

LibDems call “Love All” for local tennis

7 February 2024



With charges pending for using **Epsom and Ewell Borough Council** tennis courts the local LibDems ask for free sport for low income players.

In a bid to bolster recreational opportunities and promote an active lifestyle within the community, Epsom & Ewell Borough Council has joined forces with the **Lawn Tennis Association (LTA)** to revitalize public tennis courts across the borough.

The LTA has pledged £26,650 towards the refurbishment of a dozen tennis courts spread across key recreational areas including Auriol Park, Alexandra Recreation Ground, Court Recreation Ground, Gibraltar Recreation Ground and Poole Road Recreation Ground.

The initiative encompasses a comprehensive upgrade plan featuring state-of-the-art gate access technology, the implementation of a user-friendly online booking platform, and court enhancements geared towards ensuring top-tier facilities for local residents.

Beyond the infrastructural improvements, the partnership also promises an array of activities catered to all age groups and skill levels. Weekly complimentary tennis sessions, inclusive of equipment provision, will eliminate barriers to entry, fostering inclusivity and accessibility. Additionally, Local Tennis Leagues will host friendly competitions, promoting a sociable and active lifestyle within the community.

The Council will roll out a ‘pay as you play’ scheme across all tennis courts in the borough, slated for implementation in the coming year. The generated revenue will be reinvested to maintain and enhance the borough’s tennis infrastructure, ensuring its longevity for future generations.

Cllr **John Beckett**, (RA Auriol Ward) Chair of the Environment Committee, expressed enthusiasm over the collaboration, emphasizing its significance in bolstering community well-being and fostering a culture of physical activity. He lauded the forthcoming free coaching sessions as pivotal in diversifying tennis participation across socioeconomic backgrounds.

Julie Porter, Chief Operating Officer at the LTA, echoed Beckett’s sentiments, highlighting the project’s alignment with the UK Government and LTA’s Parks Tennis Project. She affirmed the commitment to providing enduring tennis facilities, thus broadening access to the sport.

In response to the impending introduction of charges for tennis court usage, Cllr **James Lawrence**, (LibDem College Ward) has launched a [petition](#) advocating for free access for disadvantaged groups. The petition proposes complimentary access for children during weekends and school holidays, as well as free usage for households receiving council tax support and other benefits.

The petition underscores the importance of preserving equitable access to public amenities, particularly for vulnerable segments of the population. As the council deliberates on the matter, stakeholders await a decision that balances fiscal responsibility with social inclusivity, ensuring that tennis remains an accessible pursuit for all within the community.

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Epsom dig deep to beat Gravesend

7 February 2024



Sutton & Epsom RFC 21 Gravesend 19. Saturday 3rd February.

It has reached the business end of the campaign and for all clubs a studious look at the table and the remaining fixtures will determine their aspirations. For Sutton & Epsom and Gravesend it was a fixture that would relieve relegation fears for the victor but increase anxiety for the defeated. When the clubs met earlier this season on the Rectory Field it was a match rather ruined by the referee's penchant for puritanical pedantry as the crowd endured an endless stream of penalties. Gravesend triumphed 36-29 with their clinical lineout securing multiple tries. On Saturday, with great credit to referee Kasey Allen, those present enjoyed a rousing contest unimpeded by the whistle as the Black & Whites secured their first win after a quartet of losses.

On a cloudy but mild afternoon on an excellent surface Gravesend kicked off playing towards the clubhouse. The temptation to watch England play Italy was too great for many and a rather Spartan gathering assembled. As England's plight increased so did the crowd watching the local contest. The opening five minutes of high tempo rugby with both sides attacking with gusto set the tone before the first scrummage interrupted the entertainment. The backs probed, the defences demonstrated thunderous tackling and the kickers sparred for territorial advantage. If Sutton were not wary of the Gravesend pack before the start they had an unpleasant reminder on the quarter hour mark. A penalty was conceded and the ball kicked into the corner. The lineout ball was taken cleaning. The initial surge was halted but slickly the ball was spun to the blindside where Brendan Kelly was in splendid isolation and had the easiest task to score in the corner. Fortune favoured S&E as Josh Smith's finely struck conversion came back off the upright. Gravesend led 5-0 with Sutton left to ponder discipline and penalty counts.

Any anxiety in the ranks of the Sutton supporters was instantly assuaged. The visitors cleared the restart but Gareth O'Brien and Ellis Rudder combined to run it back into the Gravesend 22 to win a penalty. It was the hosts' turn to kick into the corner for the attacking lineout. The first assault saw Freddie Bunting close to glory but an earlier infringement meant the home team had a second chance. As it has been for over a decade the go-to man was Matt Whitaker and he delivered. Perhaps conscious of his veteran status he arrived clean-shaven this week, though it only took days off his appearance it had not diminished his strength and footwork near the line as he powered over. Freddy Bunting's conversion put Sutton & Epsom ahead 7-5.

It was now that Gravesend winger Andrew Cooke entered the fray. His first run was rather lateral but evaded too many defenders before the ball was marshalled into touch. That was merely an appetiser to his next contribution. He gathered a clearance in his 22 in the middle of the pitch and ran the ball straight back into the Sutton 22 before being denied a sensational try. Perhaps it needed that fright to ignite the hosts. S&E now put together their best phases of the match as forwards and backs in unison swept down the pitch recycling the ball at pace. The attack ended with a penalty for a high tackle. Yet again the crowd waited to see if a 5-metre lineout would be converted into points. Once more with clinical efficiency the forwards controlled the ball and advanced to the line for lock Josh Glanville to score. Captain Bunting bisected the uprights to extend Sutton's advantage to 14-5.

The remainder of the first period was played out without further addition to the scoreboard. The indication of the first half was that this match was evenly poised with Gravesend not only dangerous through their powerful pack but carrying significantly more attacking threat in their back division than was seen in the October meeting. For S&E the lineout was functioning superbly, the set scrum had manfully met the challenge and they were playing with pace and precision. The sides turned around with all to play for with Sutton holding the upper hand 14-5.

The Rugby Lane crowd nearly had the perfect start to the second half. Centre Lawrence Elliott went from the sublime to the ridiculous. He picked the perfect angle to break the line and strode purposefully into the Gravesend 22 with a try looking probable he then threw out a pass that could generously be described as unforgiving as the bemused winger, Ellis Rudder, watched the ball speed towards the advertising hoardings. Though Sutton stole the lineout ball they could not manufacture another opening. Soon the Rugby Lane XV was to be on the defensive. A penalty in the Black & White 22 saw the visitors opt for a scrummage and as they went wide a kick through rolled against the corner flag as Sutton scrambled in defence. This started a period of relentless pressure. The hosts did not aid their cause by failing to find touch with a clearance. The Kent men were now playing their best rugby and it seemed to be a question of when rather than if they would score.

However, it was now that possibly the key factor of the fixture was becoming evident. The Sutton defence was obdurate in the extreme, to a man they tackled tenaciously and got on their feet eager to put in another hit. Almost miraculously the line held as Gravesend were frustrated time and again as they were held up over the line. Eventually the visitors scored and it took exceptional work from winger Matthew Brady twisting and turning to score in the corner with multiple tacklers in attendance. Josh Smith converted exquisitely from the touchline as they made it a two-point deficit, 12-14. Significantly it had taken ten minutes of siege warfare for the try which must have emboldened the resolve of the hosts whilst equally left the visitors asking what do we need to do to score. From the restart Gravesend were hampered by a yellow card as an instinctive outstretched arm, with no malice intended, caught Kyren Ghumra's head. The winger had to be replaced by Matt Symonds but Sutton had ten minutes to play against 14 men.

Reacting to the numerical superiority with great urgency the home team went in search of points to extend their lead beyond a solitary score. Soon they were given an opportunity. Despite being awarded a penalty very much within the capabilities of the prolific Bunting boot the captain chose to go for the corner. His bravery was rewarded as the lineout was secured and the pack advanced to the line for Chris Farrell to score. The vital conversion was added by Freddy Bunting and the 21-12 lead meant that Gravesend would have to score twice in the final quarter of an hour.

If Sutton had been under siege before their third try they now endured an all out assault from Gravesend. It was the type of rugby that has every spectator on the edge of their seat living every carry and every tackle. The previous fortitude had transformed to cussed resilience and was on the way to heroic defence. Gravesend opted for scrums but the Sutton pack refused to yield. When the ball went wide the visiting backs opted for solo glory rather than swift passing and were met by scything tackles. The longer the line held the more desperate were the attacks. If the Kent men picked the wrong options to their great credit they did not offer up the knock-ons or penalties to assist the Sutton cause. Eventually centre Chris Brady crossed the whitewash and Josh Smith made it a two-point game once more as Sutton led 21-19. Crucially Sutton had eaten away significantly at the clock and only a couple of minutes were left.

It was now a test of game management and S&E controlled possession with admirable skill advance to the 22. On the attack they put through a speculative kick to the try line. Though it did not result in a score and gave Gravesend the ball it left the visitors with the Herculean labour of scoring from the length of the pitch. Moments later the final whistle blew and Sutton had won a victory of great significance. The manner of the success built on passion, team spirit and determination should hold them in great stead for the remainder of the campaign. For Gravesend they earned a bonus point but they put in a performance vastly superior to the earlier encounter and they certainly have all the assets required to navigate their way to safety.

There is no game next Saturday but the league continues on 17 th February with a trip to Crescent Farm to play the improving Sidcup who like S&E are on 38 points in the league but a place higher on points' difference.

Sutton & Epsom: Gareth O'Brien, Kyren Ghumra, Lawrence Elliott, Freddy Bunting ©, Ellis Rudder, Tom Lennard, Steve Munford, Alex Mount, Chris Farrell, Callum Gibson, Josh Glanville, Ewan McTaggart, George London, Rob Hegarty & Matt Whitaker.
Replacements: Tom Boaden, Tariq Al Khaldi & Matt Symonds.

Gravesend: Jamie Fautley, Andrew Cooke, Chris Brady, Josh Smith, Matt Brady, George Bruce, Ben Kite, Brendan Kelly, Terry Papworth, Jamie Forsythe, Tom Bird, Harry Brooker, Matt Hewitt, Samraj Chahal & Connor Murphy.
Replacements: Stan Dadson, Ben Reeve & Harvey Dean

Image - Robin Kennedy

Twice led, thrice beaten....

7 February 2024



Sheerwater 4-3 Epsom & Ewell FC. Combined Counties League - Premier Division. Saturday 3rd February.

One of the most concerning afternoons in recent club history took place on Saturday as we made our very first visit to Sheerwater's Eastwood Leisure Centre for a massive League match between the two clubs. Yet, despite the importance of the fixture, we led twice and threw the game away in the final minutes, marking the third match in a row where we have now done this as the home side claimed a 4-3 victory to record their fifth straight win against us.



For the three previous match reports between 16th and 30 January 2024 [CLICK here](#) for reports brought to us by Nathan Lambert.

We went into the match with news breaking over the previous 24 hours that we had lost regular players Jaan Stanley and Ollie Thompson who had decided to move on and I found out during the afternoon that over the last week we had also lost George Owusu, Ade Batula and Tommy Williams too. The club hasn't bothered to advise its supporters of any of these departures, or even acknowledge their contributions, leaving long suffering fans to figure things out for themselves; not for the first time as secrecy and paranoia continue to reign at our club. One glance at the FA Full Time site was enough to tell me that we have had no new registered players joining the club since Steve Springett resigned and we took the field with just four substitutes named for this hugely important contest.

In terms of personnel Harvey Keogh came back in for Toby Colwell who was one of the four subs, but this was the only change to the line up from our narrow loss to Jersey Bulls four days earlier.

