for Springett (69), Sirak Negassi for Edwards (78), Ade Batula for Eshilokun (78)

Report Source: www.eefconline.co.uk

Epsom & Ewell FC imperious victory in Imperial Fields

11 December 2023



Tooting & Mitcham 0-3 Epsom & Ewell. Combined Counties League – Premier Division. Saturday 11th November 2023.

Cast your mind back to the 4th March 2003. Some young lad by the name of Justin Timberlake was at number 1 with Cry Me A River, Tony Blair was Prime Minister and our Manager was Adrian Hill, who was approaching the end of a club record thirteen year tenure in his second spell in charge. Oh yes, and we defeated Tooting & Mitcham United by four goals to three in an Isthmian League victory on our first ever visit to Imperial Fields.

Just over twenty years on, it was great to see our former Manager, now aged 78, amongst the crowd as we achieved our first victory over the Terrors since that date and it has to be said that this 3-0 win; our best since 1934, probably flattered us a little, as the match was very even for a large part of the contest. However, a second half sending off for the home side followed by a crazy own goal enabled us to cruise home comfortably by the time the final whistle blew.

There were five players in our starting eleven who had taken the field in Epsom colours last season, yet there were also three in the Tooting & Mitcham team! We renewed acquaintances with Tom Theobald, Johnny “Sonic” Akoto, and Warren Colman, not to mention another former Salt Kieron Campbell who was with us in three earlier spells and this wasn’t even including Captain Alex Penfold who was an unused substitute and their Manager Jamie Byatt who was not in the playing line up on this occasion.

For our part, we made just the two changes from our defeat against Sutton United with Tijani Eshilokun coming in for George Owusu, while Jaan Stanley played ahead of Luke Miller, although both of the replaced players were on the bench and would come on later in the contest.

The home side were in decent form and the match programme referred to their aim of reaching for the playoffs. Arguably they were, and remain under more pressure to achieve this season than our club does, and much of that pressure is centred on their Centre-forward Shay Brennan who had a number of goals already this season. However, one feature of this match was that he was kept very quiet throughout and it could be argued that this was our best defensive performance of the season as a result, as Harvey Keogh didn’t have a massive amount to do in this match, certainly compared to the recent games we have played.

The first half probably should have finished 0-0 as neither team created a vast amount. Both keepers made the occasional save; Theobald, the hero in our penalty shoot out win over Selsey last season was down well to save from Rory Edwards, while Keogh made a couple of decent blocks too, but nothing too taxing. Despite the lack of real chances for either side, we took the lead in the 34th minute from a well directed Edwards corner that was challenged for by a number of players from both sides, but the ball looped up off them and was heading towards goal. Fortunately Eshilokun got a toe to the ball on its way down to get it over the line from close range and save me from trying to work out who the scorer would have been otherwise!

In reality, neither team probably deserved to be ahead to that point, but this is sometimes where expectation and pressure tells. A 0-0 draw would have been fine for us, but totally unacceptable to the home side who would have been well aware of our recent defeats to Knaphill and Farnham Town and aiming to replicate them. However, they were severely hampered in that target just two minutes into the second half when Edwards played a nice pass towards Stanley, only to then be taken out by a challenge from behind. It looked a naughty challenge, but was still a surprise to me when a straight red card was shown in the direction of Jayden Hutchings, although other people who saw the challenge from another angle said it was deserving of a straight red.

Ironically, the home side then had their best spell of the match, but they were struggling to find Brennan and Keogh kept out a good volley from the edge of the penalty area with his feet. He was then down well to make a low save that came from a decent move down the right and a near post strike, but the threat from the home side completely evaporated in the 81st minute when we scored our second goal. It’s hard to say exactly how much credit we deserve for this one as it was mostly down to the home side as Sam Orisatoki sent the ball twenty yards back to Theobald who then missed the ball with his kick completely and despite rushing back to try and repair the damage, the ball had crossed the goal line by the time he was able to clear it and the Assistant flagged accordingly.

