

# Harriers Polish Medals

27 April 2023



**Epsom & Ewell Harriers** older runners are back in the UK having picked up medals at the world indoor athletics championships in Torun Poland.

**Lisa Boland** W40 (40-44) competed in the 60m and the 200m. Her 60m race saw her gain a PB of 7.82sec winning her a silver medal, she also won a Bronze medal in the 200m with a time of 25.85sec. If this wasn't enough, she also won a silver medal in the W40 4 x 200m relay.

**Anne Nelson** W70 (70-74) competed in the 60m, finishing with a bronze medal with an astonishing time of 10.19sec. To add to this medal, Anne also secured 3rd position and a bronze medal in the 200m with a time of 35.69sec.

Top photo: Lisa and Anne with their medals.

After a year of training, they were ready for the World Master Athletics Indoor Championships 2023 in Torun, Poland. Lisa and Anne train with Epsom & Ewell Harriers at the Harrier Centre, Poole Road. **Simon Bean**, President of Epsom & Ewell Harriers commented "We are so proud of Lisa and Anne, they have worked so hard throughout the year, to come away with so many medals is an incredible achievement."

The World Masters Indoor Championships enables athletes from across the world over the age of 35 to continue to compete in the sport they love. A celebration of athletics with age categories spreading right up to 85+ years of age.

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Other news from Epsom and Ewell Harriers:

Epsom & Ewell Harriers shine through in the East Surrey Amateur Athletic League 2022/23. The recent third and final of the 3 East Surrey Amateur Athletic X-Country races took place at the Harrier Centre, Poole Road, Epsom. The 5-mile race was a 2-lap course with a mixture of on and off rd. Epsom & Ewell Harriers won 3 of the 4 team events, they were the overall team winners in the girls, men's and women's categories. Simon Bean, President of Epsom & Ewell Harriers said "this is an incredible result for the Club." In addition, there were some amazing individual Epsom & Ewell Harrier successes as follows:

Women

- U17 Women: 1st **Sophie Glencross**, 2nd **Lily Brown**
- U20 W- 1st **Georgina Winder**
- Women overall: 2nd **Helen Maguire**, 3rd **Georgina Winder**
- W35-44: 1st **Helen Maguire**

Men

- U13 Boys: 2nd **Oliver Henderson**
- U20 men: 2nd **George Hannay**, 3rd **Alex Rodriguez**
- M45: 1st **Gary Coleman**
- M50: 1st **Steve Winder**
- Men overall: 1st **Alex Gurteen**, 2nd **Steve Winder**

Epsom & Ewell Harriers welcomes new runners of all standards whether you've run before or not. For more information about our training sessions see here: <https://eandeharriers.weebly.com/>

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## "Is it promotion you're looking for?"

27 April 2023



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

However, the main event occurred in the 83rd minute. Stanley was released down the right, although his ball across goal was just ahead of Wilson and just behind Dyer, by now operating on the left wing. He retrieved the ball though and sent a superb deep cross to the back post where Wilson met it with a solid downwards header just a couple of yards out from

goal, giving Osei no chance to save it.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The hosts were looking visibly tired by now after matches on Tuesday and Thursday and with Dorking Wanderers leading at this stage, I was aware that two more goals would give us second place even if they held on to win. As it happened though, we wouldn't need them as the Mile Oak result went our way. It was all good, although there were a couple of injury concerns as Springett picked up a broken nose and then in the final minutes Penfold went down having pulled his groin, which threatens to put a premature end to his season. The injury gave Jack Porter a rare run out for the final moments, becoming to my knowledge the first person in club history to take the field with a number 21 shirt!

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

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

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

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

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## Vital points for local football team

27 April 2023



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

With the clock on 68 minutes we brought on Thompson Adeyemi and Rory Edwards to give us fresh legs and Adeyemi set

up Dyer who crumpled under a challenge from Matlock, even though there was no contact and was fortunate not to be booked for simulation, although Burns did pick up a card for Selsey around the same time for a handball.