Despite the backdrop to this match, we actually started very well. There were only 91 seconds on the clock when a good move down the left was laid back for Ethan Nelson-Roberts to deliver the ball into the danger area where Carl Oblitey stretched to guide the ball past Joe Hill from close range in the Sheerwater goal. This was a terrific way to start and whilst Louis McGrave headed over unmarked from a corner soon after our goal, the home threat would prove to be fairly limited in the final third in this opening period.

Oblitey was causing problems and it looks like Springett's final signing will be pivotal to our plight if we are to stay up. He had another chance in the seventh minute after Tijani Eshilokun intercepted a poor defensive pass and set him up, only for our striker to snatch at the ball, puling it wide from just inside the area when he had more time than he realised.

The home side had as much possession in the first half as we did and around the twenty minute mark they sent two balls fizzing straight across our six yard area in opposite directions with no one there to get the vital touch, but we looked likely to increase our lead whenever we went forward and a Nick Wilson free kick was parried by Hill with Nick Inwugwu just millimetres away from getting a touch to the ball first. Oblitey then struck wide from another Eshilokun pass before we extended our lead in the 40th minute. Luke Miller did well down the right and sent in a deep cross that had Hill scrambling. He just managed to reach the ball to claw it away, but only as far as Oblitey and although his chance was blocked, the loose ball reached Lewis Pearch who scooped the ball over the line, off a defender's leg and up into the roof of the net from inside the six yard box. There were shouts for handball from the home side, but I didn't see one, although handballs would go on to play an enormous part in the second half story.

But at the half we went in, fully deserving of the two goal lead and unaware of the disastrous second half that would follow. The hosts clearly changed things and Michael Milne and George Sellick began to cause us real difficulty. An early strike from distance wasn't an issue for Keogh, but a low shot from the right wing caused him to make a good block at the near post, only for the loose ball to be struck against the arm of Reece Tierney with a penalty being awarded. Milne tucked away the penalty in the 51st minute and the home side were on the board.

Tierney was the man penalised for the penalty against Jersey Bulls four days previously, but this one, although it did hit him on the arm, looked a bit harsh and it's not clear exactly how we could have been expected to get out of the way. Having now seen a video of the incident, I don't believe that the arm was in an unnatural position either. Either way though it was now 2-1, but not for long as a low shot in came back off our far post and as it rebounded back into play Frazier Osunkoya reacted first to knock the ball into the net from around six yards. This happened in the 53rd minute and our two goal lead had suddenly evaporated into thin air.

We responded to the setback fairly well though and Oblitey set Pearch up for a low shot that was kept out by the feet of Hill before we went ahead again on the hour mark after Miller's cross was blocked by an arm and Wilson stepped up to send the keeper the wrong way from the spot. It was another one of those decisions where in the old days the appeal would have been rejected as it was clearly ball to hand, but with these new interpretations, I don't believe anyone is completely sure of what actually constitutes a handball any more. All you could say I suppose is that the referee was consistent in his approach to both penalties and we were 3-2 up again.

Despite being given this lifeline though, we started to be pushed back with Sellick in particular giving our defenders a very difficult examination and asking the question about why he was causing so much trouble after being fairly anonymous in the opening forty-five. However, Keogh was alert to block his low shot before Sellick got through again, winning a corner after a defender got across to block his shot. A free kick was then headed over from one of his crosses while we picked up three yellow cards, one of which for Wilson, saw the home player flying up in the air as a result. Maybe it looked worse than it was, but this is the fourth match in a row with a yellow card for our Captain and he is better than that.

Sellick drilled a shot across goal before delivering another ball deep to the far post which was headed back into the danger area, only for another handball to be given against Tierney. Again, this looked harsh, but Milne put the spot kick to Keogh's right for the second time in the match and it was 3-3.

In response, Ethan Nelson-Roberts benefitted from a good "no-look" pass from Pearch but chose to shoot from an angle with Miller waiting in the middle and Hill parried the ball to safety, but for the third match in a row we conceded in the closing seconds after Milne wasn't closed down and his shot from around the edge of the area crept into the corner in the 91st minute to complete his hat trick and give Sheerwater a 4-3 lead that they wouldn't have time to relinquish.

There was still time for Milne to fall to the ground in the middle of the field, whereupon he picked up a second yellow card for apparent simulation. It was a bizarre decision from a referee who had become a little too trigger happy and incensed

the home side to the extent that one of their Management was shown a red card in the “discussions” that followed the final whistle. We were no angels either as the referee was also pursued at the final whistle by our Vice-Chairman Barry Gartell, claiming vociferously that the referee didn’t understand the handball law. He may well have had a point, although I’m aware that the guidelines are often changing in this respect, but it wasn’t a very good look for our club.

Our new Management team now have some significant work to do in bringing in some new players ahead of a brutal run of fixtures coming up throughout the month of February, but the manner of this defeat will also need to be questioned, along with our game Management ability as this is now three points dropped in the last three matches that may well prove costly in a relegation battle that Sheerwater showed more likelihood of escaping than we do right now.

Epsom & Ewell: Harvey Keogh, Ethan Brazier, Ethan Nelson-Roberts, Nick Inwugwu, Reece Tierney, Nick Wilson (c), Luke Miller, Thompson Adeyemi, Carl Oblitey, Tijani Eshilokun, Lewis Pearch

Subs: Sirak Negassi for Pearch (88)

Report Source: www.eefconline.co.uk

Three January match reports for Epsom and Ewell FC

7 February 2024

Between 16th and 30th January **Nathan Lambert** took up the Epsom and Ewell FC match reporting responsibilities of his father Richard. Here are his three reports for your pleasure and the archives. Well done Nathan. Good job.

Epsom & Ewell 2-4 Virginia Water. Southern Combination Cup – Second Round. Tuesday 16th January 2024. Report Source: www.eefconline.co.uk. Reporter: Nathan Lambert

Salts frozen out by Water

On a cold evening at the Reg Madgwick stadium in Cobham, Virginia Water visited us for a Southern Combination Cup tie. The match started off well with a few good chances for both teams as in the sixth minute, Lewis Pearch was set free down the left wing and his ball into the box was headed narrowly wide by Jaan Stanley. From the resulting goal kick, Water went down the other end and put a shot from 15 yards high and wide to the right.

A few minutes later, Thompson Adeyemi ran through the opposition defence and squared a ball across for the shot to be lashed narrowly over the bar from just outside the box. Once again Virginia Water went up the other end and put a ball across the face of the goal from the left-hand side that no one could capitalize on.

After 20 minutes, both sides had decent chances and both could have scored, but it was us that took the lead in the 25th minute when a deep ball from defence found Luke Miller who got in behind the defence through the use of a nice one-two with Tijani Eshilokun. Miller finished this chance off with a great finish at the near post.

It was all downhill from here unfortunately with not much happening between this point and half time, apart from us conceding in the 44th minute with Brandon Jackson who scored for the visitors with a clinical finish into the bottom right corner.

At half time we seemed to be worth the draw but that would not stay the same into the second half as in the 52nd minute, a ball across from the left was poked into the net by Casey Boccaro from about 12 yards out. A few minutes later we made a double substitution to try and switch things up. We brought Carl Oblitey and Sirak Negassi on for Jaan Stanley and Lewis Pearch.

Debutant Oblitey, with an almost instant impact, was put through on goal by Rory Edwards after he ran through a couple of defenders and put his shot just over the bar. However soon after this we went out of the match entirely, conceding soon after from a free kick which was originally saved, but the rebound was tapped in from close range in the 72nd minute.

Ten minutes later a great back-post ball from the right wing was finished back across the goal into the far bottom corner and the visitors did not let off the pressure having two more goals ruled out for offside where balls in behind were slightly mistimed. This was not the end of the action however as substitute Sirak Negassi found himself in possession of the ball after a sliced defensive clearance to curl the ball over the keeper into the top right corner in the 90th minute.

In conclusion this was a fairly poor performance all round, as we were too open at the back, not holding the ball in midfield and we weren’t creative enough in the final third but, at the end of the day it was a cup match and our main focus has to be staying up in the league this year.

Epsom & Ewell: Harvey Keogh (c), Ethan Brazier, Tommy Williams, Rory Edwards, Reece Tierney, Nick Wilson, Luke Miller, Thompson Adeyemi, Tijani Eshilokun, Jaan Stanley, Lewis Pearch

Subs: Carl Oblitey for Pearch (63), Sirak Negassi for Stanley (63), Jerry Antwi for Williams (80)

Epsom & Ewell 1-2 Cobham. Combined Counties League – Premier Division. Friday 26th January 2024

Landlords leave it late on Friday night

Subsequent to this disappointing injury-time loss to Cobham, the threat of relegation looms large as we are six points beneath Guildford and only three ahead of Sheerwater and four ahead of Colliers Wood United. I certainly think that we need to have an improvement in form soon or we may well be headed back into step Six and possibly back to Sussex, which would be unfortunate after the work we put in to get promoted last season.

Toby Colwell came in for a rare match between the posts as Harvey Keogh was away for a few days and we started off strongly in the 4th minute where a ball in found its way to the back post where it was poked over the line following a goal-mouth scramble. Unfortunately, it was disallowed for a foul against the Cobham goalkeeper which was probably fair. Two minutes later we had another good chance after Nick Wilson found himself in some space on the edge of the box, but he drilled his shot wide.

The next piece of action at either end came in the 14th minute as Luke Miller received the ball just outside the box and put us ahead with a low, curling shot that was reached by the keeper, but not kept out. At this point I was thinking back to the last match we had played against Virginia Water, where we had gone 1-0 up fairly early with a Miller goal but had let it slip by conceding four from that point. However, this looked different as there was limited action for much of the remainder of the first half with a few saves at each end, most notably in the 34th, with a great low save by Toby Colwell that went out for a corner that led to nothing.

Three minutes later our new signing (as of last week) Carl Oblitey had a shot from roughly 20 yards that went slightly over the bar. It seemed like we were playing the better football as we were approaching half time with one Cobham chance in the 44th minute that flew over the bar from 15 yards.

At the half we probably deserved the lead. In the 51st minute, Cobham got a player through onto a one on one with our keeper that was well saved by Colwell with the follow up being blocked as well. Soon after we had a free kick that was crossed to the back post and headed narrowly wide.

Nothing much else happened for 15 minutes except for Cobham seeming to be more in control of possession. This however, would count for nothing if they couldn't create chances whilst they had most of the momentum. Unfortunately for us, they did take advantage of this period of good play with a goal in the 75th minute where a shot from Reis Stanislaus found its way across goal to Ryan Marklew who bundled it in.

At this point I could tell that it would be a matter of "when" rather than "if" as we were losing focus, losing control and we couldn't string many passes together. We tried to make a couple of substitutions to change our fortune, but Cobham piled on the pressure after a few quick restarts and got chance after chance.

A brilliant opportunity opened up for Ryan Holt in the 92nd minute as our defence didn't close him down and he was able to get his shot off to swerve which led to a corner. The corner was only half cleared and this would cost us as the ball was returned to the back post where Marklew got himself his and Cobham's second when they needed it most - three minutes over the normal time

Although there were another eight minutes after the goal for us to score in, it seemed that we were trying to punt the ball long and win the header to score but it didn't work and the game finished 2-1. I felt we were unlucky to lose but it still leaves us in a bad position, particularly if results elsewhere go badly.

Epsom & Ewell: Toby Colwell, Tommy Williams, Ethan Nelson-Roberts, Nick Inwugwu, Reece Tierney, Nick Wilson (c), Luke Miller, Thompson Adeyemi, Carl Oblitey, Tijani Eshilokun, Lewis Pearch

Subs: Jaan Stanley for Oblitey (65), Sirak Negassi for Eshilokun (80), Ethan Brazier for Williams (87)

Epsom & Ewell 1-2 Jersey Bulls. Combined Counties League - Premier Division. Tuesday 30th January 2024

A late loss, again

Our fifth home match in a row provided us with a fourth consecutive loss on Tuesday as we lost in the final minutes against Jersey Bulls. Although it was a narrow loss and late in the match it still leaves us without a point for 2024 so far; form that can't continue if we want to stay up this season.