The goal knocked the stuffing out of the home side and the match was all over as a contest. Five minutes later we had a third as Edwards, arguably playing his best game for our club, got down the left wing and pulled the ball back to substitute Luke Miller in the vicinity of the penalty spot and he drilled the ball first time into Theobald’s bottom right hand corner to seal the points. We had further chances in the closing minutes as Tommy Williams played a one-two with Ade Batula but dragged his shot beyond the far post, while Batula’s shot was deflected over the bar, although no corner was awarded. In the end it didn’t really matter and whilst the scoreline may have been slightly generous, I have bemoaned the fact that we were unlucky to lose by so many in recent weeks, so it’s swings and roundabouts really!

I wrote last week that good, hard-working performances like those at Farnham and Knaphill were great, as long as we could take that on and get something from our next games, and I’m happy to report that we did exactly that at Imperial Fields with a performance that was very similar to the one at Spelthorne Sports three weeks previously, but was also our first three goal haul away from home in any competition since winning 3-1 at Billingshurst back in April and our largest away win since we scored five at Oakwood back in August 2022. We go to Sandhurst on Tuesday in good form and are now up to third from bottom of the table with games in hand. A good weekend!

Epsom & Ewell: Harvey Keogh, Tommy Williams, Nick Inwugwu, Steve Springett, Reece Tierney, Ollie Thompson, Ethan Nelson-Roberts, Rory Edwards, Tijani Eshilokun, Thompson Adeyemi, Jaan Stanley

Subs: Luke Miller for Stanley (59), Ade Batula for Eshilokun (77), George Owusu for Nelson-Roberts (87), Tino Carpena for Springett (93)

Report Source: www.eefconline.co.uk

Epsom Derby football cup defeat

11 December 2023



Epsom & Ewell 1-2 Sutton United. Surrey Senior Cup – Second Round. Tuesday 7th November 2023.

Our first match back in the Surrey Senior Cup for five years, coupled with the fact it was our first meeting for twelve years against our old rivals Sutton United, ensured that a healthy crowd, counted at 135, were present at Cobham for this encounter, maybe like me with memories of past encounters and rivalries long consigned to history.

It is obviously difficult to assess the quality of this performance. This was often the case back when we were at Step Six and played Development and Reserve teams and you never really knew quite what standard of opponent you were going to face. Indeed we defeated a Sutton United Development eleven by seven clear goals in the Surrey Premier Cup not long ago, but it was clear from the start that this wasn’t going to happen in this match. It was also good to see two former Salts in the Sutton dugout as Jimmy Dack and Ross White took charge for the visitors. Dack played for us as a 16 year old under Ricky Kidd from March 1989 before moving up the footballing pyramid, while White made his debut in March 2011, although it was his younger brother Sean that made the lion’s share of their appearances for our first team.

Our club chose to insult people’s intelligence on its social media by making out that we had narrowly lost to a team five divisions above us, when quite obviously we weren’t playing their first eleven. Their Academy side provided more than enough of a challenge though and deservedly won this match 2-1, despite our boys taking the lead just after the hour. In fact, the margin of victory would probably have been greater, had Harvey Keogh not made half a dozen superb saves in what was arguably his best performance for the club.

Keogh made his first start with the Captain’s armband on in the absence of injured Zach Powell, and it was also good to see Tommy Williams back on the field after his own injuries, while Caretaker Manager Steve Springett made his first start of the season too. Further forward Thompson Adeyemi came back into the starting eleven along with George Owusu as Sirak Negassi and Ade Batula dropped out, although the latter would join the action from the bench later. Finally, Ollie Thompson was good to go again after being withdrawn just before kick off against Knaphill and he came in for Ash Snadden.

