



# Sutton and Epsom rugby away win

26 January 2025



SIDCUP 24 SUTTON & EPSOM RFC 34. Saturday 25th January. Crescent Farm has produced a bounteous harvest this season with a maximum crop yield of 35 points from a magnificent seven wins. In addition, last season's visit by Sutton and Epsom was seen by many levelheaded observers as the nadir of that campaign. Originally planned for January 18th, before the intervention of Jack Frost, this fixture came with the usual proviso of a rescheduled match: Who is available? In a quality encounter, Sutton and Epsom, playing their best rugby of the season, inflicted the first home defeat of the season on Sidcup by 34-24.

The Black & Whites welcomed back Messrs Johnson & Lennie to the front row union but were bereft of the veteran Munford and Number 8 Rob Hegarty who had scored a hat trick against Old Tiffinians the previous Saturday. Job 1:21 springs to mind. The hosts kicked off in glorious sunshine on a windless afternoon. S&E were swiftly into their stride opening their account after a few minutes. Freddy Bunting kicked a penalty to the 22 where Ewan McTaggart obliged with clean lineout ball. A dominant carry by Josh Glanville set up the backs and slick passing resulted in a Gareth O'Brien dummy and a try. Captain Bunting converted from the flank for 7-0. Sutton now demonstrated vastly improved kicking from hand with the highlight being a sublime 50-22 from Tom Lennard. Sidcup have conceded the least points by any club in the league this season so excellent defence was expected. A second try was denied but they came back for a penalty that Freddy Bunting nonchalantly converted for 10-0.

The home team hit back with multiple phases and great intent. Deep in the Sutton 22 they had a free ball and looked to cross the whitewash. It was the turn of the Surrey men to defend valiantly and the Kent team to have the consolation of a penalty. Josh Twyford obliged to trail by 3-10. It had been a thrilling start but the best was still to come. On the quarter hour Sutton produced their try of the season. The forwards carried with pace and conviction with Sam Lennie and Josh Glanville making gains. The ball was then passed along the backs with pace and precision to exploit an overlap, and winger Finlay Scott ran in untouched from near halfway. Freddy Bunting's conversion extended the advantage to 17-3 at the end of an inspired first quarter.

Sidcup fought hard to get back into the game but not only was S&E tackling first rate but also the coverage of the host's kicking game was most efficient. Another penalty gave Freddy Bunting the chance to put the Crescent Farm team into the corner. The lineout was secured but all momentum appeared to have dissipated, and the drive was halted. Sutton lost yards and were recycling the ball on the 22 when Number 9 Laurence Wise dummied at the ruck and made a clean break. Ben Tame's fine support run was rewarded with his try under the posts. A simple conversion added to the burgeoning Bunting account for the season for 24-3 on the half hour.

There was no easing off from the visitors. Playing with a high tempo combining powerful carrying from the pack and astute kicking from the backs, the hosts were forced to defend in their 22. With normal time nearly complete, winger Matt Symonds picked up a loose ball near touch as Sidcup tried to break out. The ball arrived at the Brobdingnagian lock Ewan McTaggart who strode towards glory only to be denied by courageous cover. Despite two 5-metre penalties under the posts, and Sidcup being reduced to 14 when Ben Ibrahim saw yellow for an additional 10-minute siesta, the visitors failed to extend their lead. S&E had replaced their front row in its entirety as Gibson, Hilton and Howes came off the bench, but despite these fresh legs the first period ended with no further addition to the scoreboard that read 24-3 to Sutton and Epsom.

Winning at home has not only become a habit but it is the norm for Sidcup this term. Sutton may have excelled in the first half with a comfortable lead at the break but all those present were expecting the hosts to raise their game. Still with the numerical advantage, the second half began where the first had left off with the Black & Whites besieging the home line after the Bunting restart was dropped on the 22 gifting S&E a scrum. Sweeping attacks, superb defence and the usual penalty kicked to the corner. However, there was variety as Sutton erred with an accidental offside followed by a Sidcup infringement on their put-in and culminating with S&E giving away a penalty at the ruck when in prime position. Would the visitors rue their failure to secure the fourth try either side of the break?