Our opponents came straight out of the gates at kick-off, putting us under some early pressure which we couldn't escape from. It took them just nine minutes to score with a fantastic ball into the box from near the touchline that was poked in from close range by Lorne Bickley. This was not the end of their pressure however as for the next 15 minutes we didn't get many chances at all whereas they kept on putting good balls into the box which were either missed, saved or blocked.

At this point in the half we were lucky not to be further behind, but the price of weathering the storm was just the one goal. We were starting to get a couple of chances at goal and in the 30th minute, Carl Oblitey headed a long ball down to Tijani Eshilokun who returned it to him for a shot towards goal. This shot looped up in the air, over the keeper and back into the box off the frame of the goal where Oblitey finished it back across goal at the second attempt, low to the keeper's left to make it 1-1.

It was only a few minutes later when Jersey had another chance. Their forward got through on goal but the ball bobbled away from him and he landed on the ground apparently due to a shirt pull from a defender, but the referee didn't give a pen for it.

The first half finished with two chances from Jersey, one was put over into the stand at that end and the second chance was a cross that went across the face of goal that no one could get to. At the half, we were lucky not to be behind after Jersey's early pressure, but the score was one apiece at the half.

Early into the second half, we showed a bit of bright attacking play where Luke Miller got down the right wing and put a ball across but no one was far enough upfield to capitalise and give us the lead. There was very little attacking threat from

Jersey for the next 15 and even less from us as the game quietened down. However Jersey then found a second wind and was pushing forward from about the 70th minute onwards.

I was surprised that we hadn't made any substitutions by this point as we weren't looking great up top, but we waited until the 86th minute to make replacements as Jaan Stanley and Sirak Negassi came on for Lewis Pearch and Eshilokun to try and create new ideas in attack. However, three minutes later, a penalty was awarded to Jersey for an apparent handball that our defenders were certain did not hit an arm. Nevertheless, the penalty was clinically converted by Bickley into Colwell's top left corner to make it 2-1 to the visitors.

Three minutes into added time we had the final chance of the match with a free kick from about 20 yards out. Nick Wilson lined up to take it but it was parried by the keeper and the rebound was gathered. It is probably worth noting that the wall did not look like it was six yards back, let alone ten but it is not the reason we ultimately lost this match. We should have created a few more chances ourselves. At the end of the day, we could have lost the match far before that point and it still leaves us with four losses out of four for January.

Epsom & Ewell: Toby Colwell, Ethan Brazier, Ethan Nelson-Roberts, Nick Inwugwu, Reece Tierney, Nick Wilson (c), Luke Miller, Thompson Adeyemi, Carl Oblitey, Tijani Eshilokun, Lewis Pearch

Subs: Jaan Stanley for Pearch (86), Sirak Negassi for Eshilokun (86)

The Battle of Medway lost

7 February 2024



Medway 37 Sutton & Epsom RFC 26. Saturday 27th January. Sutton & Epsom returned to a most happy hunting ground on Saturday as their only previous trip to Priestfields saw them gain promotion in 2016 with an Andy Matthews hat trick. There were two survivors from that famous afternoon being back row brothers George London and Matt Whitaker. If nostalgia filled the air it was also because it was a red-letter day for Medway stalwart Tom Beaumont who was making his 200th league appearance. For the veteran flanker the hosts obliged with a 37-26 win in a hard fought and entertaining encounter.

Sutton saw a welcome return to Ellis Rudder, last seen four years ago at Westcliff in National 2, and Lawrence Elliott after injury breaks of vastly contrasting lengths of time. The Priestfield playing surface was in excellent condition considering the recent vagaries of the weather as Freddy Bunting kicked off on a dry but chill winter afternoon. S&E were on the attack immediately with a surging break to the opposition 22 from the prolific Matt Whitaker after the initial line break from Gareth O'Brien. An early riposte from the hosts gather the ball on the blindside on halfway with great prospects the ball inexplicably fell to earth. After this entertaining start the opening score was rather more mundane. The visitors conceded a penalty and were penalised for not retreating> The second infringement lead to a lineout in the corner. It was third time unlucky as the referee gave Owen Church-Mills the opportunity to open Medway's account. The Number 10 assuredly bisected the uprights to put Medway 3-0 up after five minutes.

Sutton & Epsom only took five minutes to not only open their account but claim the lead. Another Whitaker carry and support by the forwards led to a penalty. It was the hosts' turn to defend a lineout near their line. The men from Surrey secured the ball and Alex Mount was the beneficiary of their control as he forced his way over for a try. Freddy Bunting added the extras for a 7-3 advantage. Five minutes later the Black & Whites were celebrating a second try. Advancing into the 22 Freddy Bunting's probing kick behind the defence was gathered by winger Kyren Ghumra who finished with panache. Captain Bunting made it 14-3 with a relatively simple conversion. At the end of the first quarter the productive opening by the Rugby Lane XV was undone by a fatal self-inflicted wound as a woeful clearance in their 22 was predictably charged down. Medway took advantage of the retreating defence as Captain Antony Clement's perfectly timed pass gifted his centre partner, Sean Marriott, a try. Owen Church-Mills conversion made it 10-14.

The Black & Whites had a chance to reprise their opening score but Freddy Bunting overcooked the penalty and instead of a 5-metre lineout his team set up to receive a drop out. As the half continued to ebb and flow Medway were playing with great continuity and Sutton were indebted to a splendid tackle from Kyren Ghumra and an over-eager forward going off his feet at the ruck.

Medway made their first change as Deji Oyesola replaced Ryan Eastley in the front row. S&E were hampered by poor kicking from hand as two kicks in as many minutes found opponents with perfect precision who gratefully called 'mark'. As the errors mounted it was a great relief for the travelling supporters when fluency returned from the familiar source of Matt Whitaker. Gareth O'Brien and Tom Boaden continued the move that was only halted by foul play. The result was a



yellow card, Medway reduced to 14 and Sutton with the penalty. The forwards took control and Chris Farrell burrowed his way over for his sides third try. Freddy Bunting's precise kick left the scoreboard reading Medway 10 Sutton & Epsom 21.

In time added on a long clearance kick unfortunately rolled through the dead ball area to the advantage of the home team. Whether you view that as careless or unlucky is up to the generosity of your spirit. However, this territorial penalty was compounded by then conceding a penalty. Owen Church-Mills stepped up to conclude the first period with his second penalty of the afternoon which took some of the gloss off the visitors first half performance but Sutton still led by 21-13 as the teams turned around.

Medway seized the initiative early in the second period. They camped in the Sutton 22 and carried relentlessly with powerful runs ably supported. However, defiant defence by Sutton averted the try that seemed imminent as a frustrated home team decided to opt for the three points at the third time of asking. Owen Church-Mills made it three out of three for penalties and his team were within a score at 16-21. It was becoming one-way traffic in the third quarter with Captain Clement at his influential best orchestrating the backs. But the stoic Sutton defence were a match for each and every carry and it was a mark of their defence that again the hosts opted for a kick at goal. It was rather a surprise when the latest strike slid wide. The despair of the home crowd was immediately replaced by a joyous cheer. The drop kick was taken by Number 8 Todd Johnson and the previously adamant defence dissolved as he broke through a couple of tackles on his way to the 22. Then Deji Oyesola exploded through the ruck to run in untouched under the posts. The easiest of conversions was added and Medway had taken the lead 23-21.

This setback inspired Sutton who finally got some attacking ball having won a penalty at a scrum they kicked to the corner. It was the turn of the Medway defence to face the music. Willem Ratu, Freddy Bunting and the pack advanced to the line. One, two and three penalties were awarded. From the third the irrepressible Matt Whitaker added another try to his record-breaking career tally. The blustering breeze carried the conversion narrowly wide but a resurgent Sutton held a slender advantage at 26-23. Suddenly it appeared to be anyone's game with ten minutes left on the clock.

After what had gone before the denouement of the match was most disappointing for the visitors. Great credit must go to Medway who raised their game to play with urgency, accuracy and potency. They declined a kickable penalty for the lineout in the corner. This time the sustained pressure resulted in a try for lock Dan Jackson. Owen Church-Mills increased the gap to 30-26 with the game still in the balance. But the hosts were in no mood to sit back on so precarious a lead. At once they went in search of the bonus point and another try to secure the win. Ewan McTaggart appeared to have won an important lineout steal but he tapped back bounced cruelly away from the visitors and was gathered by the alert Kent pack. Once more the hosts burst through a ruck but this time it was an assist to Deji Oyesola who was perfectly placed to trot in under the posts for his second try of the afternoon and an impregnable 37-26 lead as Owen Church Mills made his personal tally 16 points. The hosts had no problem running down the clock to secure the 37-26 bonus point win.

It was the third game in a row that Sutton & Epsom had led in the second half but failed to hold onto their advantage. For long periods their defence was of the highest quality but unfortunately errors were punished. Medway, as they had at Rugby Lane, carried aggressively with great continuity created by timely offloads to excellent support players. Antony Clement was at his influential best whilst Todd Johnson and Deji Oyesola impressed in the pack. For S&E there was a great sense of frustration despite a try-scoring bonus point they had the chance for more. For long spells the defence was first rate but there was a sense that more than one of the scores could have been avoided. In attack the Black & Whites conversion rate in the 22 was high and four tries on the road should be the foundation for a victory. There is an urgent need to find a way of seeing out these close finishes to win matches that are in the balance.

Next Saturday Sutton and Epsom entertain Gravesend, at Rugby Lane at 2:30pm, who like the hosts and Sidcup have a 10-6 loss record in the rather congested nether regions of the league.

Sutton & Epsom:

Gareth O'Brien, Kyren Ghumra, Lawrence Elliott, Freddy Bunting ©, Ellis Rudder, Tom Lennard, Steve Munford, Alex Mount, Chris Farrell, Tom Boaden, Josh Glanville, Ewan McTaggart, George London, Rob Hegarty & Matt Whitaker.

Replacements: Callum Gibson, Ben Green & Willem Ratu.

Medway:

Perry Macauley, John Sipawa, Sean Marriott, Antony Clement, Conor Chalmers, Owen Church-Mills, Ben Dance, Ryan Eastley, Josh Knight, Jack Nickalls, Dan Jackson, Jordan Stubbington, Harry Gibbons, Tom Beaumont & Todd Johnson.

Replacements: Deji Oyesola, Joseph Byrne & Robert O'Brien.



Local rugby team not blinded by Old Alley

7 February 2024



Sutton & Epsom RFC 15 - Old Alleynians 19. Saturday 13th January.

On Dulwich Common at the start of the league campaign the Old Alleynians won an exhilarating encounter 29-25 with a Will Malins hat trick grabbing the headlines. Both sides were much changed for the return fixture at Rugby Lane. After the Battersea Ironsides defeat Sutton and Epsom had mixed blessings from the physio hut as Tom Lennard had recovered from his back injury to make his first start at 10 but Willem Ratu's knee failed the fitness test. History repeated itself at Rugby Lane as the OAs again triumphed by four points but this time they had to come from behind to win 19-15.

On a cold but thankfully wind free afternoon Freddy Bunting initiated proceedings. Alleynians put themselves under pressure from the kick off as a forward met the kick with a technique better served for volleyball than rugby union. The unforgiving ball was spiked backwards and snatched by the Black & White pack from the retreating visitors. Encouraged by this immediate success Sutton stormed into the opposition 22 in search of the opening score. Excellent work by the forwards saw Tom Boaden carry to within a couple of strides before the ball was knocked on a couple of phases later. However, the backpedalling defence of the visitors had incurred the wrath of the referee and Sutton had the bonus of a five-metre penalty. The simple kick at goal was declined and the attacking option was chosen. Matt Whitaker rewarded the faith of his captain with a vintage score as he stepped past the first defenders before his telescopic reach stretched for the line. Freddy Bunting's conversion drifted wide but Sutton led 5-0.

