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Just not cricket to replace Banstead pavilion?

12 April 2024

A long-standing cricket club's ambitious plans to construct a modern pavilion and expand its facilities have sparked a debate from people that live in the area, saying it would "ruin the village feel".

A centuries old sports club wants to modernise its facilities, in part due to the massive growth of the game among girls and women, although some warn its ambitious plans overstep the mark.

Banstead Cricket Club has applied to demolish its current clubhouse, which it says was only every designed to last 10 years but has stood for 60, and replace it with a new modern facility that conforms to "Sport England and the sports governing body standards".

It is also seeking to refurbish its pavilion to create a dedicated changing space for women and girls. While opponents to the plans aren't arguing against its need to modernise, and would like to see the 182-year-old cricket club get a new clubhouse – they say they are worries about the size and location of the plans. They feel the potential increase in social events at the site, could have a negative impact on people living near the ground.

The club, however, told the Local Democracy Reporting Service that they are "not trying to just suddenly become an events business" and that "the most important thing to stress is that Banstead Cricket Club is a cricket club". The application has already had 252 comments with the majority (151) backing the plans and 91 objecting.

Club chairperson Neil Bowman said: "We need something bigger and we need something that has more than one room. We need to have other areas where people can hang out, or have a team meeting. We didn't design it as a wedding venue, and we do appreciate the neighbours' concerns, there was a concern about creating an event venue, and all the additional traffic, noise.

"I can entirely understand people's concerns, but we are not trying to do that, we are trying to build a modern clubhouse." The club said that Sport England and the England and Wales Cricket Board have been consulted in terms of the most ideal sighting for the new building and it's the internal layout.

Its new location will allow people to take in matches from either of the club's two pitches. The club has also said it will re-lay its car park with an environmentally friendly solution. Project head Ian Rusbridge said: "We are not trying to just suddenly become an events business, that's not our game.

"We don't foresee (a surge in) event hire, there may be a little bit more during the summer – because at the moment we can't hire it out at all. The other thing to stress, is that the cricket club is run by volunteers, who have full time jobs, and lives and children. They haven't got the capacity to run a cricket club let alone an events business. " Adding to that, in terms of the design the architects we employed, their speciality is sport pavilions."

The club has a licence until 1am but says it is rarely used and that the events held usually stop serving alcohol at 11pm. It said it did not see this changing in the future. Among the objections however include the increase in traffic around the green belt area, noise that would come from an expanded pavilion, and the determination visual impact it would have.

One objector wrote that the scale of the two-storey building was "far too large" and would "ruin the village feel" of the site. He felt the current buildings were perfectly adequate and would support plans that improved and updated the facilities within the same space.

The Local Democracy Reporting Service spoke with another resident who has also written in to object. Robert Garbut lives off Park Road, near the club, and challenged the size of the plans, its impact on traffic and neighbourhood fears the site could become a late-night venue.

He said: "It's massive. It's a 350 per cent increase over two floors, on another field that had never been built on before. Earth-moving trucks that will have to move into the park – I'm sure people just don't realise what is happening. Having said all of that, the cricket club has been there for a hundred years, it's hugely successful, they need more changing rooms.

"We assumed they would knock down the old clubhouse and build an all-singing all-dancing version of that. They also own the practice field adjacent to that – that's where they want to build, you can understand that as it makes sense to build it on your own land rather than land owned by Reigate and Banstead Council.

"All of our objections are about the superscale of this social venue, nobody but nobody wants to be mean spirited. We want the club to be a great building not the ramshackle thing they're in now."

The planning application is still with Reigate and Banstead Borough Council's planning team. A date has yet to be set for when it will be determined.

Image – visualisation of new pavilion and current inset.

London Calling Time with a Sutton & Epsom Win

12 April 2024

Sutton & Epsom RFC 12 Reeds Weybridge 10. Saturday 6th April.

As is the format of league rugby the fixtures conclude by playing the opposition first encountered on the opening day of the campaign. On that September afternoon bathed in glorious sunshine but disrupted by Rugby World Cup absentees, of the carousing rather than playing variety, Reeds Weybridge gained a 27-12 success. With both teams secure in the knowledge that they had retained their Regional 2 South East status for next time one might have expected a high-scoring denouement to the campaign. In the end the teams created a Sutton & Epsom league record as the Black & Whites edged the contest 12-10 so recording the lowest aggregate ever for the last game of the season undercutting the 1995 classic when S&E won 13-11 at Ealing.

It was a red-letter day for George London as the veteran, but not balding, back row made his 200th league appearance for the 1 st XV transforming the 'Fab Four' into the

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‘Famous Five’ of players to have reached that landmark. The match was played with the handicap, or advantage, of a howling wind arrowing towards the corner flag at the clubhouse end. Reeds Weybridge kicked off with the elements against them. At once the significance of the gale was demonstrated as Tom Lennard cleared from his 22 to the opposition 22. If that was not harsh enough it was a 50/22 and Sutton were awarded the lineout.