In the third quarter, Sutton and Epsom were forced into demonstrating their defensive qualities. They were assisted by a lack of discipline by the hosts. After a 5-metre lineout had been neutered, Sidcup had the consolation of a scrum under the posts. Not only did they concede a penalty but in addition a quizzical comment saw them retreat ten metres more a second time. The cacodoxy in rugby is to argue with the referee. The second 10-metre forced march for Sidcup hinted at an outbreak of logorrhoea from a certain quarter and Mr Pedro Diogo would not tolerate the dissentient voices. Finally, the hosts made their possession, territory, and pressure count. The popular combination of a penalty, kick to the corner and the catch & drive try. Replacement Harry Large was the beneficiary of the fine forward effort. The reliable boot of Josh Twyford added the extras and optimism swept through Crescent Farm as their team trailed 10-24.

Sutton reintroduced Lennie and Johnson for Howes and Hilton. The gains from the Sidcup goal were quickly negated by

another penalty which gave Freddy Bunting the opportunity to extend the lead to 27-10. From the restart the Rugby Lane men tried to run it out of their 22 but knocked on. From the scrum the hosts took full advantage as the forwards carried deep into the 22 before centre Sam Leek's astute line of running saw him touchdown by the uprights. Josh Twyford made it 27-17 and the comeback was on. Ewan McTaggart then received a yellow card at the restart and suddenly the game took on an entirely new complexion. An emboldened Sidcup threw everything at the visitors and looked favourites to add another quick score. However, credit to the character of this current S&E vintage. They rallied, scrapped for every ball and were defensively dogged.

The decisive blow came with ten minutes to go and the Black & Whites still with 14. A loose ball was picked up by prop Dan Johnson. There is no more popular sight in rugby than a prop forward on the charge. This was a classic with an impressively high knee-lift he set off like a Highland warrior eager to decapitate an Englishman and bearing an expression of deranged ferocity as he covered the 40 metres to score unchallenged under the posts for a memorable first try for Sutton. Freddy Bunting chipped over the easiest of conversions for a 34-17 lead and a bonus point.

Returning to their full complement, the Black & Whites doubled down defensively and looked to control territory. A penalty was kicked to the 22 was followed by a fine grubber by Tom Lennard and the hosts were stuck deep in their own half. The game entered time added on and the deficit was too great but credit to Sidcup as they kept pressing. The Crescent Farm crowd were rewarded when their team scored their third try of the afternoon. A penalty was kicked into the corner and from the ideal platform of the 5-metre lineout they crossed the whitewash. Josh Twyford being presented with the close-range try after the hard yards from the forwards. He added the conversion for 24-34. There was just time for one more play but there was to be no further addition to the scoreboard and Sutton recorded a notable scalp winning away 34-24.

Without doubt, this was the performance of the season that has included fine wins over the table toppers at Rugby Lane on three separate occasions. It was a wonderful team effort from 1 to 18 with the forwards providing quality ball and the backs playing with a fluency not previously seen. Laurence Wise at 9 had an exceptional game for a man with only a handful of caps. The kicking game was unrecognisable from recent times, the defence was back to its high standards but it was the tempo and continuity that really caught the eye. It needed a performance of this nature to defeat a Sidcup XV that has made Crescent Farm a fortress this season.

Next week, the Sutton charabanc heads to Medway who will be looking to redress the balance. They arrived at Rugby Lane in October in pole position and returned with a 28-24 defeat.

**Sutton and Epsom:** O'Brien, Symonds, Bibby, Bunting ©, Scott, Lennard, Wise, Johnson, Lennie, Boaden, Glanville, McTaggart, Rea, Jones & Tame. Replacements: Hilton, Gibson & Howes.

**Sidcup:** Ellison, Sheridan, Leek, McMahon, Keeley, Twyford, Ibrahim, Conlon, Fordham, Carmen, Epps, Evans, Williams, Healey & West. Replacements: Gibbons, Large & Masters.

---

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

26 January 2025



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Report Source: [www.eefconline.co.uk](http://www.eefconline.co.uk)

---

## Sutton & Epsom RFC just fail to mount comeback

26 January 2025



SUTTON & EPSOM RFC 42 OLD TIFFINIANS 46. Saturday 18th January. *Sutton and Epsom* started this campaign with a rollicking runaway win over Old Colfeians.

Since then the Rugby Lane crowd has enjoyed an overwhelming diet of tense, low scoring affairs with defensive defiance the common theme. The avalanche of points in the 48-43 loss to Old Reigatian being very much the statistical outlier. However, a glance at the reverse fixture, a 41-19 Tiffinians triumph, and the bonus point penchant of OTs perhaps gave a hint to another Old Boy try-fest. In a seesaw encounter of thirteen tries the visitors edged it 46-42.