Alleynians went in search of an immediate reply and imitated the hosts by regaining the restart. The men from Dulwich eagerly went through their phases and quickly entered the 22 and looked likely to make amends for their early reverse. The determined defence of S&E managed to prevent an equalising score as the visitors spilled the ball in contact with the line at their mercy. Sutton failed to adequately clear their lines and moments later the OAs were attacking once more. Again the referee awarded a penalty to the attacking side but on this occasion the kick at goal was the more obvious option being some distance from the try-line. The attempt fell short and the Black & Whites were able to clear their lines.

Buoyed by their early success Sutton were playing with confidence and a high tempo with the halfback combination of Munford and Lennard orchestrating the attacks. The hosts were faster in thought and deed than the visitors who were struggling to find their familiar rhythm. S&E on the front foot were impressive as forwards and backs combined and they took advantage of a penalty awarded at a scrum to kick to the corner. The hosts failed to capitalise dropping the ball but a poor clearance from the subsequent scrum led to another S&E lineout on the 22. Excellent continuity was matched by robust defence that led to Tom Lennard floating a kick to the corner where Ciaran Mohr under scrutiny just failed to catch the ball a metre from the line. Fortune favoured Sutton as they were awarded a free kick for foot up in the scrum. Matt Whitaker carried the ball to the line and Tom Boaden was rewarded for his support play to receive the ball and score. Freddy Bunting converted for a 12-0 lead at the end of the first quarter.

A vocal Old Alleynians XV huddled behind the posts and called upon a greater collective effort after the second try and urged the team to match the S&E team's pace at the breakdown. From the restart Number 8 Gillam Crouch caught the ball and advanced at pace into the Sutton half. From the next scrum they drove the Black & White pack off their ball. The OAs looked favourites to score but tremendous tackling not only denied them but won Sutton & Epsom a relieving penalty. The match ebbed and flowed as the clock entered time added on in the first period. OAs continued to press for a vital score and belatedly got on the scoreboard. They kicked a penalty to the corner and secured the ball at the lineout. Though the forwards were denied the ball went wide and Robert Outram chose the perfect line to carve through the defence to score. Josh Winduss added the extras as Alleynians trailed 7-14. All their good work was nearly undone as they failed to kick the ball to touch on the final play of the half and conceded a penalty for an accidental offside. Freddy Bunting failed to compound their misery as his penalty attempt went narrowly wide and Mr Richardson blew for half-time with Sutton leading 12-7.

Sutton & Epsom were the first to score in the second period. Ten minutes into the half they were awarded a penalty as the men from Dulwich strayed offside. Captain Bunting stepped up and

bisected the uprights to extend Sutton's advantage to 15-7. Both sides looked threatening in attack but equally the well organised defences neutered the offensive play. As the match progressed it was Old Alleynians who began to have the majority of the possession and territory. As the match entered the final quarter S&E were indebted to Gareth O'Brien who made a superb mark in the corner that not only prevented a possible try but allowed the hosts to relieve the siege. Stubborn Sutton defence was frustrating the visitors who conceded a penalty in the hosts'

However, it was becoming one-way traffic and only a cover tackle from Ross Parsons averted a score. But the Black & Whites just could not find the comfort of the opposition half.

With ten minutes remaining after a rather scrappy sequence of rucks with each side turning over the ball Old Alleynians were awarded a scrum less than 10 metres from the Sutton posts in a central position. From the perfect platform winger Rory Holford touched down and replacement Ollie Hobman added the conversion. S&E's lead was now by the narrowest of margins at 15-14. The visitors were in the ascendancy and pressed ahead in search of the victory. Under pressure the Rugby Lane men responded in style as they advanced to the opposition 22 with their best sequence of the half. Sadly for the home supporters, unlike the first period, they did not come away with points after their foray in the opposition 22. As the match entered time added on the Sutton defences were breached near halfway. The visitors swarmed through and Ollie Hobman scored the crucial try. Though the conversion never threatened the posts Old Alleynians had the lead for the first time in the match, 19-15, with precious few minutes remaining.

The Black & Whites played with desperation trying to attack from deep in their half and Ben Osuntokun charged down a clearance and was only thwarted by the depth of the in-goal area from adding a fourth try. If that had been the case not only would Alleynians have secured a bonus point it would have given them an opportunity to deny Sutton a losing bonus point. In so evenly contested a match it would have been unduly harsh if the hosts had been denied the solitary point for their endeavours. Moments later the referee blew the final whistle. A keenly contested match concluded with Old Alleynians victorious 19-15 in a fixture that could have gone either way.

If the first encounter in September was entertaining fare enlivened by an excessive error count by both teams Saturday's match was of a far higher standard reflecting the improved status of both clubs. Old Alleynians gained promotion with a solitary blemish on their 2022-23 league record and are thriving at the higher level rather than struggling to acclimatise as is the case with many an elevated side. Their set piece scrummage was dominant in the first period and arguably had the upper hand throughout. Their back division has pace and quality and from the first minute they looked to play 15-man rugby. Ben Osuntokun was formidable and his ubiquitous presence became more apparent the longer the game continued. For the Black & Whites there was greater fluency and tempo in the first quarter which created the early advantage. In addition the scrambling and committed defence in their 22 frustrated their opponents. It was a match that could have gone either way but OAs finished the stronger side and at the eleventh hour broke through the Black & Whites defences for the vital score.

For Sutton & Epsom next Saturday is a rest weekend before the league campaign resumes on January 27th with the charabanc taking the team to Priestfields. In the reverse fixture an impressive Medway ran away 33-15 victors at Rugby Lane but in this league prior success appears to be almost irrelevant as a guide to form. In contrast next Saturday the Old Boys have to play their postponed fixture against Cobham. The visitors took exception to the playing surface at Dulwich Common and headed back to the Memorial Ground whilst the hosts enjoyed the afternoon watching their 3rd XV play on the unplayable surface.

Sutton & Epsom:

Gareth O'Brien, Kyren Ghumra, Ross Parsons, Freddy Bunting ©, Ciaran Mohr, Tom Lennard, Steve Munford, Alex Mount, Chris Farrell, Tom Boaden, Josh Glanville, Ewan McTaggart, Rob Hegarty, Josh Pulvirenti & Matt Whitaker.

Replacements: Callum Gibson, Ben Green & Matt Symonds.

Old Alleynians

Josh Winduss, Tom Williams, Robert Outram, Andrew Jones-Davies, Rory Holford, Henry Dewing, Tristram Holden, Jeremiah Manning, Charles Thompson, Tom Weightman, Will Hinchcliffe, James Mair, Ben Osuntokun, Hadley Eames & Gillam Crouch.

Replacements: Cameron Saunders, Brian Lennard & Ollie Hobman.

Photo credit: Robin Kennedy

Battersea power ahead of local rugby team

7 February 2024



Battersea Ironsides 38 Sutton & Epsom RFC 29. Saturday 6th January.

In September at Rugby Lane Sutton & Epsom belatedly gained their first success of their campaign with a last gasp 26-25 win over the then league leader's Battersea Ironsides. Therefore the return fixture was anticipated with great relish. Before the kick off there was much disruption from the scheduled proceedings. Storm Henk had led to torrential midweek rains resulting in Battersea's Openview facilities being unplayable. Fortunately an alternative time and venue was found. The match was rescheduled for 4pm at the splendid Grasshoppers RFC venue. The crowd enjoyed the curtain-raiser at 2pm as HAC overcame Grasshoppers 22-14 in the parallel Regional 2 Thames League before settling in for the main event. A thrilling nine-try match ensued with the lead changing hands five times before Battersea Ironsides triumphed 38-29.

Sutton & Epsom suffered a setback in the warm up as Tom Lennard injured his back. The deck was reshuffled and Gareth O'Brien went to 10 and Austin Bell, returning from University, came off the bench to 15. The unfortunate Lennard, with all the mobility of an octogenarian, was ushered to the bench and was unlikely to play any part in proceedings unless some miracle worker happened to be strolling down Syon Lane. The game started under the floodlights with Battersea Ironsides immediately in the ascendancy. A try in the opening minute was denied as the hosts were held up over the line. Five minutes later blindside flanker Ollie Davies made the first of many penetrating breaks. From halfway he broke through the first defender then palmed off prospective tacklers who were scattered like skittles as he raced in to score. Charles Stuart regally added the conversion for a 7-0 lead.

The high tempo opening from the hosts continued as Charles Stuart added a penalty to extend the lead to 10-0. Moments later Sutton were on the scoreboard from the familiar efficiency of Freddy Bunting's boot as he added another penalty to his ever-increasing season's tally to make it 10-3. However, the errant Sutton defence yielded another penalty that enabled the hosts to regain their ten-point advantage to lead 13-3 a couple of minutes later. At the end of the first quarter Battersea Ironsides were rewarded for their dominant start to the match with their second try. This time it was Number 8 Tom Jeffs who forced his way past flailing defenders from ten metres out. The ball-carrying of Davies & Jeffs was to be the difference between the sides by the final whistle. Though Charles Stuart's conversion drifted harmlessly wide the Ironsides had a healthy advantage of 18-3 with the visitors starved of territory and possession.

The early ascendancy of the SW17 outfit was replaced by a sterling Sutton comeback. At last the Black & Whites put together some phases and excellent handling got them deep into the Battersea half. The opportunity looked to have been lost but the referee brought the game back for an earlier offence. With the 15-point deficit Captain Bunting shunned the 3-point option and kicked to the corner. The gamble saw a rich reward. Josh Pulvirenti scored from close-range and Freddy Bunting added the conversion to trail 10-18. Though the S&E revival was soon deflated by another Charles Stuart penalty that saw the score at 21-10 the Black & Whites had a foothold in the game and were looking dangerous when they had possession.

With the interval rapidly approaching Sutton & Epsom enjoyed their best spell of the game as they went in search of a score before the break. Resolute and powerful tackling by the Battersea team held the line. However, under pressure the defence transgressed and they were reduced to 14 men. With the clock counting down in time added on in the first period finally flanker Rob Hegarty forced his way over following a 5-metre lineout. Freddy Bunting's conversion concluded the first half with Sutton closing the gap to 17-21.

The second half began with the Black & Whites confident that they could repeat the come from behind win they had enjoyed earlier this season. In contrast Battersea sought to regain the dominance they had enjoyed at the start of the game. As ever the opening score of the half would be vital for the hopes of both sides. Ten minutes into the second period Battersea kicked into the Sutton half. Fullback Austin Bell gathered the ball and looked for an advantageous 50-22 kick. As the ball rolled towards the beneficial touch it trickled to a halt but Sutton's initial frustration was transformed into delight. Winger Kyren Ghumra arrived with the cover and his boot manage to nudge the ball to the Ironsides 22. He regained his footing gathered the loose ball and ran in unopposed. Freddy Bunting added the conversion and Sutton led 22-21.

If self-doubt had entered into the hosts it was soon dispelled as the redoubtable Tom Jeffs added to his account with his second try of the afternoon. A penalty was kicked to the corner and the 5-metre lineout was secured and ball was quickly transferred to Tom Jeffs who bulldozed his way over. Though the conversion was missed Battersea lead once more by 26-22. Sutton refused to be subdued and five minutes later they had regained lead. From a breakdown 15 metres from the line lock Ewan McTaggart gather the ball, broke through and sidestepped the last defender to score by

the uprights. The towering second row is arguably S&E's most improved player this season and his try was greeted with joyous enthusiasm from the travelling support. With Freddy Bunting adding the extras the Black & Whites led 29-26 entering the final quarter.