This initiated a ten-minute siege of the Reeds line. The throw in was secured, the forwards advanced and a penalty was indicated as a speculative ball descended from the heavens onto the wings. The defenders saved the day but returned for more punishment. The penalty was kicked to the corner, McTaggart rose skywards to gather and initiate the second assault. Three carries and a penalty and the same dose of medicine was repeated. This time the referee issued a yellow card and Sutton & Epsom pressed on against 14. A tap and go, a roar from the crowd but no try and it went wide and more optimistic overtures as Ghumra dived for the corner. Back for another penalty and the Rugby Lane crowd were beseeching Sir to indicate a try but Hegarty was held up. Reeds relief and a drop out under the posts to restart play. The Black & Whites countered with zeal and finally opened their account. Perhaps Mr Richardson had a sense of occasion as the try-scorer was George London. The conversion was added but with another dramatic twist as Freddy Bunting was allowed a second bite at the cherry and the hosts led 7-0.

The opening score was not the sign of the floodgates opening but saw the visitors getting a foothold in the game. It was obvious that Reeds were looking to play at a high tempo and get the ball to their dangerous back division. Penalties were played quickly and the RW pack was gaining the ascendancy at the scrummage. On the half hour they were rewarded with an outstanding try. The combination of superb line of running by Pete Cole and a perfectly timed pass saw winger Matt Stevenson run in under the posts with four colleagues in congratulatory support. Fullback Pete Cole added the extras to level the scores at 7-7. Moments later it took two tremendous tackles within a minute by Josh Pulvirenti to snuff out a potential break from halfway. Despite the conditions it was Reeds who were finishing the first half the stronger with centre Josh Clark to the fore using intelligent chips and grubbers to keep Sutton on the back foot. The first period ended with no further addition to the scoreboard. Reeds Weybridge had achieved the notable success of being on level terms despite playing against a very strong wind.

The start of the second period was a mirror of the first which was hardly surprising as there was no easing up from the elements. The men from Whiteley Village dominated territory and possession but they discovered, as had their Sutton counterparts, that those final yards were the hardest. Marcus Clark on the wing came closest to breaking the deadlock but the S&E defensive line stood strong whether it was Kyren Ghumra on the wing or the tireless pack. Increasingly the flow of the game was disrupted by infringements on the deck that created a stalemate that prevented the Reeds backs demonstrating their quality and gave the Sutton & Epsom defence added confidence in what was a surprisingly uneventful third quarter.

The final twenty minutes signalled the start of increased excitement as Matt Stevenson’s quickly taken penalty appeared to have caught Sutton & Epsom napping. However, a fabulous cover tackle by Captain Bunting was a most timely intervention that was improved when S&E were awarded a relieving penalty. Soon it was advantage Sutton & Epsom with Freddie Bunting making a surging break to the 22 to link with centre partner Ellis Rudder that concluded with a Sutton penalty. The resulting 5-metre attacking lineout drifted on the wind with a not straight verdict giving the visitors an escape route. Perhaps it was frustration but the visitors ignored the helpful conditions to run the ball from their own line. The yards gained were immediately lost to a penalty and petulance that saw them marched back 10 metres. Ironically Reeds next opportunity came as Sutton lost the ball in the opposition 22 and it was fly-hacked clear. Suddenly the pitch opened up with RW players streaming ominously forward but Austin Bell did wonderfully to secure the loose ball to avert disaster on halfway.

With the game in the balance and in time added on Reeds were within touching distance of glory but had the consolation of a penalty. It was an easy decision for captain Herbie Finn to opt for the kick at goal as fullback Pete Cole effortlessly put the visitors 10-7 up. One could imagine Captain Finn imploring his team to secure the restart and send it deep into Sutton territory and on no account concede a penalty. With the billowing breeze making the restart more of a lottery than it might have been the Black & Whites were given the lifeline of a penalty. It was advanced to the corner and another penalty followed the lineout. Sutton went for route one as tempers boiled over before the final play of the season. The forwards provide a mass of steaming humanity on the try-line and Rob Hegarty squeezed over to win the game for Sutton & Epsom. It was left for George London to attempt the touchline conversion and despite a passable impression of All Black legend Don Clarke it fell short. The final whistle blew and Sutton & Epsom had snatched victory by 12-10. The supporters retired to the clubhouse and for those who live in a tinkerless world they ruminated on what might have been in 2023-4. The Sutton & Epsom victory was synonymous with the man of the hour, George London, it was full of determination, a never say die attitude and a will to win in adversity that saw Sutton over the line. Reeds had the edge in the scrummage and the more threatening back division. However, the powerful wind did not bring the anticipated cascade of points as both XVs demonstrated determined defence and it was the Black & Whites who gained the points by virtue of winning the try battle by 2-1 but only at the eleventh hour with Brunnhilde on her final chorus.