Sutton and Epsom kicked off with prop **Alex Mount** celebrating his 100th league appearance and desperate to eviscerate the memory of that chastening October loss. The opening salvos were fast and furious with both sides hinting that it would be an entertaining afternoon on a favourable surface with minimal elemental interference. After ten minutes an accidental offside from a lineout offered Freddy Bunting the chance to peg the Old Boys back into their 22. This initiated an all-out assault as the forwards looked to open the scoring against a resilient Tiffinian defence. Ironically on this red-letter day for the centurion it was the ultimate unsung hero, Josh Glanville, who took the best supporting Oscar with the opening try on his 50th appearance. The stalwart second row is worth many a verse of praise as he is always at the heart of the action doing the less glamorous hard work that is much admired by not only his teammates but also the supporters. Bunting added the extras for a reassuring 7-0 lead.

Five minutes later the hosts had doubled their advantage. Benefiting from two quick-fire penalties the Black & Whites were gifted a 5-metre lineout in the corner. With commendable precision and control the forwards ushered Rob Hegarty over the line. If Sutton and Epsom had started with the single-minded determination to redress the balance from the unpalatable defeat at Summer Avenue then their opponents demonstrated admirable sangfroid. As Bunting prepared to make it 14 zip there were no splanetic recriminations under the posts but just a calm assessment from Captain Hobbs that they were playing well. Little did we know that we had the heir to Nostradamus in our midst.

There followed a remarkable twenty minutes. To describe it as a reversal of fortunes would be a grotesque understatement. It was a tectonic shift of cataclysmic proportions that altered the landscape of Rugby Lane with 29 unanswered points from a rampant Old Tiffinians. It started with some familiar ineffective kick tennis followed by a couple of penalties conceded by the hosts. The visitors pressed hard and the livewire scrum half Matt Fowler collected the first of his trio of tries. The touchline conversion failed and 5-14. Sutton and Epsom seemed to shrug off this aberration with a promising attack from a tapped penalty but good work was undermined by poor handling. Tiffs next incursion in the home 22 saw winger Segun splendidly exploit a Sutton and Epsom error with a stylish finish. The touchline conversion struck the crossbar and went over for 12-14. The comfortable cushion had deflated to a miserly 2-point advantage.

An emboldened opposition were certainly not finished. More penalties ceded territory, more errors were punished and two more tries followed in the next five minutes. Matt Fowler was the major beneficiary as his excellent support play and eye for the tryline saw him complete a first period hat trick. Coach Blackburn must have been delighted at the response of his charges with the high tempo play, slick passing and a lethal awareness that led to four clinical finishes and a 26-14 lead. With the interval approaching Sutton and Epsom conceded another penalty in front of their posts but with the 4-try bonus point already securely banked Sharif Dougramaji took the three points meaning that Sutton and Epsom required three scores as now they trailed 29-14.

In time added on in the first half the home crowd urged their team to respond. Captain Bunting perhaps motivated by an understandable despair at the horrific turn of events adopted the motto of the suffragettes: "Deeds not Words". He set off on a stunning break combining pace, power and changes of direction before being halted in the OT 22 and gaining a penalty. With the lineout operating like a metronome the kick was declined in favour of the 5-metre lineout. With the throw safely secured Sutton and Epsom advanced to the line. Desperate defence could not stop the drive and Mr Maynard spotted skulduggery and trotted under the posts to award a penalty try. The whistle blew to conclude a breathless 50-point first half with Tiffinians 29-21 to the good.

Sutton and Epsom opened the second period on the front foot and despite missing an early opportunity to cross the whitewash they were given a second chance with a prior indiscretion. The supporters waited in anxious anticipation for the 5-metre lineout. Once again the forwards delivered and Rob Hegarty had his second score and Sutton and Epsom had the bonus point. The reliability of the lineout was rivalling the Bunting boot that made it 28-29. The penalty count mounted against the visitors. Five minutes later Sutton and Epsom faced the familiar question: Take the simple three points or go for the maximum? Their positive approach and the excellence of the lineout gave Rob Hegarty his hat trick. Freddy Bunting impressed once more with a touchline conversion and the Black & Whites had regained the lead 35-29 but there was still 30 minutes on the clock.