Once more the Ironsides went in search of a try. Another penalty was kicked to the corner for a 5-metre lineout. The expectant home crowd bayed for a repeat dose of the medicine. Initially it appeared that the Sutton defences had frustrated the hosts on the line. After much delay and close inspection of the mass of humanity piled in front of him the referee raised his arm aloft to signal the try. Prop Henry Warby was awarded the crucial score. The pendulum had swung back in favour of Battersea and Charles Stuart's conversion put the hosts 33-29 ahead. A couple of minutes later the confused crowd saw Josh Glanville and a Battersea forward depart with yellow cards. It came to pass that Sir had been unimpressed by some pushing and shoving though the incident was less than what commuters experience boarding a rush hour tube and to onlookers it seemed a rather draconian response.

The topsy-turvy nature of the second half had fifteen minutes to go and the outcome was still in the balance. Sutton & Epsom went in search of the 22 and a platform to launch an attack on the Battersea line. Freddy Bunting's long penalty kick from hand, intended for the corner, was gathered infield and a mark called. The threat was averted and the Ironsides set out their stall in the visitors' half. In a rousing finish multiple attacks followed as last ditch tackles frustrated the hosts. Finally, Charles Stuart rounded off a fine performance as he dummied and sidestepped his way over the line for Battersea Ironside's fifth try of the afternoon. The score resulted in an unseemly fracas in the in-goal area. No further cards were issued with only a couple of minutes remaining but Battersea were awarded a penalty at the restart. For those who revel in the unusual it was rather disappointing that Charles Stuart did not attempt the extra three points but Battersea led 38-29 with a two score cushion.

There was no further addition to the score and the Ironsides had won a most exciting game 38-29. Messrs Davies and Jeffs had been outstanding for the victors carrying numerous times collecting considerable yardage as well as three tries. Sutton had looked dangerous in attack but their defence lacked the excellence of their Cobham away win and ultimately that was the deciding factor in a match played between two sides who were notably better than their earlier meeting this season. Next Saturday Sutton & Epsom host Old Alleynians who have started 2024 in splendid fashion by crushing London Cornish 50-17. When the two sides met at Dulwich Common in September the Old Boys edged out S&E 29-25.

Sutton & Epsom:

Austin Bell, Ciaran Mohr, Willem Ratu, Kyren Ghumra, Freddy Bunting ©, Gareth O'Brien, Ross Parsons, Tom Boaden, Chris Farrell, Alex Mount, Ewan McTaggart, Josh Glanville, Rob Hegarty, Josh Pulvirenti & Matt Whitaker.

Replacements: Callum Gibson & Ben Green. Unused: Tom Lennard.

Battersea Ironsides

George Clair, Will Diamond, Ben Turner, Jacob Donovan, Mike Brennan, Charles Stuart, Jack Moates, Harry Martin, Ollie Lewis, Henry Warby, Archie MacPherson, Sam Reeves, Ollie Davies, Alex Chitan & Tom Jeffs.

Replacements: Harry Batson, Max Trickett & Cameron Baker.

A goal conceded for every year not played

7 February 2024



Epsom & Ewell FC 0-5 Camberley Town. Combined Counties League - Premier Division. Saturday 6th January.

Our first meeting with Camberley Town for five years ended in a dispiriting home defeat by five clear goals, which marked our worst defeat of the season so far. Historians won't be particularly surprised as we hadn't won on this day in history since 1934, but this was surprisingly poor, bearing in mind our stellar second half showing just seven days previously.

Despite many other matches being called off and the knowledge that our game would definitely be on, a hugely disappointing crowd counted as 62, even though the official figure was advised as a rather ambitious 92, witnessed a very disappointing performance against a Camberley Town team that belied their League position and looked likely to score whenever they went forward, while we registered just two shots on target, with the visiting keeper Stuart Norman only having one serious save to make, and that came in second half injury time!

We made three changes from last week's win over Tooting & Mitcham United. Steve Springett was on dad duty and was

unable to take the field, while Nick Wilson and Reece Tierney returned to the line up after being unavailable and injured respectively. They came in for the injured Ollie Thompson and also Nick Inwugwu who had to make do with a place on the bench, while Lewis Pearch came in up front.

On a day when there were some very erratic officiating calls that left players confused and sometimes frustrated at times, it is important to point out that this match wasn't close enough to be affected by them, even though we looked quite good for the opening ten minutes!

Unfortunately, the first time the visitors went into our half, their striker was brought down clumsily on the edge of the penalty area and Regan Hitch delivered a free kick casually into the bottom far corner with our keeper Harvey Keogh either slow to get down to it, or unsighted. This goal came in the tenth minute and the lead was extended just two minutes later as a right wing cross was met with an unmarked looping header from Mason Taylor that gave Keogh no chance from twelve yards.

Things nearly got worse in the 14th minute when another break on the right from Stan Jones ended with a shot past Keogh that crossed the line, but hit the diagonal stanchion supporting the post and came back out. We had a spell of incidents like this a few years back at Chipstead, but fortunately, in each case the officials had awarded the goal to us. This time there was to be no such decision in Camberley's favour, much to the amazement of a number of their players and the score remained at 2-0.

Maybe it was to be our day after all. That bit of fortune should really have motivated us to fight back, but Epsom just weren't at the races and a third goal followed in the 26th minute. Maybe appropriately it was Jones who was the scorer after being "denied" twelve minutes earlier, although his shot appeared to be scuffed and Keogh, expecting a more powerful shot, went down before the ball got there and it crept into the net.

We desperately needed a way back into this match in quick time and Luke Miller produced a pinpoint cross for Pearch, but he headed the ball over the bar from just six yards. What we didn't realise at the time was that this would prove to be our best chance of the match and the visitors were soon back on the attack with Keogh being well placed to make a good save from a close range header. As we went into the third minute of injury time Tommy Williams played a decent one-two with a teammate, but the shot with his weaker left foot was easily fielded by Norman.

Could we turn this around in the second half, as we had done just seven days previously? Well, frankly, no! We had only been playing for a few minutes when an injury to Ayran Kugathas necessitated his replacement. We did put together a decent move, starting with Jaan Stanley who found Miller who then set up Rory Edwards, whose shot went across goal, but was just out of reach of the incoming Ethan Nelson-Roberts. Keogh was forced into another good save but in the 70th minute a good run from Jones ended with a shot across goal where Brandon Vangrove was there to touch the ball in from close range for the fourth Camberley goal. Things were looking really serious now and we made a triple substitution, but Keogh still had to make another close range save to prevent the score going higher.

We had a half chance with quarter of an hour remaining when substitute Thompson Adeyemi had a try from just outside the penalty area, only to see the ball hit the full face of the cross bar and rebound to safety, but in the 79th minute a corner was headed in by the unmarked Tom Wensley at close range and we were 5-0 down. Keogh had to make another couple of saves, with the latter of these coming out of the top drawer with a full stretch save of a shot that was heading for the top corner before Norman actually had some work to do in the 92nd minute when he tipped over a Williams shot from twenty yards with the subsequent corner being headed over by Tierney, but to be honest, a goal wouldn't have even counted as a consolation, such was the standard of this performance.

You rarely get results this one-sided unless two things happen. Firstly, we didn't play well, but secondly, Camberley did. With the hugely impressive Jones on the field, we appeared to have no real answer and remain winless against the Krooners in nine attempts dating back to 2014. To his credit our Manager Springett was brutally honest about the performance on social media after the match and it is hoped that we can fight back, although we now do not have another League match for three weeks, so there should be plenty of opportunity to try things out at training during that time. Either way, we need to improve or this relegation battle will remain a concern for far longer than it really should do.

Epsom & Ewell: Harvey Keogh (c), Tommy Williams, Ayran Kugathas, Rory Edwards, Reece Tierney, Nick Wilson, Luke Miller, Tijani Eshilokun, Lewis Pearch, Jaan Stanley, Ethan Nelson-Roberts

Subs: Nick Inwugwu for Kugathas (50), Thompson Adeyemi for Stanley (65), Ade Batula for Pearch (77), Tino Carpene for Miller (77), Jerry Antwi for Nelson-Roberts (77)

Something special for Surrey athletes

7 February 2024



Special Olympics **Surrey Athletes** Gear Up for Inaugural National Winter Games. In an exciting development for Special

Olympics Great Britain, the country's leading sports training and competition provider for individuals with intellectual disabilities, the spotlight is on six talented athletes from Special Olympics Surrey. These exceptional individuals are set to represent their region at the upcoming inaugural National Winter Games organized by Special Olympics GB.

The event, scheduled to unfold in Folgaria, nestled in the picturesque northern Italian region of Trentino-Alto Adige/Südtiro, will feature alpine skiing and figure skating competitions for athletes with intellectual disabilities. From January 27 to February 3, the participating athletes will showcase their prowess on the icy slopes and the glittering rink.

A total of 73 athletes hailing from England, Scotland, and Wales will participate in the Special Olympics GB National Winter Games, and among them are the six accomplished athletes from Special Olympics **Surrey**:

- **Mikey Lines** - Alpine Skiing, SO South East - SO Surrey
- **Bartholome Meredith-Hardy** - Alpine Skiing, SO South East - SO Surrey
- **Stef Nakoneczny** - Alpine Skiing, SO South East - SO Surrey
- **Karen Oosthuizen** - Alpine Skiing, SO South East - SO Surrey
- **Elanor Sinden** - Alpine Skiing, SO South East - SO Surrey
- **Alice Willans** - Alpine Skiing, SO South East - SO Surrey

Colin Dyer, Chief Executive of Special Olympics GB, expressed his enthusiasm about expanding their competition calendar with the introduction of the National Winter Games. He highlighted the transformative impact of national and international events on athletes, inspiring them to develop life skills and make positive changes, supporting their independence and career growth.

Special Olympics GB is extending its gratitude to Special Olympics Grampian club for their dedicated planning efforts as the host club. Additionally, Inclusive Skating has been recognized as the delivery partner for all figure skating events. The Ski Company and Alpe Cimbra are providing crucial support to ensure the success of the National Winter Games.

Dyer emphasized that this competition will play a pivotal role in selecting athletes for the subsequent Special Olympics World Winter Games, slated for Torino, Italy, from March 8 to 16, 2025. Team Special Olympics GB will be represented by eight alpine skiers and two figure skaters, marking their return to the global stage since 2017.

Across England, Scotland, and Wales, Special Olympics GB's impact is evident, providing regular sporting opportunities for over 6,600 athletes with intellectual disabilities. With 95 accredited clubs offering training and competition in 27 different sports, a devoted team of 3,800 volunteers ensures the success of the programs.

Established in 1978, Special Olympics Great Britain is a non-profit charity dedicated to providing year-round sports coaching and athletic competition in summer and winter sports for children and adults with intellectual disabilities. With 95 accredited programs across England, Scotland, and Wales, the organization offers coaching and competition opportunities in 27 sports, supported by over 3,800 volunteers benefiting more than 6,600 athletes.

Special Olympics GB goes beyond sports, transforming lives by boosting confidence, realizing potential, enhancing physical fitness and mental well-being, fostering courage, and fostering new friendships. Financial support from individuals, trusts, and corporate donations is crucial for the continuation of their impactful work.

Founded in 1968, Special Olympics is a global movement aimed at ending discrimination against individuals with intellectual disabilities. Using the power of sport and programming in education, health, and leadership, Special Olympics fosters acceptance and inclusivity.

With over six million athletes, Special Olympics Unified Sports® partners, one million coaches, and volunteers in over 200 accredited programs, Special Olympics organizes more than 30 Olympic-type sports and over 100,000 Games and competitions annually. Learn more at www.SpecialOlympics.org.