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

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

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

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

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## Surrey FA young mascot search is on

27 April 2023



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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## All level after quick return

27 April 2023



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

27 April 2023



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

These dropped points mean that the opportunity to finish in second place is now no longer exclusively in our hands, with both Wick and Godalming Town now three points behind us and holding a game in hand. Godalming also now have a better goal difference than us and are clearly in a better run of form, although they have a tough finishing schedule so



there is still hope if we can win our final four fixtures. Who do we face this Saturday? It's Mile Oak again!!

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

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

## Salts give Mullets taste for big victory

27 April 2023

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

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

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

Top of Southern Combination League Division One

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Now that ten man Shoreham's victory over East Preston has virtually guaranteed them the title, it is imperative we cling on to second place to guarantee the home playoff matches. The players kept trying in this contest, even at the end and I'm aware that some more new signings are likely as we approach the transfer deadline on 31st March, but if we don't get



back to winning ways on Wednesday at Mile Oak, we could slip out of that position. We cannot make any more mistakes now.

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

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

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

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

## Epsom and Ewell FC form rising

27 April 2023

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The second half also started with a strange incident as Sabino was grappling with Gideon Acheampong for the ball. It was a physical battle and our man ended up on the deck with a free kick awarded in our favour, but for some reason the yellow card was waved at Sabino, when I really couldn't see any reason for it.

In the 56th minute after some more pressure Dyer just got his toe to the ball ahead of a challenge which then took him out in the penalty area, but he then blotted his copybook by sending the penalty Harry Kane style, just over the bar to the

keeper's right! Byatt then headed over from eight yards before a much better downward header forced Gardner into a smart near post save with his legs.

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

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

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

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

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

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

## The season's final curtain

27 April 2023



Sutton & Epsom RFC 34 v Bracknell 24. Saturday 11th March.

The modern league fixture list has a marvellous symmetry as it ends against the opponent one played on the opening day of the season. Way back in September that meant a journey to Lily Hill Park to play Bracknell for the first time since the 2009-10 season. A lot of players have crossed the whitewash since then, and too many of them have been S&E's opponents, and 22 games later the season has ended. Perhaps the omens were not so favourable on Day 1 as once again as with those former times the Black & Whites were facing the denouement of the campaign having already been relegated from Level 5. On 10 th April 2010 the team bid a fond farewell by thrashing North Walsham 55-15 and on this occasion Sutton & Epsom put in a rousing performance to sign off with a 34-24 triumph over Bracknell.

The game certainly had the feeling of the end of an era as James Caddy led out the side for his allegedly last appearance. Joining the stalwart back row in the departure lounge were George Drye, Sam Hurley and Jamie See, all of whom have been superb servants of the club and were instrumental in the recent rise to National 2. In addition, it was certainly a red-letter day for Chris Pointing as he celebrated his 100 th 1 st XV league appearance.

Despite the aforesaid reasons for one last Herculean effort S&E started the match in the worst possible manner. The unfathomable slow start that has become the byword of this season reared its ugly head again. In front of a crowd in excess of 250 Bracknell ruthlessly exposed the early



Sutton frailties. The opening ten minutes hinted at an unpalatable drubbing for the Black & Whites. The outstanding Bracknell Number 8 Ken Hodgson was rampaging round Rugby Lane and soon scythed through the defence to set up Simon Bayliss for a try in the corner. Moments later the backtracking Robbie Martey cut out an assist but was shown a yellow card. With the man advantage the Berkshire men went blind exploiting another defensive oversight and Simon Bayliss strolled in for his second. On this occasion Ollie Radford added the conversion for 12-0.

As the Fab Four might have considered that the fairy tale ending to their careers was being penned by the Brothers Grimm Sutton scored. Freddy Bunting intercepted a pass in his own half and ran it back. He added the conversion for S&E to trail 7-12. The Rugby Lane men had woken from their slumber and began to defend with urgency. The Bracknell backs who had enjoyed time and space in the first quarter were being pressed on the gain line and all over the pitch Sutton tackled with a ferocity and zeal that lifted the crowd. Robbie Martey returned and was soon on the action making a vital mark on a dangerous cross-field kick. A couple of infringements and the Bunting boot put the hosts in the corner for a 5-metre lineout. The ball was secured and the pack did the necessary and George London scored. Freddy Bunting made light of the challenging conversion and the Black & Whites led 14-12.