The restart should be a moment to refocus and heighten one's concentration. Sadly Sutton and Epsom reacted in statuesque fashion to the kick. To compound this error they conceded a completely unnecessary penalty for a high tackle on a man in the maul. For the umpteenth time the ball arrowed into the corner from a penalty. This time there was some variation on the theme as the ball was shipped wide to the backs. The Sutton and Epsom focus on the catch and drive left an overlap and Sharif Dougramaji bulldozed his way over the line. The centre converted his try and the pendulum swung back in Old Tiffinians favour as they led 36-35.

Ineffectual kicking and penalties now haunted Sutton and Epsom as the Old Boys were in the ascendancy. They declined a simple penalty in front of the posts in search of another try. There was a return to the popular catch and drive theme as Number 8 Jaewon Jang completed the score. The missed conversion left Sutton and Epsom trailing by 35-41 knowing a goal would inch them ahead. Moments later and it was roles reversed. Sutton and Epsom had the penalty and another lineout opportunity. Once more the excellent throwing in by Alex Mount found its mark. The home pack bullied their way to the line and prop Callum Gibson scored from a couple of centimetres out. The highly lubricated crowd roared their approval as the Bunting conversion sailed over and his side led 42-41 with ten to go.

It was the traditional tense ending for the assembled crowd as has become the norm at Rugby Lane but that certainly did not ease the tension. Errors and infringements far outnumbered moments of quality as all involved knew that the next score might be the decider. As the hosts ran the ball from just outside their 22 disaster struck as a pass was intercepted. Sharif Dougramaji kept his composure and scored lucky try number 13 in the match. However, once again he failed with the conversion and with the OTs leading 46-42 Sutton and Epsom required a try to lead. In the in-goal area a disconsolate and exhausted Alex Mount left the field having given his all. He may not have scored a try but his excellent lineout service had provided a remarkable six tries for his pack.

There was to be no last gasp glory and Old Tiffinians held on to complete the double over Sutton and Epsom. The hosts' errors had been costly but great credit to the visitors who pounced on every opportunity and did not squander a chance

all game. Hat trick hero Matt Fowler exemplified their ruthless streak and the first half purple patch was the foundation of their success. Rob Hegarty joins the illustrious trio of Will East (Luton), Kyren Ghumra (Shelford) and Ollie Baptiste-Wilson (Royal Wootton Bassett) who have scored a hat trick in the league for Sutton and Epsom in a losing cause. The match was a curious affair because there was much to applaud in the Sutton and Epsom performance but their demise was the result of self-inflicted wounds that were deep and proved to be fatal. Next Saturday sees the visit to Sidcup to play the fixture that was recently frozen off. There can be no doubt about not only the severity of the task but also that the hosts will be equally unforgiving if the Black & Whites repeat such an error-strewn performance.

Sutton and Epsom:

O'Brien, Scott, Bibby, Bunting ©, Rea, Lennard, Munford, Mount, Boaden, Gibson, Glanville, McTaggart, Tame, Jones & Hegarty.

Replacements: Hilton, Davies & Wise.

Old Tiffinians:

Day, Segun, Dougramaji, Sabania, Marshall, Taylor, Fowler, Hobbs ©, Blackman, Turner, O'Connell, Noeh, Dore, Graham & Jang.

Replacements: Oram, Turnbull & Burgess.

---

## Epsom & Ewell FC knocked out by narrow loss

26 January 2025



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

other end as the home side threatened to extend their lead. We went off at the break trailing by the one goal.

An early opportunity for the hosts just missed our post before we registered our first shot on target in the 55th minute when Essilfie-Conduah's shot took a slight deflection on the way but Walker was able to make the save. We nearly had a chance just after that when Kendall's ball in from the right wing seemed destined to be met by the head of Dundas, only for the VCD Captain Ben Fitchett to get the faintest touch to it and deflect it away. Fitchett had clearly been detailed to keep an eye on our experienced midfielder and did an excellent job throughout the match.

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

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

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

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

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

---

## Penalty shoot out won by Epsom and Ewell FC

26 January 2025

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Kendall saw his shot deflect wide off a defender for a corner before Green was brought down on the edge of the area out on the right wing, but the free kick was blocked. Finally a Kendall looping header from a corner was claimed comfortably

by Rackley-Hayes and we went in for the break goalless.