Horley make mincemeat of Epsom and Ewell

7 February 2024



Horley Town 4-0 Epsom & Ewell FC. Combined Counties League - Premier Division. Saturday 23rd December 2023.

Exactly six years to the day since we last visited Horley Town, we made a visit that will not live long in the memory unless you are a Horley fan as we crashed 4-0 in our latest League fixture.

Horley produced a nice touch for this contest by sending some of the children around the ground to offer everyone mince pies, but regrettably that was all we would get from them in this match, as they finished much the stronger of the two teams after a fairly even first half hour. In comparison, we were extremely generous and many gifts were presented by

our team!

Our line up contained our Captain Harvey Keogh, who had returned from a trip away, while Tommy Williams came back into the starting eleven, pushing Ethan Nelson-Roberts further forward. Tijani Eshilokun, Luke Miller and Tino Carpena also started, while Thomson Adeyemi surprisingly dropped to the bench and Sirak Negassi and George Owusu were not available. Finally, Ollie Thompson was back on the bench after what looked like being a longer term injury last weekend, although he advised that he wasn't going to be risked. For Horley there were two former Salts as Josh Alder and their Captain Louis Chin lined up against us.

Although possession was fairly even in the opening exchanges, we never really managed to get a shot of any power or accuracy at goal, while for Horley, Sam Harper broke through, but Keogh spread himself well to block the ball with his feet. An Alder right wing cross just eluded the incoming strikers, while Keogh then required treatment after he and a home player both went up with high feet and our man came off worse. Fortunately he was able to continue after receiving treatment.

The game changed in the 33rd minute when Miller picked up a yellow card, somewhat harshly, I thought. However, his response to this in applauding the decision earned him an unnecessary visit to the sin bin. Our club are well aware when a referee has an assessor present, but I wonder whether our Management are advised of this fact, as you always know that these sort of things are more likely to be actioned on by an official who is being assessed.

Within a minute we were forced into a substitution after Reece Tierney picked up an injury and Thompson came on for an appearance he wasn't expecting to make. Horley stepped up the pressure and Nick Inwugwu made a good clearance from a dangerous ball in. Then Alder's shot on goal was blocked for a corner, from which Jake Roberts then fired the ball into the roof of the net for the opening goal in the 37th minute.

We were back to ten men soon after, but Horley were up and running now and a right wing cross was headed just wide of our goal before our defence parted in the 48th minute and Joshua Rapson delicately chipped the ball over the exposed Keogh to put the home side two nil up at the break.

We had a couple of half chances early in the second half, but Nelson-Roberts was flagged offside when Miller appeared to be fouled in the area, and then a Steve Springett free kick required George Hyde in the Horley goal to make his first real intervention of the day by punching the ball clear, but these were small crumbs unfortunately and in the 57th minute we conceded a third goal in awful circumstances when Harper eased past Inwugwu and squared the ball for Cameron Gyeabour to finish off from close range.

Bad became worse just seven minutes later when Hyde's long goal kick put Alder through and with no defenders nearby, Keogh had to come out, leaving the former Salt to chip the ball over him into the net from twenty yards, despite a covering defender being on the line by this time.

In response Springett sent a free kick high and wide from 25 yards and substitute Adeyemi also sent a shot wide, but I didn't recognise a single shot on target from our boys in this match and there was even time for Hyde to venture behind the goal to share a drink with some of the home fans! The final chances fell to the home team and they had a fair shout for a penalty turned down, before Hyde nearly secured a second assist when his long ball found Rapson on the left and his shot was well blocked by Keogh, although the ball went up in the air and should have really been finished off by an incoming player, but fortunately he missed his kick! We were then reduced to ten men in the 93rd minute after Nelson-Roberts picked up a visit to the sin-bin himself. He has been one of our best players this season, but obviously you can't influence the match when you are on the sidelines and we need to start learning this lesson. Mercifully the whistle saved us from further punishment and we retired, defeated by four clear goals.

There were many concerning aspects about this particular afternoon, but I shall concentrate on the three most important ones. Firstly, the way we defended, particularly in the second half. Secondly, we have now gone 301 minutes of normal time since we scored a goal. Finally, for the first time in a while results around us did not go well, particularly with Colliers Wood United winning at Tooting & Mitcham United. We face the latter in our next contest and it's fair to say that this now becomes a very important League match for our club.

Epsom & Ewell: Harvey Keogh (c), Tommy Williams, Nick Inwugwu, Steve Springett, Reece Tierney, Nick Wilson, Luke Miller, Tijani Eshilokun, Tino Carpena, Rory Edwards, Ethan Nelson-Roberts

Subs: Ollie Thompson for Tierney (34), Thompson Adeyemi for Carpena (56), Jaan Stanley for Miller (76), Ade Batula for Springett (76)

Report Source: www.eefconline.co.uk

Wish their paths had not crossed?

7 February 2024



Epsom & Ewell FC 0-2 Tadley Calleva*. Combined Counties League - Premier Division Tuesday 19th December 2023.

On a rather chilly Tuesday evening at the Madgwick in front of less than 70 hardy souls, Tadley Calleva made the long journey over to Surrey and returned with the points after defeating us fairly comfortably by two goals to nil.

Anyone who just looks at the results would have seen Tadley's heavy defeat at the weekend, but anyone who actually studies them in detail would have seen that it came against Farnham Town and written it off as an anomaly. Far more relevantly, their three matches prior to that had been won and there was little doubt that they would collect the points here as they controlled the first half, scored twice and then kept us at arm's length for the majority of the second period, despite an improvement from our boys.

Toby Colwell kept his place in goal, but Ollie Thompson was unable to go following his injury at Colliers Wood United that will keep him out over the Christmas period at least. In his place came Steve Springett while Ethan Nelson-Roberts also returned which enabled Nick Inwugwu to switch over to right back, releasing Rory Edwards to play back in midfield again. Further forward Jaan Stanley and Tijani Eshilokun were unavailable, so Sirak Negassi and George Owusu came in for starts with Luke Miller dropping to the bench and Nick Wilson retaining the Captain's armband he had been holding since Thompson's injury.

We nearly had a shocking start as the visitors swept downfield and Alex Miller struck our post with a curling shot inside the first ten seconds. A regular supporter near me advised the time as six seconds, which, if it had gone in would have represented the earliest goal ever scored in an Epsom match as far as records could prove. We escaped this time, but apart from a Negassi shot that was well blocked by a defender, we created little in the first half and were often confronted with the sight of watching the match at distance as much of the opening "forty-five" was played in our half. Colwell made a couple of good saves midway through it, with the second of these right out of the top drawer to deny Sheldon Wright.

We made a little progress in the 33rd minute when Thompson Adeyemi fed Negassi who beat two men, but shot weakly at Craig Atkinson in the Tadley goal from a good position. However, we were back on the defensive soon after and the visitors opened their account in the 35th minute with a deep corner that was met at the far post with a downward header by Brad Neal. Although one of our defenders cleared the ball away, it had already crossed the line. Bad became worse when a second followed just four minutes later with a low drive from Ousman Darboe which nestled in the far corner from the edge of the penalty area.

We could have no complaints about the score to this point, although it was disappointing that we had created so little, particularly after drawing a blank at Colliers Wood in the previous match. The second half looked like it might follow a similar pattern as Colwell was forced into another good low save just after the restart, but things got better and we nearly pulled a goal back in the 57th minute when a deep corner found Ade Batula who controlled the ball and shot at goal, only for the ball to be blocked on the line by a defender with the grateful Atkinson falling onto the ball before we could get that vital touch.

On the hour we saw the return of Tommy Williams after he had completed his four match suspension, although it was originally meant to be in relief of Reece Tierney whose number came up, only for a quick change of mind by our Management team after they had spotted that Nelson-Roberts had just picked up an injury and he was the man who came off instead.

Batula was asking a few questions with his pace and he was brought down in the corner for a free kick just a couple of yards in from the touchline, but the Springett delivery was headed over the bar by Adeyemi. Then Batula broke through the offside trap and bore down on goal, although his shot was a good height for Atkinson who parried the strike on goal. The visitors had a couple of strikes from distance, both of which only just missed our top corner, but this was a much better half and Adeyemi climbed to win a good header which he sent back across goal. It wasn't clear whether it would have crept inside the post, but it didn't matter as a defender was there to hook the ball away in any case.

As we entered the final few minutes of normal time Darboe picked up a yellow card for a clumsy challenge and two minutes later collected a second card, leaving the visitors with ten men for the remaining two minutes, plus five more of injury time. In between the two bookings we had our best chance of the match after Adeyemi made a good run and pass to Miller who then put another substitute through in Tino Carpene, who clipped the ball over Atkinson, only to see the ball miss the far post and also the incoming Springett by inches.

Our final chance came in the first minute of injury time, but as we sent a long throw in from Williams to the head of the towering Adeyemi it was apparent that there was no one actually beyond him to finish off a chance should one arrive! The flick on was duly won, with the ball dribbling past the far post for what would have been a certain tap in, had we gambled. It set the seal on a disappointing evening, although it must be remembered that our opponents are looking good for the playoff spots and were very solid last night.

The League table shows us third from bottom with 14 points from 19 available which currently provides a healthy gap between us and the two clubs below us. For some reason our club has chosen not to put a League table in its match programmes, which is a shame because it looks a lot better than it did at the end of September! Hopefully, we can continue to increase the number of points between us and the single relegation place when we visit Horley on Saturday for another important League fixture.

Epsom & Ewell: Toby Colwell, Nick Inwugwu, Ethan Nelson-Roberts, Steve Springett, Reece Tierney, Nick Wilson ©, Ade Batula, Thompson Adeyemi, George Owusu, Rory Edwards, Sirak Negassi

Subs: Tommy Williams for Nelson-Roberts (59), Luke Miller for Owusu (74), Tino Carpene for Batula (80), Kiyoo Brown for Negassi (80)

Report Source: www.eefconline.co.uk

The word Calleva means "**where the paths cross**".

Somewhat resigned by Reigatians

7 February 2024



Sutton & Epsom RFC 21 - Old Reigatian 38. Saturday 16th December.

In the reverse fixture Old Reigatian finally subdued a stubborn Sutton and Epsom 35-29 after a game of fluctuating fortunes. This time the Black & Whites were enjoying a run of five victories whilst the visitors were lying third and snapping at the heels of the leaders. For the hosts it was a red-letter day for hooker Chris Farrell who was celebrating his 100 th 1st XV league appearance. In stark contrast Ben Green was making his debut for S&E and was one of four changes to the starting line-up. Old Reigatian continued their upward trajectory with a very impressive 38-21 triumph.