What had looked like a relaxing end of season jaunt for the visitors had been transformed and the hosts had not finished. On the half hour the S&E pack once more lined up for another 5-metre lineout. Lightning was to strike twice and with meritorious efficiency Will Lloyd forced his way over. Freddy Bunting thumped over the conversion as the jubilant crowd roared their appreciation for the 21-12 lead. Aged followers tried to recall if they had seen their team lead at the break. The Lily Hill Park team rather taken aback by the effrontery of three scores conceded without reply threatened to end the half as it had begun. Scrum half Franklin Lewis took a quick penalty 40 metres out. Desperate defence saw Sutton fling themselves on a loose ball but a knock on gave Bracknell a scrum 15 metres out under the posts. From this prime platform to attack Ben Tame and Jamie See made crucial tackles before Ken Hodgson was held up over the line. Five minutes later the referee drew the first half to a close when Ollie Radford's promising run ended when he

was bundled into touch. Sutton turned around 21-12 to the good after a Jekyll and Hyde performance in the first period.

The second half got under way with the visitors having the advantage of the wind and keen to be the first to add to their tally on the scoreboard. An early Bracknell break was followed by a probing kick that was gathered by a wonderful sliding take by Robbie Martey 5 metres from his line. Having cleared the ball Sutton continued their fine form of the first period. The hosts spread the ball wide after powerful carries by the forwards and forced the visitors onto the defensive. Both sides were showing great defensive resolve as thunderous tackling all over the pitch thwarted the best attacking efforts of all concerned. The match ebbed and flowed until a long clearance from Freddy Bunting was taken near the touchline on halfway. The initial chaser was too easily stepped and the defensive support was inadequate. A surging run down the touchline and a simple pass inside saw lock George Jupp score. Ollie Radford impressively bisected the uprights as Bracknell trailed 19-21.

There was hardly any time for the crowd to contemplate the two-point deficit before the next score. And what a score it was by Robbie Martey. Any self-doubt in the Black & White ranks was instantly extinguished as the winger jinked and weaved his way through would be tacklers and outpaced the cover to score Sutton's try of the season. The conversion drifted wide as the hosts led 26-19. Next it was Jamie See's turn to sidestep his way down the pitch and the Rugby Lane team were awarded a penalty. Wisely they opted for the kick at goal and Freddy Bunting extended the lead to 29-19. Sutton had a ten-point lead with ten minutes left on the clock.

Perhaps the largest roar of the day greeted Chris Pointing coming off the bench for his 100<sup>th</sup> 1<sup>st</sup> XV league appearance. There have been too many near misses and eleventh hour tragedies this season for the Black & Whites and the crowd urged on the team to dig deep. The XV responded in great style. Ross Parsons made a break and the pack powered in behind him to advance the ball to the Bracknell line. It was the Berkshire men's turn to show superb defence and frustrate the Surrey men by holding them up over the line. However, Sutton gathered the drop out and countered. The ball went wide to replacement Ciaran Mohr who finished with aplomb squeezing in at the corner he stretched for the line to score despite a superb covering tackle. S&E led 34-19 as the game entered time added on.

There was no let up in the action as Sutton again attacked. Even in the opposition 22 the hosts tackled as if they were on their own line as they denied them any space to counter. In the end it was a kick and chase by Noah Cannon that almost secured a fourth try and a bonus point for the Lily Hill Park team. Once again Robbie Martey was on hand to touch down. In was a temporary respite as moments later Noah Cannon decided on a more direct approach. He sped down the blindside delivered a jolting palm off and scored in the corner. The conversion drifted wide and Mr Foster blew the final whistle and Sutton had won 34-24.