We had an early scare in just the seventh minute when Jack Phillips sent an early strike just beyond out far post, but in response Luke Miller put Owusu through on goal and his shot was tipped onto the bar by Bradley House, although the offside flag would have ruled the strike out anyway. Adeyemi was next to strike the Sutton bar with a header, but he too was offside.

Just after the half hour mark Keogh made the first of his fine saves with a point blank range save from a far post header and he had to make another low one to keep the scores level at the break. However, the second half was just ten minutes old before he had to make a further good block from a header that was definitely going in.

Despite threatening rarely to that point, we then won a penalty in the 60th minute. A good move down our left flank ended with a trip on Edwards right in the corner of the penalty area. With Jaan Stanley on the bench and Marlon Pinder absent, Miller stepped up to take the spot kick, only to see it well reached by House, diving to his left to parry the ball for a corner. With the visitors maybe thinking they had got away with it, a Steve Springett corner eluded everyone and was nodded in from close range at the back post by Ethan Nelson-Roberts in the 62nd minute.

We made a couple more substitutions with Lewis Elsom, joining from Aldershot Town, made his debut when he came on for Williams, while Stanley replaced Miller, probably wishing he had come on ten minutes earlier to take the spot kick! Stanley was soon attacking and his deflected strike from twenty yards had House scrambling to keep the ball out, although the ball was going just wide anyway.

Unfortunately for us, as the match reached the closing stages the visitors drew level. With the clock showing the 76th minute a deep ball in from the right was knocked back across goal where a powerful low shot was again well blocked by Keogh, but the loose ball was then knocked in from ten yards out by George Vorster.

It was the least they deserved though, and Keogh had to be alert once again to tip a Sutton header over the bar, but was powerless to stop their winner in the 86th minute as a dangerous run from the left resulted in the ball being laid back into the path of Vorster who drilled a low shot into the far corner from around 15 yards out which proved to be the winner.

The game turned around quite rapidly here and it is becoming noticeable that we are conceding a lot of late goals. If you look at those which have come after the 80th minute of our matches, we have scored twice, yet conceded thirteen! I'm not sure if our people were aware of this, but hopefully something can and will be done that will increase either our fitness or our game management, or both. Luckily this match was largely irrelevant in the grand scheme of things, but with important League matches coming up against Tooting & Mitcham United, Sandhurst Town and AFC Croydon Athletic, we need to tighten up in those final stages.

Epsom & Ewell: Harvey Keogh, Tommy Williams, Nick Inwugwu, Steve Springett, Reece Tierney, Ollie Thompson, Ethan Nelson-Roberts, Rory Edwards, George Owusu, Thompson Adeyemi, Luke Miller

Subs: Ben Amissah for Owusu (55), Lewis Elsom for Williams (64), Jaan Stanley for Miller (67), Tino Carpena for Springett (75), Ade Batula for Nelson-Roberts (81)

Report Source: www.eefconline.co.uk

Epsom and Ewell FC caught Knapping?

11 December 2023



Epsom & Ewell 0-4 Knaphill. Combined Counties League - Premier Division. Saturday 4th November 2023. We have been unfortunate to come up against arguably the best two teams in the League in consecutive weeks and we appear to have been soundly beaten by both if you look solely at the score lines. However, as with last week's defeat at Farnham, we gave as good as we got for large periods of this game, only to fall apart in a ten minute spell at the end of the match, when the visitors scored three times to complete a 4-0 victory over our boys.

Now, all who read these reports will know that I'm honest with my summaries, even when we are poor, and it might sound like a broken record here, but we have actually played quite well in our last two matches. However, the two teams we have faced just had more quality than we do currently and whilst we are now a lot more competitive and will fancy our chances of survival this year, these two results will not define our season.