Freddy Bunting kicked off with the wind favouring the hosts. Moments later he was impressively putting his team onto the front foot with a probing 50-22 kick. It was a fast and furious opening ten minutes as each side were eager to gain the early advantage. It was most competitive at the breakdown and both defences held firm. On the quarter hour Lawrence Elliott was adjudged to have obstructed the OR kicker as the ball rolled off the back of the pitch. The penalty was kicked into the corner. Sterling Sutton defence halted the visitors but they were brought back for another penalty. The second attempt improved on the dress rehearsal as a perfectly executed catch & drive saw prop Ciaran Nestor touch down for the first try of the afternoon. Lucas Overtom stroked over the conversion for a 7-0 lead for OR.

| # | Team | P | W | D | L | PF | PA | +/- | TB | LB | Pts |
|----|---------------------|----|---|---|----|-----|-----|------|----|----|-----|
| 1 | Beckenham | 13 | 9 | 0 | 4 | 394 | 322 | 72 | 8 | 3 | 47 |
| 2 | Old Reigatian | 13 | 9 | 0 | 4 | 380 | 300 | 80 | 10 | 0 | 46 |
| 3 | Battersea Ironsides | 13 | 9 | 0 | 4 | 395 | 274 | 121 | 7 | 2 | 45 |
| 4 | Reeds Weybridge | 13 | 9 | 0 | 4 | 354 | 235 | 119 | 4 | 3 | 43 |
| 5 | Old Colfeians | 13 | 7 | 0 | 6 | 324 | 331 | -7 | 5 | 2 | 35 |
| 6 | Medway | 13 | 7 | 0 | 6 | 290 | 338 | -48 | 5 | 2 | 35 |
| 7 | Old Alleynians | 12 | 6 | 0 | 6 | 321 | 306 | 15 | 6 | 3 | 33 |
| 8 | Sutton & Epsom | 13 | 6 | 0 | 7 | 372 | 364 | 8 | 4 | 4 | 32 |
| 9 | Cobham | 12 | 5 | 0 | 7 | 319 | 343 | -24 | 7 | 1 | 28 |
| 10 | Gravesend | 13 | 4 | 0 | 9 | 257 | 382 | -125 | 4 | 3 | 23 |
| 11 | Sidcup | 13 | 3 | 0 | 10 | 283 | 353 | -70 | 3 | 4 | 19 |
| 12 | London Cornish | 13 | 3 | 0 | 10 | 280 | 421 | -141 | 4 | 2 | 18 |

England Rugby Regional 2 South East table

Top image: Chris Farrell playing in his 100th 2st XV league match. Credit Robin Kennedy.

Though the hosts pressed hard to get back on terms with a couple of visits to their opponents' 22 the men from the Geoffrey Knight Fields stood tall with an impregnable defence. S&E got to the line but were denied the chance to level the score as they lost possession at the critical juncture. In fact it was the team from Reigate who lifted the temporary siege and scored their second try with their second visit to the Sutton 22. On the half hour mark a sweeping play with great continuity provided by adept passes out of tackles saw Reigatian centre Gareth Stephens chip over the defence re-gather the ball and complete a stylish score. Though the conversion never



threatened the uprights Old Reigatian had a healthy 12-0 advantage.

Sutton & Epsom were in need of a score to get a foothold in the game and despite Willem Ratu charging ahead like Jehu support was not at hand to benefit from the break. Sutton did not aid their chances by conceding penalties and from one given for a high tackle the Reigate side kicked into the corner. Despite spoiling the lineout the loose ball was touched down in the host's in-goal area resulting in a 5-metre scrum to OR. A fine tackle by Josh Pulvirenti and a knock on appeared to have saved S&E but once more the referee brought the sides back to an earlier infringement by the Rugby Lane XV. Following another scrummage and multiple carries Max Coyle popped over from short-range. Lucas Overtoom added the extras for a 19-0 lead.

A thoroughly downcast home team restarted and promptly conceded a soft score. The kick was taken and returned with a vengeance through apologetic tackles. Gareth O'Brien's attempt to clear the ball from his 22 was impeded and the voracious hands of the visitors collected the loose ball. It was relayed to lock Jack Baart who powered in at the corner. The touchline conversion bisected the uprights and Old Reigatian led 26-0 with a bonus point already in their back pocket. Timely words were uttered under the Sutton posts and the hosts desperately attempted to get a score before the interval but to no avail. OR turned around 26-0 ahead leaving S&E with an Everest-like challenge to maintain their winning run.

It is the modern vogue for coaches and pundits alike to highlight the conversion rate for teams when visiting their opponents' 22. For sorry Sutton the first half recorded 0% whilst Old Reigatian were on 100%. In addition the normally faultless Bunting boot had erred twice. The 26-0 deficit may not have accurately reflected the balance of the game but it highlighted that one side was ruthlessly clinical whilst the other was most profligate. The Black & Whites held back on making changes at the break no doubt planning to get an early score to exert maximum pressure on the visitors. They would have to reverse the trend of the first period and take every opportunity to score if they were going to get anything out of this fixture.

An early score for the hosts was not only essential to make a contest of the match but also for Sutton's self-belief. However, within five minutes the visitors were crossing the whitewash for a fifth time. A kick through, a ricochet and a helpful assist from a Black & White boot gifted Gareth Stephens his second try. Despite the missed conversion Old Reigatian looked over the horizon and far away leading 31-0. Sutton & Epsom rang the changes as Alex Mount returned to the fray and Ross Parsons had his first taste of action replacing Chris Ballard. A few minutes later George London was the last pair of fresh legs as Isaac Lea took a breather. Two penalties on the bounce to the home team propelled the Rugby Lane team to a lineout 10 metres out. Though they were thwarted this time another penalty meant they had a second chance from a 5-metre lineout. The forwards controlled the ball and the try was scored. It could not have been a more popular try as it was the outstretched arm of Chris Farrell on his 100th appearance who touched down. Freddy Bunting added the conversion for 7-31.

Ten minutes later Sutton & Epsom were again benefiting from Reigatian indiscipline as they kicked a penalty into the corner. From the five-metre lineout the visitors' defiant defence thwarted initial attempts until Alex Mount side-stepped would be tacklers to score. Freddy Bunting added the extras as the home crowd dared to dream of a miracle at 14-31. Those dreams swiftly became a nightmare as the Black & Whites conceded an interception try just outside their 22 a minute later. Max Coyle had his second try and Lucas Overtoom his fourth conversion and the visitors had the healthy cushion again leading 38-14.

Sutton were not finished and it was Alex Mount who scored again. If the prop's first try owed much to nimble footwork his second was from brute force and determination as he muscled his way over the line. Freddy Bunting did the necessary to trail 21-38. With ten minutes remaining there began the game within the game as the Black & Whites went in search of bonus points as one more try would secure at least one consolation point. Though the hosts dominated territory and possession they failed to add to their tally. The resolute Old Reigatian defence were in no mood for any charitable Christmas presents for their opponents. The final whistle concluded the contest with OR victors by the commanding margin of 38-21 and excellent value for their success. Old Reigatian played splendidly with a ruthless efficiency. Once again their three-quarters were of the highest quality playing with confidence, fluency and an enviable slickness with Max Coyle a constant threat. Their pack had the edge in the set scrum and were disruptive at the breakdown with Finlay Lock, like all good 7s, a constant irritation. In defence they tackled forcefully and closed down Sutton rapidly. However, it was their ability to convert pressure in the 22 into points that was the key difference. For S&E too often their breaks by Willem Ratu et al lacked support. Most frustratingly speculative offloads were lured into the hands of their opponents as if they were victims of sirens without an Odysseus to rescue them. The result had far more to do with the quality of the play of the Old Reigatian team than the failings of Sutton and the win has put the visitors very much in the title race.

The league enters its festive break and returns with Sutton's trip to Battersea Ironsides on 6th January. If one is looking for a barometer for how competitive this league has become there is no other league in England that is topped by a team with four defeats but in Regional 2 South East there are four clubs with a nine-four win-loss record. For S&E lest we forget that their campaign has been transformed with five wins from the last six starts and the Rugby Lane faithful should



approach 2024 with cautious optimism.

Sutton & Epsom:

Gareth O'Brien, Matt Symonds, Willem Ratu, Tom Lennard, Lawrence Elliott, Freddy Bunting ©, Tom Boaden, Chris Farrell, Alex Mount, Ewan McTaggart, Ben Green, Isaac Lea, Josh Pulvirenti & Rob Hegarty.

Replacements: Callum Gibson, George London & Ross Parsons.

Old Reigatian:

Conor Woods, Harrison Mitchell, Gareth Stephens, Max Coyle, Finn Coyle, Lucas Overtoom, Alex Skinner, Ciaran Nestor, Harry Plowman, Toby Collister, Oli Brooks, Jack Baart, Sam Foreman, Finlay Lock & Ryan Travers.

Replacements: David Niven, Ed Cox & Ben Holder.

Goalless draw with bottom side

7 February 2024



Colliers Wood United 0-0 Epsom & Ewell FC. Combined Counties League - Premier Division. Saturday 16th December 2023.

On Saturday, two clubs; each placed in precarious positions in the League, met each other and showed everyone present exactly why they were down there! An extremely poor goalless draw was the result of this match, although the real memory of this one for me will be the scrappiness of this contest with the inability of either team to string more than three passes together, despite having perfect conditions for football.

Premier Division South

| # | Team | Pl | HW | HD | HL | AW | AD | AL | W | D | L | F | A | Diff | Pts |
|-----|-----------------------------|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|---|---|----|----|----|------|-----------|
| 18. | Epsom & Ewell | 18 | 2 | 0 | 5 | 2 | 2 | 7 | 4 | 2 | 12 | 26 | 42 | -16 | 14 |
| 19. | Sheerwater | 20 | 1 | 1 | 9 | 1 | 1 | 7 | 2 | 2 | 16 | 22 | 67 | -45 | 8 |
| 20. | Colliers Wood United | 20 | 0 | 3 | 7 | 1 | 1 | 8 | 1 | 4 | 15 | 16 | 49 | -33 | 7 |

This was obviously a pivotal match and was bound to be a tense occasion, particularly for the home side who really needed to close the gap on those teams above them, while we were obviously keen to produce a similar performance to the one that had resulted in a 5-1 Salts win back in Steve Springett's first match in charge on 7th October, but the only players who will take anything positive from this contest will be the two keepers, not that either had a vast amount to deal with though, as both defences dealt with the limited threats on their goal fairly comfortably.

In goal for the opposition was Toby McKimm, and any supporters who went to Hailsham Town last year will have remembered him making an appearance for us, although it was a debut he would want to forget as he was unfairly dismissed after just twenty-five minutes, making him the possessor of one of the shortest playing spells in our club history. We also had a change between the posts as Harvey Keogh was away for this match on a pre-arranged trip, although for those of you who recall his collision with the fencing the previous week, a Club Official advised that he is now fine, which is good news for all. In his place, and making his second appearance for our club was Toby Colwell, who has been most reliable this season, despite having to spend a vast amount of his time on the bench, as is the lot of a substitute keeper. Taking the Captain's armband in place of Keogh was Ollie Thompson who returned to the starting eleven, along with the suspended Tijani Eshilokun, with Steve Springett and Ethan Nelson-Roberts unavailable to play.

The hosts had an early opportunity when they dragged a shot wide from fairly close range in the second minute, although five minutes later we had what would prove to be our best opportunity of the half when Ade Batula sent a perfect ball through to Eshilokun just twelve yards out, but he delayed matters instead of shooting and McKimm was out quickly to clear the danger.

Soon after this Luke Miller put another great ball through to Jaan Stanley who tucked the ball low into the corner of the net, only to see the Assistant's flag raised against him. Batula then blazed high and wide after cutting onto his left foot, before Colliers Wood sent a deep ball to the far post where a shot was blocked by a defender.

In the 26th minute Thompson picked up a facial injury, believed to be a broken nose and required quite a few minutes of treatment. He was able to continue but would not reappear for the second half. It is hoped the injury will not result in him missing much time. From this point the match became more attritional with few real chances and we went in at the break

goalless.

Sirak Negassi came on for Thompson which led to a reshuffle of our back line with Nick Wilson dropping back there and taking on the armband. We already had Rory Edwards playing in an unfamiliar right back role, so it was becoming a bit of a makeshift back line by this stage. Within a few moments of Wilson moving back, a long ball went just beyond him, although fortunately Colwell had smartly anticipated the danger and was out just in time to gather it ahead of an incoming attacker.

We had another decent opportunity just after the hour when a decent move down the left was centred to Miller who struck powerfully with his left foot, only to see the ball deflected away for a corner by a defender. McKimm then dropped the corner but the danger was cleared. Then at the other end a Wood attack finished with a low shot, and I must remind people that I was a hundred yards away from this, so apologies if I have this wrong, but the ball appeared to go out for a goal kick off the foot of our post.