It was a rousing end to a disappointing season and a fitting farewell to Messrs Caddy, Drye, Hurley & See. It was the best Sutton performance of the season in a match where Bracknell started in irresistible style and threatened to run away with the game. For the visitors Ken Hodgson was at the heart of everything and a constant threat. For S&E it was a wonderful team performance. The commitment to the cause was mightily impressive whether it was the tackling in defensive duties or the ball-carrying by the pack or the Bunting boot. When it was needed Robbie Martey added that sprinkling of magic on an afternoon when the Black & Whites were not to be denied. The

league season may have ended but a new Cup competition follows in the weeks to come. The draw will occur next week and the date and opposition for this match will be posted in due course on the club website.

Sutton & Epsom

Alex Mawdsley, Robbie Martey, Lawrence Elliott, Freddy Bunting, Sam Hurley, Jamie See, Ross Parsons, Tom Boaden, Chris Farrell, Will Lloyd, George Drye, Josh Glanville, Ben Tame, George London, James Caddy ©.

Replacements: (all used) Alex Mount, Chris Pointing & Ciaran Mohr

Bracknell

Alex Frame, Simon Bayliss, Daniel Mays, Oliver Radford, Alexander Fieldhouse, Matthew Outson, Franklin Lewis, Ruairi Henderson, Bradley Walters, Nicholas Ovens, Thomas Scott, George Jupp, James Johnson, Liam Wood, Ken Hodgson.

Replacements: (all used) Jasper Miranda, Joseph Maybey & Noah Cannon.

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## Surrey Youth Games getting starting pistol

27 April 2023



The Specsavers Surrey Youth Games is kicking off next month, with a wide range of activities available in Epsom & Ewell. The Games are the largest multi-sport youth programme of their kind in the South East, offering FREE local training for 7-16 year olds across Surrey, leading to a final celebratory event for the whole family.

The Games are for beginners who may not get the opportunity to attend clubs, or are put off by the thought of initially competing against others. Supportive coaches will help participants join in, have fun, learn new skills and boost their confidence.

Registration is now open for the free training sessions across a range of activities, which start after Easter and are aimed at those who live or go to school in the borough. All teams then unite for a family-friendly event at the Surrey Sports Park in Guildford on Saturday 17 June.

Councillor **Alex Coley**, Chair of the Community and Wellbeing Committee, said “This is a wonderful initiative that provides a great opportunity for young people who are still building their confidence in sport to access training free of charge, as well as gain a feeling of belonging in their local setting. I encourage all those who might benefit from the training to take a look at what’s on offer”

You can find out what’s on offer in the Epsom & Ewell borough and register for a place by visiting [www.epsom-ewell.gov.uk/syg](http://www.epsom-ewell.gov.uk/syg)

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## Epsom draw from the jaws of defeat

27 April 2023

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

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

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

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

There weren’t many chances in this half really though, and the only other real items to note were a rather strange booking for Smith-Joseph, who appeared to be blocked by a defender, and then in the 35th minute when Ross Cheek was sent to the sin bin. We pushed a little more after that, but a Quiassaca ball across goal was behind Dyer and this summed up the

first half really. As the teams went off at the half there was no disguising the fact that this was a fairly flat performance to this point, but a match that could still be won if we could improve. However, in the 58th minute a ball over the top of our defence was collected by Tom White who just got to the ball ahead of McKimm and lifted it over him and just below the bar despite attempts to clear by our defenders.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

## The Prince of Maidenhead Reigns Supreme

27 April 2023



Sutton & Epsom RFC 26 - Maidenhead 45. Saturday 4th March.

The Black & Whites returned to Rugby Lane in the knowledge that their race had been run this season. The men in magenta had torn them to shreds at Braywick Park in November and both squads were fully aware of that outcome. Despite the match having no consequence with regard to the league table or which cup competition would be entered both sides produced a thrilling spectacle played at breakneck pace with eleven tries to applaud. Maidenhead won by 45-26 but Sutton restored their pride with a performance that deservedly earned them a bonus point.

It might have been the first Saturday in March but there was no sign of spring in the air as Freddy Bunting started the match with a biting wind behind him. From the outset it was clear that the visitors were going to utilise their excellent back division and run the ball from anywhere. This scenario was no surprise to the hosts whose defensive line on the Berkshire 22 held firm despite several efforts to break free. Reluctantly Maidenhead cleared with the boot. S&E's first possession proved to be most productive. The covering Caddy charged towards the 22 and after several swift phases Alex Mawdsley's perfectly timed pass allowed Robbie Martey to score. Freddy Bunting added the conversion for 7-0.