In a match that was in my opinion excellently officiated, with exception of a penalty shout towards the end that was never likely to be given, due to the referee allowing the game to flow instead of blowing the whistle every few seconds, we made a few changes to our starting eleven. In came Nick Inwugwu and Ash Snadden at the back, while further forward Luke Miller came in for his first start since returning to our club in a more central role than where we used to see him play a couple of seasons back while Sirak Negassi earned another start on the left wing after playing well from the bench last week. We then had to make a final change after Ollie Thompson tweaked his knee in the warm up and it was decided not to risk things; Reece Tierney coming in for him, although Thompson remained as a named player on the bench.

The opening ten minutes of the match were very much in favour of the confident visitors who had been unfortunate to pick up just the one point in Jersey the Saturday before and an early chance was headed over the bar before they took the lead in the 11th minute when a ball into the right hand channel was then set up into the stride of Calvin Camara running across the edge of the penalty area and he guided a low left footed shot beyond Harvey Keogh into the far corner to open the scoring.

The crowd of 98, boosted largely by the postponements of other local matches is definitely a positive advertisement for having an artificial surface. However, one of the negatives appears to be that we just cannot go ninety minutes on this surface without picking up at least one injury and this time, following a corner, Zach Powell went down after twisting his lower leg as he landed and he required treatment, although was unable to continue, so Thompson Adeyemi joined the action and it appeared as though Keogh took the Captain's armband on. If our keeper was Captain, it would represent one of our youngest ever players to hold the position.

The remaining twenty minutes of the half was very even, although it was apparent that the visitors were very solid at the back and we rarely threatened to break through. Inwugwu made a good run on the right and reached the touchline, but his cross was parried away by Jos Barker and we went in at the break, just the one goal down, but very much in the match still.

The first item of note in the second half came when the referee had to stop play to take issue with one of our substitutes, George Owusu, who was warming up perfectly normally on the touchline. However, his fluorescent yellow top was clashing with that of the Knaphill team and he was asked to remove it!

The game continued in a similar pattern to that of the first half with both teams cancelling each other out in midfield. Rory Edwards and Adeyemi were both heavily involved, but we were unable to find that pass through to our front men. In the 69th minute a deep Knaphill corner was met with a towering downward header at the far post but Keogh did really well to keep the ball out. However, the visitors were getting closer and they had a goal disallowed for offside just four minutes later before putting another header over the bar from a good position. Then Keogh was down low to make another good save from close range as Camara threatened a second goal.

However, it wasn't until the 80th minute when the man of the match got involved. Joining the action as a substitute Spencer Whitfield received a clever slide rule pass inside Inwugwu, which he ran onto and cut back before clipping the ball past Keogh into the far corner from 12 yards to give Knaphill that two goal cushion.

And with the result no longer in doubt, the visitors really turned it on. Keogh had to make another low save to turn the shot around the post. Owusu had by now been introduced although Ethan Nelson-Roberts' good work on the left was wasted a little when Owusu sent the shot high and wide. Then in the 88th minute we gave the ball away in midfield and Knaphill broke on the left, sending a sweeping delivery across goal to Stacey Thripp at the far post and his delivery was bundled in by Whitfield from close range. Moments later Edwards tumbled in the area, and whilst we have seen penalties given before, you knew it wouldn't be given today and we allowed the visitors to break where Whitfield then completed his hat trick at which point the substitute was then promptly subbed off again!

In summary, we competed well for all but the first ten and the last ten minutes of this match, but against the top teams in this division we need to accept we are still a fair way short and the upcoming match at Imperial Fields against Tooting & Mitcham United will provide a much better guide of where we are likely to finish this season.

Epsom & Ewell: Harvey Keogh, Nick Inwugwu, Ethan Nelson-Roberts, Ash Snadden, Zach Powell (c), Reece Tierney, Luke Miller, Rory Edwards, Ade Batula, Jaan Stanley, Sirak Negassi

Subs: Thompson Adeyemi for Powell (25), George Owusu for Negassi (55), Tino Carpena for Batula (70), Marlon Pinder for Miller (84)

Report Source: www.eefconline.co.uk