In the 73rd minute we got another chance after McKimm's poor clearance went to Stanley thirty yards out, but he was unable to return the ball to what would have been a vacant goal at that point; instead he went down the left and squared the ball where Batula went in for the ball with McKimm, only for the keeper to lie almost motionless for a few minutes as a result of the collision which our man then picked up a yellow card for. From our angle it was hard to see what Batula had done wrong and protests were made to this effect while McKimm remained on the ground receiving treatment. Fortunately he was able to continue after another long break and the match continued to meander.

Finally, in what would become nine minutes of injury time there was a little more to write about, and the first chance involved one of our substitutes, Yannick Monga-Ebwa, who made tracks down the left and his ball was collected by Batula whose shot on the turn went just beyond the Wood far post. Then Eshilokun's twenty yard drive wasn't gathered by McKimm, although he was just able to recover the ball as Batula ran in. In the 98th minute another sub George Owusu was unfortunate to see his shot from eight yards ricochet off a defender and go wide for another corner.

From that corner we had a bit of controversy as a Nick Inwugwu header was fumbled by McKimm and looked like it was going to go over the line, but he reacted quickly to claw the ball away. There were appeals that the ball had crossed the line, but as with the earlier Wood chance where I was a hundred yards away, this time I was less than two yards from this one and I wasn't convinced it had crossed, although admittedly it was close. Far more relevantly than mine or anyone else's opinion, the Assistant was bang in line with the play and also felt it had stayed out. The final whistle blew shortly after this and Colliers Wood's first clean sheet in the League this season, along with Colwell's first for our club were confirmed.

It was a bit embarrassing to see our Club Secretary berating the Assistant over the goal line incident, purely on the basis of a phone clip he had taken (even though it was from a far worse angle) that he "claimed" had proven the ball had gone over the line. Further ridicule followed when he doubled down on this after the match by placing a picture on the club Twitter site that failed to show any clear view of the line or the ball! It was similar to the kind of grainy and inconclusive image that we've all seen in the papers whenever anyone thinks they've seen the Loch Ness Monster, and deserved the derision it received from a number of commentators!

Regrettably this ninety minutes proved about as fruitful as that peculiar Scottish hobby, but the draw ensures that we remain in a much stronger position than the two clubs below us. It must be said that one of the things we have failed to do this season is grind out a point from time to time, without falling to a late sucker punch as we have at Fleet Town, Eastbourne United and Abbey Rangers, so credit is deserved in that area, particularly with the personnel changes that were required at the back. Indeed, over the course of the match, we also had the slightly better chances close to goal, but by no means did either team do enough to say they genuinely deserved to win this match and hard work remains for both if they are to avoid being the one club that will make the drop to Step Six this season.

Epsom & Ewell: Toby Colwell, Rory Edwards, Nick Inwugwu, Nick Wilson, Reece Tierney, Ollie Thompson ©, Luke Miller, Thompson Adeyemi, Ade Batula, Tijani Eshilokun, Jaan Stanley

Subs: Sirak Negassi for Thompson (HT), George Owusu for Miller (89), Yannick Monga-Ebwa for Stanley (89), Tino Carpeno for Batula (95)

Report Source: www.eefconline.co.uk

Community Football hero retires

7 February 2024



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

Top dog toppled in windy contest

7 February 2024



Beckenham RFC 22 - Sutton & Epsom RFC 26. Saturday 9th December.

Saturday marked the start of the home stretch with the first of the reverse fixtures. In Week 2 both teams endured testing temperatures in the crucible of Rugby Lane to produce an extraordinary game of extremely fluctuating fortunes. The denouement included the ecstasy of a penalty try to Beckenham and the agony of a last second penalty drift wide for Sutton as the visitors won 42-41. At least the teams were spared Arctic weather for the rematch at Balmoral



Avenue. Many players had crossed the whitewash since that September Saturday and the Kent Club sat atop of Regional 2 South East whilst the men from Surrey arrived with four consecutive wins under their belt. After an enthralling contest Sutton gained their most impressive scalp of the season as they won 26-22.

Sutton & Epsom offered a warm welcome back to Tom Lennard after his highly successful jaunt in the Antipodes. The playmaker not only starred for Melbourne University gaining representative honours but also encouraged Josh Pulvirenti to join him at S&E. If Tom was the Australian addition New Zealand was represented by the returning Willem Ratu. So the domestic unions did not feel overlooked Sutton even selected a Welshman in Ross Parsons. The weather once again played a significant role in the fixture with a tremendous wind billowing down the pitch. Freddy Bunting kicked off with the gale behind him and Sutton went on the offensive from the very start but their swift attacks were matched by the swarming defence of the hosts. Though the leaders gave up an early penalty in front of the uprights. With a prostrate player holding the ball in place and the posts swaying in the wind Captain Bunting made it 3-0.

Beckenham gave an early warning to the visitors of the quality of their back play as Tom Bateman linked with Matt Lovell to bring the leaders deep into the Sutton 22 but their efforts were thwarted by conceding a penalty. After ten minutes S&E had doubled their lead to 6-0 with another Bunting penalty but they were frustrated that a fine attack had not resulted in a try. At the end of the first quarter Matt Whitaker's desperate bid to force his way over by the posts was held up by resilient defenders. The elements made it extremely difficult for the hosts to exit from their 22 but their well organised defence frustrated the Black & White backs. On the half hour Tom Lennard hacked through a loose ball and gathered it up and a couple of strides short of glory he was tackled. The referee ruled it a high tackle and with no other defender in view he awarded a penalty try and Sutton led 13-0.

The leaders then enjoyed their best passage of play as their forwards and backs combined with multiple phases to get into the Sutton 22. Impressive offloads in the tackle maintained the momentum and then they opted to kick ahead. On any other afternoon it would have been a worthwhile gamble but the ball was gathered by Freddy Bunting and despatched on the wind 60 metres back down the paddock. The visitors pressed hard to extend their lead and thought they were about to score again from a 5-metre scrum when Gareth O'Brien was penalised. With time running out in the first half Willem Ratu countered towards the 22. His run earned another penalty which Freddy Bunting readily converted to conclude the half with a 16-0 lead.

As both sides retired to the warmth of the dressing rooms for directions from their coaches everyone pondered just how many points the wind was worth. In addition to the elements Beckenham had survived 10 minutes with 14 men after a yellow card to stand off Gary Dipple. The leaders had done extremely well to frustrate the Black & Whites who, for all their territory and possession, only scored a solitary try. Sutton knew that they would need to be at their very best in the second half to withstand the inevitable siege to come.

The Blamoral Avenue crowd did not have long to wait to cheer the success of their local heroes. A Sutton fumble on their 22 from the restart put the hosts in prime position to chip away at the lead. S&E conceded a penalty at the scrum and Geordie Boyce stepped up to chip over the conversion for 3-16. Beckenham pressed hard for further additions. A Gareth O'Brien tackle thwarted one attack and the pack stole a scrum ball on their 22. However, the clearance kick was run back with a vengeance. The Kent side were within 5 metres and flung out a long pass. Lock Ciall Kirwan was hugging the touchline and did superbly to take the pass on his laces to score in the corner. Unsurprisingly the touchline conversion was blown off course but the Sutton lead was now 16-8 with 30 minutes remaining.

With errors mounting in the Sutton play and confidence surging through the veins of the league leaders the momentum had definitely shifted. It was now that Sutton & Epsom demonstrated not only great character but also their best play. The howitzer boot of Bunting thumped a penalty into the 22 to give his team a promising lineout. The catch and drive advanced the ball into threatening territory. Following multiple phases and admirable control by the pack finally Matt Whitaker was ushered over the line for the try. The kick adjacent to the uprights was converted and S&E led by 23-8. The men from Rugby Lane continued to attack in search of another try. As per the first period the Beckenham defence held firm but once again the referee brought play back for a penalty. Once more the irrepressible Bunting extended the lead to 26-8 as the game entered the final quarter.

Considering the playing conditions this was a most impressive phase of play from the visitors who continued on the offensive not only carrying well but when required kicking penalties into the 22. At this stage centre Tane Feldhaus-Davies gave voice to his frustration with the number of offside penalties that his team were accumulating as he let fly with colourful language as he enquired to the heavens as to the precise number of offences. With ten minutes remaining Beckenham scored a quite outstanding try as fullback Francesco Pennacchia made a stunning break from his own half and linked with his support. A wave of Beckenham shirts burst into the Sutton 22 and captain Hans Laud-Anderson, like every quality 7, was on hand to add the finishing touch. Geordie Boyce added the extras for 26-15.

Roared on by a sizeable and passionate crowd the game was now turned on its head and it was the Surrey team who had to show their defensive mettle. It was the turn of the visitors to concede penalties. Beckenham opted for a 5-metre scrum and the result was another penalty and a yellow card not to a prop but to flanker Rob Hegarty and the leaders opted for the tap penalty. The ball

was given to replacement prop James Cleverly with his mane like Samson, the beard of a lumberjack and a physique that shuns the modern figure-hugging apparel he bounced off the first tackler, sidestepped through a gap and strode over for a most accomplished solo effort. With Geordie Boyce chipping over the conversion the Sutton lead was only 26-22.

The crowd were in full voice and expectations running high as Sutton had five minutes to survive. In recent times the expression game management has not been linked with flattering adjectives for the Black & Whites but they now relentlessly held onto possession through multiple phases near halfway with a prodigious effort by the forwards. Then a shrill blast of the whistle and the hosts were given a lifeline of a penalty. The Gods smiled down benevolently on S&E as the kick went through the in-goal area. A grateful Sutton accepted a scrum on halfway and moments later ran down the clock to gain a fabulous 26-22 victory.

That made it five wins in a row for Sutton and to inflict the first defeat on the table-toppers at Balmoral Avenue this season was a notable achievement. The Beckenham backs are formidable not only in attack but also in defence. The leaders ability to pass out of the tackle is a most potent weapon but S&E matched their lofty opponents and it was their ability to play so well against the wind that was the deciding factor. Freddie Bunting's accumulation of points is well known but in this game it was the power of his kicking from hand that caught the eye. However, in truth it was a great team performance, as is often the way in harsh weather, that was the backbone for this latest win. It would be remiss not to mention the magnificent hospitality offered at Balmoral Avenue with the clubhouse bar one of the finest locations around to enjoy the traditional pleasures for which rugby is renowned.

Probably with a sense of relief to players, coaches and administrators next Saturday sees the last league match of 2023 and the competition adjourns for the festive break. For those readers who still prefer the High Street to online purchasing but are looking for an excuse to escape the horrors of Christmas shopping I can heartily recommend Sutton's game against Old Reigatian at Rugby Lane that kicks off at 2pm.

Sutton & Epsom:

Gareth O'Brien, Kyren Ghumra, Willem Ratu, Tom Lennard, Ciaran Mohr, Freddy Bunting ©, Ross Parsons, Tom Boaden, Chris Farrell, Alex Mount, Ewan McTaggart, Josh Glanville, Rob Hegarty, Josh Pulvirenti & Matt Whitaker. Replacements: Callum Gibson, Jack Howes & Matt Symonds.

Beckenham:

Francesco Pennacchia, Tom Bateman, Matt Lovell, Tane Feldhaus-Davies, Geordie Boyce, Gary Dipple, Ben Murphy, Lamar Sinclair, Liam Markey, Graham Murray, Ciall Kirwan, Josh Hiscott, Conor Palmer, Hans Laud-Anderson © & Oliver Stapelton.

Replacements: James Cleverly, Thomas Ward & Jed Hamilton

Salts beat County Town, or City?

7 February 2024



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 Carpene, 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 Carpene for Batula (75)

Report Source: www.eefconline.co.uk