That instant success focussed the Maidenhead minds and within five minutes they had not only drawn level but had taken the lead. Though Sutton safely secured the restart after a few phases near halfway the opted to kick. Their opponent countered at pace searching for space on the right before switching to the opposite flank. An arcing run by centre Harry Wells set up the prolific Alex Turton who ran round under the posts. Moments later Harry Wells turned from provider to scorer. A long clearance into the Surrey men's 22 was run back but the ball was turned over and the alert Harry Wells swept down the unguarded blindside to score. Greg Smith converted both scores and the boys from Braywick Park led 14-7 after a magnificent seven opening minutes.

There was no respite from the high tempo as both teams threw themselves headlong into attack. Equally both sides were demonstrating resolute defence. At the start of the second quarter the Black & Whites encamped within five minutes of glory. Jordan Huie went close, a 5-metre catch and drive was denied and a golden opportunity to level the scores was missed. Then to heap Pelion upon Ossa the visitors cleared their lines and scored with their next attack. Harry Wells was a central figure again as he put Greg Smith into space. The fly half burst into enemy territory and was only stopped by an excellent tackle by Alex Mawdsley but the ball was soon in the hands of Scott Prince who ran in the last 30 metres for the first of his three tries of the afternoon. Greg Smith, perfection personified, added the extras for 21-7.

Excellent Sutton defence from the restart regained possession and moments later the hosts had a penalty. A well-rehearsed lineout ploy saw George Drye rampage down the touchline. The ball was spun wide to the opposite flank where Jordan Huie was thwarted by excellent cover. A minute later it was Chris Farrell throwing himself at the line like a torpedo who went agonising close and a shrill blast from Mr Dixon's whistle gave Maidenhead a relieving penalty. Very soon relief became a form of cruel and unusual punishment. A speculative kick ahead by Scott Prince enjoyed a favourable bounce and the ball was transferred to fullback James Maddern who coasted home to score. Greg Smith celebrated the bonus point try with another conversion for 28-7. With the interval rapidly approaching the hosts desperately needed some reward for their first half endeavours. It was now S&E's turn to run back a clearance kick and score. Robbie Martey evaded the first man, sped through the gap and drawing the retreating defence onto him he passed to Jamie See who did well to cover the last 10 metres to touch down. Freddy Bunting added the conversion as the referee concluded the first half with the magenta men 28-14 ahead.

Despite the score-line the Black & Whites had had the majority of the possession and territory as well as more minutes in their opponent's 22. However, the visitors were ruthless in exploiting any errors as well as additionally demonstrating scintillating back play.

Sutton enjoyed the perfect start to the second period with a try. Despite failing to secure the 5-metre lineout they regained possession and this time they were not to be denied close to the line. Appropriately George London was the scorer on an afternoon when he carried with relentless aggression and to great effect. Trailing 19-28 S&E were right back in the contest. It was now the turn of the Braywick Park boys to turn the screw in the Sutton 22. Time and again the Rugby Lane men scythed down the opposition but the Maidenhead team patiently retained possession until a long pass found Scott Prince who crossed the whitewash for the second time. Though the conversion drifted wide the visitors had a 14-point cushion leading 33-19 with half an hour to go. Despite dominating the next fifteen minutes with George Drye to the fore with rampaging runs synonymous of classic locks throughout the ages S&E erred at the crucial moment. Whether it was a lineout infringement or pressure from the organised and resolute opposition defence they failed to add to their score. To massage sodium chloride into the laceration Maidenhead needed the merest glimpse of a chance to see them adding to their account. A turnover near their line led to an audacious counter that saw captain Niall Crossley put into space and stride in from 40 metres. With Greg Smith having departed with an earlier injury scrum half Archie Dunnill took over the kicking duties and bisected the uprights for 40-19.