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

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

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

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

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

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

Report Source: [www.eefconline.co.uk](http://www.eefconline.co.uk)

---

## Walton Golf Club's dismissal of one-in-hole unfair

26 January 2025



A greenkeeper who had worked at a Surrey golf course for almost 40 years has won a case for “unreasonable” dismissal after he was sacked when his digger fell into a hole. An employment tribunal found the disciplinary action taken against the 58-year-old had “snowballed” before alternative options were considered.

Michael Hayne's digger had to be hauled from a ditch at Walton Heath Golf Club, in Tadworth, after the machine had tumbled into a hole, cab-side down while the driver was not wearing a seatbelt. The deputy course manager initially dismissed the accident as minor because no harm was done, and so did not formally report it in an accident log book.

But his bosses at the golf club viewed it as a significant incident and Mr Haynes was later dismissed for gross misconduct. The managers argued it was a “serious breach” of health and safety rules that the accident was not reported, and could cause more incidents.

Mr Haynes argued that he was sure he told Mr Mann about the accident at the time and considered he did not need to write up the event in the health and safety book.

The report, published December 23, 2024, detailed that the golf course had two diggers weighing 7.5 tons and 2.5 tons. Mr Haynes had been externally trained on how to use the diggers since around 2005, and his certification was updated every five years- although his current renewal had been overdue.

During a staff training session in November 2021, the instructor reportedly told course manager at the time, Michael Mann, that Mr Haynes was “very lucky with his accident that he hadn't been seriously hurt or worse”. But Mr Mann said he did not know about the digger incident.

After some initial investigation, the Surrey club launched a disciplinary hearing against Mr Haynes, accusing him of “gross misconduct” for failing to comply with health and safety standards.

In a letter before the disciplinary hearing in November 2021, Mr Haynes wrote: "I have been a faithful employee of this Club for nearly 40 years. I love this Club and have spent my life in its service. I have a clean disciplinary record.

"If I were to be dismissed, not only would I lose my livelihood but also my wife and I would lose our home. I can assure this meeting that I have learned a lesson and will never fail to report any incident again. I would welcome any additional training that is felt necessary."

Mr Haynes was dismissed without notice, and escorted off the site. The Chief Executive, Mr Woodward, had decided his explanation was "unacceptable" and the "trust and confidence placed" in him had been "completely undermined". He added further dangerous incidents could have been avoided if Mr Haynes had reported the initial accident.

In desperation, Mr Haynes appealed the dismissal twice and provided photographic and video evidence of incidents not reported by other members of staff. However, this appeal was rejected both times.

However, the employment tribunal has now found Mr Haynes' dismissal was "procedurally unfair". It said there was no real evidence that any of the decision-makers weighed up the possibility of an alternative sanction for the Claimant.

The report stated there were "flaws" with the golf club's investigation process such as "exaggerating and maximising the seriousness of the incident". For instance, inconsistencies in describing the final position of the digger as "tipping over" and "almost horizontal".

The tribunal still found Mr Haynes "culpable" for failing to report the digger incident in the accident book as he was involved. Employment Judge Leith said: "His failure to [report it] was rendered considerably starker because of his [senior] role [...] he should have known better."

Concluding the case, the tribunal ruled that Mr Haynes' compensation will be reduced by 50 per cent because of his failure to log the accident. The report did not disclose the amount.

Walton Heath Golf Club has been contacted for comment.

---

## New Year less cheerful for Epsom and Ewell football

26 January 2025



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

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

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

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

We kicked off towards the St Helier end of the ground, or, if you've sat in the stand there before, we played from right to left, and started breezily enough, as was maybe appropriate when considering the bitter wind chill and freezing rain that was unpleasant enough for us, let alone the home crowd who were even less used to this sort of weather. We earned an early pair of Adam Green corners and it was also Green who provided the first shot of the day following a good run from Kionte Gillfillian-Waul, although it was wide of the mark.

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

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

However, from the Jersey free kick, the ball to the far post was knocked in first time where Dos Santos was waiting to

head the ball in off Kardel from close range in the 39th minute. Kardel kept the score at 2-0 with a good low save but we were definitely second best at the break, with the two goal lead being a fair one.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

---

## New Year Cheer For Sutton and Epsom Rugby

26 January 2025



**Sutton & Epsom RFC 21 Battersea Ironsides 20.** Saturday 4th January.

The September fixtures had concluded with a rousing encounter at Garratt Green when these two fine sides could not be separated and fought to a standstill for an engrossing 19-19 draw. It was the first indication in this campaign that Sutton had transformed their rather porous defence of recent times into a far more formidable outfit. The Ironsides still remain the benchmark for this league and another fiercely competitive contest was expected. Rugby Lane had witnessed five home victories on the bounce but every one of them by a miserly margin. This match maintained that sequence as Sutton edged out Battersea by a solitary point to win 21-20.