Making light of the latest setback Sutton continued the search for a fourth try and a bonus point. The remarkable pace of the game did not relent and the attacks rained down at either end. A jinking run by Dan Jones hinted at greater deeds. Then five minutes later Alex Mawdsley made a break on halfway but his errant pass was gathered by Scott Prince who needed no second invitation to sprint in unopposed to complete his hat trick. The challenging conversion drifted wide and Maidenhead led 45-19. The game entered time added on and the Black & Whites continued their quest for the Holy Grail of the bonus point. Agonisingly they were held up over the line. Then with the final play of the afternoon there was at last ecstasy after so much agony. Fittingly the score followed another charge from George Drye and an incisive burst from Robbie Martey to set up Freddy Bunting for his first league try for the Black & Whites. He failed to convert his score and the referee ended the contest with Maidenhead 45-26 victors.

In the end it was Maidenhead's superior quality that told in an enthralling contest. Harry Wells was at the creative heart and wingers Prince and Turton were a constant menace with the former taking the glory with his triple. The Black & Whites more than played a supporting role in this fixture. The back row trio of Messrs Tame, London and Caddy were exceptional as they tackled, harried and carried throughout. George Drye played like a man possessed, as ever Steve Munford tackled everything that moved and parenthood has not blunted Jamie See's talents. For S&E it was an afternoon when every error was punished with brutal efficiency whilst they failed to

make the most of their chances. That being said they took the game to one of the best attacking sides in the league from their early opening score to their bonus point try on the final play of the game and deserve great credit for their performance.

The season concludes for Sutton & Epsom next Saturday with the visit of Bracknell who defeated the Black & Whites on the opening day of the season. The kick off at Rugby Lane will be 3pm. It is hoped that a sizable crowd will be present to bid a fond farewell to the departing quartet of Sam Hurley, James Caddy, Jamie See and George Drye who have given many years of devoted service to the team and have been instrumental in the club's recent successes.

### **Sutton & Epsom**

Alex Mawdsley, Jordan Huie, Sam Hurley, Jamie See, Robbie Martey, Freddy Bunting, Steve Munford, Tom Boaden, Chris Farrell ©, Will Lloyd, George Drye, Josh Glanville, Ben Tame, George London & James Caddy.

Replacements: (all used) Joe Reid, Dan Jones & Joe Lovatt.

### **Maidenhead**

James Maddern, Scott Prince, Harry Wells, Niall Crossley ©, Alex Turton, Greg Smith, Archie Dunnill, Elio Mandozzi, Jake Leach, Finlay Glass, Brook Harvey-Smith, Mark Grimshaw, Chris Gill, William Macaulay & Ed Atkins.

Replacements: Dan Hostetler, Mykel Parrott & Charlie

## **Late winner points Epsom's way.**

27 April 2023



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Moments later though we had our first scare for a while when a slide rule pass set Cian Griffin-Tilley through on goal,



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

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

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

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

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

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

## Epsom and Ewell FC wandering to top table?

27 April 2023

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

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

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

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

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

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

Stanley's left wing cross was clawed away from danger by Jacob Teddy the visiting keeper as early as the third minute and although chances were limited in this period, the balance of play was well in our favour and it looked like if any team were going to score, it would be us. And so it proved when Athan Smith-Joseph made tracks on the left and his low ball in deflected upwards. As a defender went to clear the ball, Dyer got in front of him and was promptly brought down in the penalty area, picking himself up to score a confident penalty in the 26th minute; his first spot kick for the club and his first goal since finding the net against Billingshurst in October.

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

We clearly weren't prepared to settle on that single goal lead as we came out for the second half and took the match to

our opponents in search of that second goal. Smith-Joseph sent a low shot in after good work from Dyer but Teddy made an easy save and Dyer turned provider for Quiassaca a few minutes later, although again Teddy wasn't really tested when the shot came in.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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## Epsom and Ewell pressed on.

27 April 2023



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

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

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

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

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

We had forced a couple of corners and looked generally in control in these early stages, although a miscommunication between Alex Penfold and Merchant-Simmonds allowed Jack Collins to get through on goal. Fortunately, some good recovery defending ensured that their player was unable to get a shot away, however, this appeared to give the visitors some belief and they fizzed another ball across our six yard box before taking the lead in embarrassing circumstances in the 25th minute. I hope Gary Jarman got this one on his video as the players should watch it back again and again. Quite



simply, a long throw was flicked on to the far post where Matthew Wilson was standing completely alone and seemed to have ages to guide his header past the helpless Tom Theobald from about six yards. It was the sort of goal you see conceded in the park on a Sunday morning and was horrible to witness from a club at our level.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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## Sutton and Epsom RFC Sink Despite All Hands On Deck

27 April 2023



Brighton 39 Sutton & Epsom 22. Saturday 25th February. The last of Epsom and Sutton's rearranged fixtures sadly fell on a weekend that not only featured the Six Nations but also a couple of stag weekends. Creativity was the byword for selection as 2 nd XV players, veterans of yesteryear, coaches and university students gathered at Waterhall for the formal introductions before taking on the Blues. In September at Rugby Lane the Black & Whites enjoyed one of only two successes this campaign when they overcame Brighton 42-24. The south coast men gained



a measure of revenge winning 39-22 which eased their fears of the drop but the result relegated S&E because remarkably at Bodicote Park Banbury had defeated second-placed Camberley.

The Sutton and Epsom XV included the veteran trio of Frankie Murray and the brothers Pointing, Chris and Mickey, debutants Jordan Farrar and Alex Gerhard from the Swallows, students Jack Benton and Taylor Gaye and coaches Steve Munford and Mark Lambert. Tom Brooker took the armband and was the only remaining member of the pack from last Saturday's Havant loss. The clouds dispersed and the game started in sunshine but with a strong wind that was illustrated as the Brighton kick off sailed out on the full. The majority of the crowd wisely took advantage of the well-appointed clubhouse rather than braving the elements pitch-side for a match of great significance for both clubs in terms of survival in this league. The hosts looked to spread the ball from the outset and their back division with Onke Nesi to the fore was lively and threatening. S&E tackled ferociously and the pack willingly took on the ball-carrying duties.

After ten minutes winger Aled Edwards thought he had wriggled free but was brought back for a foot in touch. The Waterhall woes were immediately abated when centre Arthur Robinson scythed through the defence after sustained Brighton pressure to score. In the absence of the redoubtable Sean O'Hagan scrum half Harry Alexander took over the kicking duties and made light of the tricky wind to make it 7-0. Five minutes later the Sutton resources were further stretched when Kyren Ghumra was forced off after a knock on the head when falling on the ball. With no spare back on the bench Jordan Farrar went on the flank and Jack Butt stood in on the wing. Despite the adversity the Black & Whites were tenacious in defence and the forwards relished the set scrums with the experienced duo of Reid and Lambert winning penalties.

The Sussex men had to wait until the half hour to extend their lead. A well-worked lineout ploy from 5 metres was thwarted but prop Billy Rolfe twisted and stretched for the line to score. The conversion drifted wide as the hosts led 12-0. Sutton & Epsom brought on Hartpury University prop Taylor Gaye for his debut and he made an immediate impact. The diminutive Dan Jones won a penalty for a high tackle which was kicked into the corner. Though the lineout was lost excellent scavenging by the pack regained possession and Taylor Gaye scored from short-range. The conversion was blown wide but Sutton were on the board trailing 5-12. Confidence now surged through the Black & White ranks and they were soon attacking in the Blues 22. With the interval rapidly approaching the referee issued a yellow card to Billy Rolfe. At once Sutton looked to benefit from their numerical advantage. The forwards got to within a yard under the posts before it was spun wide. It appeared that Angus Findlay had scored in the corner but an excellent defensive covering tackle dislodged the ball as the winger tried to touch down. Brighton cleared their lines from the scrum and the referee concluded the first period with the Blues 12-5 up at the break. If S&E were despondent at their failure to score before the interval you would not have noticed by the way they started the second half. Robbie Martey caught a clearance on halfway and advanced towards the 22. Captain Brooker kept up the attack and ball came to Dan Jones who jinked his way to the line and passed to Frankie Murray who scored a try that rolled back the years. The conversion narrowly missed but Sutton were only 10-12 down with the extra man.