With winter arriving in the week there were concerns the pitch might be under threat from the elements. Rugby Lane was spared and a small but knowledgeable crowd gathered in gelid amiability. Freddy Bunting initiated proceedings as Sutton attacked the clubhouse end. The hosts were in top gear at once with multiple phases and commendable continuity they advanced steadily into the visiting 22 but concluded by conceding a penalty. The defences held sway as they thwarted the best endeavours of both teams. However, S&E put themselves under unnecessary pressure with errant kicking from hand

that has been an unwelcome feature in recent weeks. The first instance came on ten minutes when a simple touch kick failed to cross the whitewash. It was returned with interest, led to a penalty and suddenly the Black & Whites were defending a lineout near their line. The pack were held short of glory before the ball was transferred to Charles Jacobs on the wing who could empathise with Buridan's ass as he pondered whether to go outside or cut back and the brief hesitation enabled Adam Bibby to hold him up over the line.

Shortly afterwards from the first scrum Sutton failed to find touch and Charles Stuart executed a perfect 50/22 to put the hosts under the cosh once more. The 2024-5 Sutton vintage is far more robust than recent predecessors and the defence forced a handling error. From the scrum Rob Hegarty made his first penetrative carry from Number 8 on an afternoon that was to garner impressive yardage for a man celebrating his 50th cap. At the third time of asking S&E cleared with the boot. Back in the opposition half the fluent movement looked to have broken down disastrously. Charles Stuart intercepted and was sauntering off for a certain score when the referee, Matt Blackett, brought play back for a penalty for the home team. Bunting stepped up to the oche and slotted over a 45-yard penalty for the 3-0 lead.

Both teams were showing admirable attacking intent that was neutered by well-organised defences with ferocious tackling. The Ironsides were also hindered by ambisinistrous handling with the mitigation being the cold weather. On the half hour another Sutton attack floundered in the Battersea 22 but Mr Blackett brought play back for an infringement near halfway. Once again Freddy Bunting impressively bisected the uprights for 6-0. From the restart the Greens soon won a penalty of their own and kicked to the 22. The lineout drive shifted the play laterally before the attack drove towards the corner. The ball was recycled and spun to the opposite side and a mismatch in the centres was expertly exploited and Charles Jacobs ran in untouched for the try. Charles Stuart put Battersea 7-6 ahead with a perfectly struck conversion.

The hosts were soon offered the chance to restore their lead but on this occasion the penalty was just beyond the range of the Bunting boot. This was the start of a period of intense pressure from Sutton as they sought the lead before the break. A penalty was kicked into the corner and from the attacking lineout the ball was sent towards the wing only to be intercepted. Again Sir brought play back for a penalty. From the tapped penalty Rob Hegarty went close before hooker Sam Lennie forced his way over for his first Sutton try. Freddy Bunting converted and the whistle blew for the interval with S&E leading 13-7.

It was the type of afternoon where the pinguin offerings of a burger van are enjoyed more for the warmth given to the hands than their culinary delights. One local resident was seen to take pity on two elderly spectators on a bench. Having popped home he returned with cups of tea and added brandy much to the appreciation of the lucky supporters. The game was living up to expectations and the score reflected an even contest that was in the balance. No one doubted that the second half would be more of the same with no quarter being given by two excellent defences.

From the restart Battersea Ironsides set out to dominate the rest of the proceedings playing at a higher tempo and with great intensity they subjected Sutton to intense pressure. The hosts were up for the challenge and weathered the early storm. Aided by a knock on by Cameron Baker, resplendent in white tights, the hosts gained a foothold in Battersea territory. Soon the familiar and reassuring sight of Freddy Bunting lining up a penalty was followed by cheers as the captain extended the lead to 16-7. Minutes later Charles Stewart replied in kind to reduce the deficit to a single score as Battersea Ironsides trailed 10-16.

The game entered the final quarter with the visitors' best efforts being undone by handling errors in the face of the relentless pressure from the home defence. Sutton's counters were promising rather than significant as the balance of play was in Battersea's favour with their glabrous Number 9 Ed Carr urging his team ever onwards. Finally, the pressure paid dividends as the Ironsides forwards were denied near the line the ball was spun wide. It was the turn of the men in green to benefit from Mr Blackett bringing the play back for a penalty. Charles Stuart accepted the easy 3-point option as the scoreboard eventually registered Sutton 16 Battersea 13 with ten minutes of regular time left on the clock.

For regulars at Rugby Lane this season this was familiar territory. Following the opening day thrashing of Old Colfeians every home game since has gone down to the wire.

**Sutton & Epsom:**

O'Brien, Huie, Bibby, Bunting ©, Findlay, Lennard, Munford, Johnson, Lennie, Boaden, Glanville, McTaggart, Tame, Jones & Hegarty.

Replacements: Gibson, Mount & Rea.

**Battersea Ironsides:**

Baker, Diamond, Magee, Banton, Jacobs, Stuart, Carr, Martin, Lewis, Chetwynd, Trickett, Wharton, Macpherson, Chitan & Dollard.

Replacements: Borup, Plater & Hirons.

Image courtesy Robin Kennedy

---

## After 12 wins in a run Sutton & Epsom fall at the thirteenth

26 January 2025



Old Reigatian 21 Sutton & Epsom RFC 15. Saturday 21st December.

Midweek illnesses, at one stage, threatened to derail Sutton selection for the last league game in 2024. Ultimately the usual array of injuries, concussion protocols and Saturnalian celebrations led to only four changes from the squad that tamed Beckenham. In September the two sides thrilled Rugby Lane with Old Reigatian holding on to win 48-43. Since that day OR have only enjoyed two more wins and even more remarkably S&E have not indulged in the frippery of a solitary further bonus point. Entering Round 13 after six wins on the spin would it be 'Seventh Heaven' or 'A Game Too Far' for the Black & Whites? In another enthralling and entertaining encounter the hosts triumphed 21-15 completing the season double over Sutton.

Despite the recent meteorological travails the pitch was in pristine condition and full credit to all those people who work tirelessly to make Geoffrey Knight Fields such an excellent venue. Though pleasantly moist under foot, rather than muddy, there was a strong diagonal wind and the ominous prospect of impending rain. Almost at once the wind, favouring the hosts, demonstrated its venomous teeth by sweeping a Reigatian kick comfortably beyond the playing parameters and play resumed with a Sutton scrum in the hosts' half. Sutton opened their account after five minutes. A powerful scrum on halfway was followed by a Bibby break and a Rea run. Fleet-footed fly-half Freddy Bunting looped around and received the ball to dash into the corner. The captain, making light of the elements, added the conversion to his try for a 7-0 advantage.

From the restart the visitors were on the attack again with Ben Tame carrying out of the 22 to link with Josh Rea who fed Dan Jones who kicked ahead. Sutton stole the line out and were awarded a penalty. Freddy Bunting opted for the three points and extended the lead to 10-0. Perhaps Old Reigatian feeling the pressure of having the wind started to run from everywhere rather than exploiting the conditions with the boot. Errors mounted and Sutton were in the ascendancy and pressing for another try. Gareth O'Brien's angled run was met by a fabulous try-saving tackle on the quarter hour. At the end of the first quarter the fluent play from the Rugby Lane team was rewarded. The referee played advantage and the ball was flung out to the right touchline. Angus Findlay did well to take the high pass and then excelled himself with a perfect inside pass to Rob Hegarty who dived into the corner. Their followed a moment or three of confusion. Freddy Bunting's effort from the extremities split the jury if not the uprights. One flag was raised, the other remained disinterested and the scoreboard indicated 15-0. Then it became 17-0 before finally resting with 15 points to Sutton & Epsom.

Sutton's play in the first quarter bore all the hallmarks of a side buoyed by their winning streak and confident in their method. The visitors then gave the hosts a foothold in the match. S&E overthrew their lineout ball 10 metres from their line. Jude McRobbie accepted the festive offering and had the awareness to exploit the situation and strode home for the try. Tom Baldwin navigated the wind with aplomb to see the home XV trail 7-15. This was followed by a frenetic period of play. The reinvigorated Reigatian team launched an ominous attack only to be undone by an Adam Bibby interception. The centre was hauled down 35 metres out and the ball was run back with an impressive counter until it was turned over and returned with interest. It was breathless stuff for players and spectators alike. Despite the best endeavours of all concerned the half ended with no further additions, or reductions, to the scoreboard. Sutton, who had dominated the early exchanges, led 15-7 but Reigatian were right back in the contest as the sides retired to the warmth of the dressing rooms to contemplate their strategy for the second period.