Before the travelling Rugby Lane faithful had time to dream of a remarkable victory they were awoken from their reverie by an instant reply from the Waterhall men. Having secured a scrum on the 22 from the restart the ball went out to Arthur Robinson who ran the perfect line to score his second and Brighton's third try. Harry Alexander added the extras for the 19-10 lead. Conditions deteriorated rapidly as the clouds gathered, the rain fell and the temperature plummeted with half an hour remaining on the clock.

The hosts began to turn the screw with two tries in as many minutes. First to benefit was returning prop Billy Rolfe who collected his second of the afternoon after relentless pressure from the Sussex men. Moments later Aled Edwards was touching down in the corner and the Black & Whites were 29-10 adrift. Entering the final quarter the impartial observer might have thought that the visitors may have run out of steam and the veterans made to suffer. The floodgates did not open and contrary to all expectations S&E began their rearguard action. The next score was an unlikely one when Brighton decided to kick a penalty with ten minutes remaining. Harry Alexander effortlessly bisected the uprights for 32-10 leaving the visitors needing four scores. The task went from uphill to climbing Everest in flip-flops when replacement Conor Scott sped in under the posts finishing with aplomb. Harry Alexander converted for 39-10.

Then Tom Brooker gave a splendid example of leading from the front. Gathering the ball near halfway he took the ball in to contact and drove back three defenders and broke through their clutches and bolted towards the posts. He finished in style brushing aside the last tackler as if he was Alex Dombrandt. Alex Mawdsley drop-kicked the conversion in a blink of an eye for 39-17. Sutton now went in search of a bonus point and took the game to Brighton. Unfortunately scrum half Austin Bell was forced off with an ankle injury and S&E shuffled the deck again. Undaunted by this setback they invaded the opposition 22 again. Quick ball was spun wide and Alex Mawdsley forced his way over. Whether he applied the coup de grace or the significant pressure was supplied by Robbie Martey was immaterial as the referee signalled a try. Alex Mawdsley failed to convert from the flank and the referee blew his whistle to end the game with Brighton victorious by 39-22.

The Blues were worthy winners. Their forwards carried aggressively and effectively and their backs looked to run at every opportunity and had plenty of pace to exploit their somewhat makeshift opponents. The bonus point win was most welcome as the hosts are still not clear of relegation. In contrast this defeat condemned the visitors to the drop. However, the manner of defeat will be cherished by the Rugby Lane supporters. The level of commitment, the tenacity and the bonus point were highlights in a display overflowing with team spirit. Steve Munford gave an outstanding performance in defence tackling all-comers. The many front row permutations were a constant menace in the scrum. The side benefited greatly from the leadership on the pitch from not only Tom Brooker but also the cadre of experienced players that filled their ranks. On the other end of the scale, the youthful debutants Alex Gerhard, Jordan Farrar and Taylor Gayle put in huge shifts and looked very comfortable at 1st XV level which bodes well for the future.

Though the season has come to a premature end for Sutton & Epsom, followers of Brighton will hope Wimbledon and Havant will reflect their lofty status and put Banbury to the sword unlike the faltering Camberley so that the Blues stay put in Regional One South Central. Next Saturday S&E entertain Maidenhead at Rugby Lane in the penultimate game of the season.

#### Sutton & Epsom

Robbie Martey, Kyren Ghumra, Steve Munford, Alex Mawdsley, Angus Findlay, Frankie Murray, Austin Bell, Mark Lambert, Dan Jones, Joe Reid, Alex Gerhard, Jack Benton, Chris Pointing, Jack Butt & Tom Brooker ©

Replacements: (all used) Mickey Pointing, Jordan Farrar & Taylor Gaye.

#### Brighton

Max Morris ©, George Payne, Arthur Robinson, Onke Nesi, Aled Edwards, David Mcilwaine, Harry Alexander, Billy Rolfe, Will Fitzpatrick, Andrew Rowlandson, Richard Neil, Milo Cawkwell, George Orchard, Alex Havers & Angus North.

Replacements: James Trevis, Will Harvey and Conor Scott.