Old Reigatian began the second half in splendid fashion creating two chances in as many minutes. The first was thwarted by an errant pass and the second by an interception. Sutton threatened to score with a wonderful 60-metre burst by Adam Bibby but he failed to connect with the lone support of Matt Symonds. OR stepped up the pressure and were aided by a flurry of S&E indiscretions that did not go unmissed by Mr Stewart. Following considerable pressure and multiple advantages Old Reigatian deservedly scored. With the addition of the Baldwin conversion the Black & Whites lead had shrunk to a single point as they held a 15-14 advantage. In addition to his exemplary place-kicking Tom Baldwin was becoming increasingly influential with ball in hand as he exploited the extra time and space he was finding with numerous jinking breaks that had Sutton scrambling in retreat.

Driving drizzle descended for the last half hour as conditions for players and spectators deteriorated rapidly. Scrum-half Ali Webb made a fine break as the hosts started to dominate proceedings. As the game entered the final quarter Sutton & Epsom received an additional burden when Mr Stewart correctly issued a yellow card to Dan Jones to reduce the visitors to 14 men when the flanker failed to avoid the airborne catcher. At once slick handling and ruthless efficiency saw winger Jonny Bridges cross the whitewash for his side's third try. Baldwin maintained his 100% record and the Geoffrey Knight Fields' fans rose as one to celebrate the 21-15 lead. The fifteen-point deficit was now a distant memory.

However, this was familiar territory for the Black & Whites who have become remarkably proficient in coming out on top in close encounters of the rugby kind. They looked poised to score through their pack as they advanced to the line only to concede a penalty. In the blink of an eye the visitors were back in their 22 and grateful that skipper Reilly Franklin-Talbot dropped the ball so denying his side the chance to increase their lead. Sutton's scrambling defence was being tested to the limits. As usual Steve Munford was to the fore but perhaps the best tackle came from Angus Findlay swooping off his wing to thwart another opportunity. With five minutes left the visiting forwards looked like they were going to add a third try. Once more they were denied by the whistle. This time the Rugby Lane team could not edge out their opponent at the

death. Old Reigatian held on for a 21-15 victory. It was a well-deserved success as Old Reigatian had created more opportunities and played the more eye-catching rugby in the second half.

**Sutton & Epsom**

O'Brien, Symonds, Rea, Bibby, Findlay, Bunting ©, Munford, Johnson, Lennie, Boaden, Glanville, McTaggart, Tame, Jones & Hegarty.

**Replacements:** Mount, Davies & Hilton.

**Old Reigatian:**

Woodford, Briggs, Allen, Baldwin, Parker, Holder, Webb, Marshall, Nestor, Lee, Grant, Franklin-Talbot ©, McRobbie, Goodwin & Travers.

**Replacements:** Garrec, Cox & Overtoom.

Photo credit Robin Kennedy

---

## Epsom and Ewell FC get marching orders from Sandhurst

26 January 2025



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

We then picked up another injury after Niall Stillwell was caught by a high foot that earned Morgan Elliot a yellow card, and again, he would limp off a few minutes later for debutant Tobi Falodi from Guildford City to take his place. We then had our best chance of the half after Gillfillian-Waul sent in a long throw that was flicked on by Craig Dundas for Green to strike, although White did well to parry the strike away to safety. Another opportunity followed after Green had split the

defence with a pass to Kendall, but although he was through on goal, the defender chasing him probably did enough to force him into an earlier shot than he would have liked and he put the ball wide from only twelve yards out.

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

Ultimately, this proved to be the winning goal and although I don't believe we deserved to lose over the ninety minutes, we hadn't really worked hard enough to win it either and if I'm honest, we probably should have done from the position we were in. It would be easy to say that this wasn't a very important League match, and it's true that we've had many more pivotal fixtures this season. However, this was another flat performance, particularly in the second half and will become a concern if repeated too often.

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

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

Report Source: [www.eefconline.co.uk](http://www.eefconline.co.uk)