Sutton & Epsom
O’Brien, Findlay, Rudder, Bunting ©, Ghumra, Lennard, Munford, Boaden, Farrell, Gibson, Glanville, McTaggart, London, Pulvirenti & Hegarty.
Replacements: Al Khaldi, Jones & Bell.

Reeds Weybridge
Cole, Stevenson, J. Clark, Maddock, Brown, Jesty, Palmer, L. Day, R. Day, Ring, Finn ©, Wasko, G. Corner, Collyer, A. Corner.
Replacements: Rawding, Relfe & M. Clark.

Image courtesy Robin Kennedy

Epsom & Ewell FC losing at the bottom

12 April 2024

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Epsom & Ewell FC 1-2 Spelthorne Sports Combined Counties League – Premier Division. Saturday 2nd April 2024.

On a miserable night for football at the Madgwick in front of just 43 spectators, our season took a serious turn for the worse as we led fellow strugglers Spelthorne Sports at the half, only to get pushed back further and further before conceding twice to lose 2-1 with almost everyone in the ground thinking that they could see it coming.

This was a particularly disappointing second half performance and if I'm honest, our opponents had most of the ball in the first half too, but we had some chances and took one of them. However, they fought back, inspired by constant cajoling from the bench and frequent substitutions, while we remained mute and kept the same eleven on the field, despite looking desperate for fresh legs from the hour mark onwards.

Before the kick off our programme notes heralded the arrival of three players, yet one of them, Kevin Turbi wasn't even in the line up! We did hand a start to Will Kendall, late of Redhill, Abbey Rangers and Merstham, while Luke Taylor from Sheerwater also came on late in the day. our opponents had former Salts Ade Batula and Tommy Williams on their registration list, but neither were on the team sheet for this encounter.

We started brightly but without forcing a save from Bob Honey, brother of Shay who had been in goal against us in the return match before joining us briefly; surely the only time in club history that we had faced two goalkeeping brothers in our two matches against the same club! Spelthorne were first to register a shot on target but Dan O'Donovan was alert at the near post to stop the shot from an angle.

There was very little going on in terms of goal threat but we had a real opportunity in the 24th minute when a high and deep cross from Luke Miller was not gathered by Honey, with the ball falling just behind Kendall who was unable to adjust to get any power on it from just a few yards out. Fifteen minutes later we took the lead from our best move of the match as Miller floated in another delivery to the far post where Thompson Adeyemi cushioned the ball back to Kendall who knocked the ball in for his first goal for our club from just five yards out.

Moments later we should have had a second goal after Miller's ball in was sent over the bar by the incoming Adeyemi from just eight yards out. We didn't realise it at the time, but this would prove to be our final real chance of the match. We went in at the half with the lead, although it was a precarious one and there was still a lot of work to do if we were to get the points.

The visitors started the stronger of the teams in the second half and somehow sent a header across goal from four yards when it was easier to score. We were struggling to get the ball out of our half and another good chance was clipped just wide of our far post from a good position on the hour. Maybe it would be our day after all.

But it was clear for all to see that we were tiring. The supply was not reaching Miller any more and Jaevon Dyer on the left wasn't creating a threat. Yet we made no changes and almost appeared to hope that we would get away with it. That hope ran out in the 74th minute when a deep ball in from the right was knocked back across goal where Andrew Juett was waiting to force the ball in from close range. An inspired Spelthorne team kept pushing and scored again eight minutes later when a ball in from the left found Zach Scott just inside the penalty area and he guided his low shot into the far bottom corner past O'Donovan to give them a lead they would not relinquish.

Dyer was unfortunate not to see his powerful shot clear the bar by inches from twenty yards, but it would prove to be his final input. After going for 86 minutes with no substitutions, we then made four all at once, including Dyer, but it was far too late for them to make an impact and apart from a couple of dangerous looking corners from Adam Green the whistle blew shortly afterwards to confirm our fate.

I should make it clear that our players worked hard all night, but we were lacking in direction, both on and off the field and it looks to our supporters as though we are unable to see matches out on the rare occasions that we get a lead. This needs to change quickly. We are quiet and desperately needed a Zach Powell, or dare I say it, an Alex Penfold, who might have been able to raise the intensity of our game.

I rated our chances of relegation as "slim" going into this match, despite recent form, but that now needs to be updated to "entirely possible" after this contest, as it is looking more and more likely that our survival can only happen because the two teams currently below us fail to win sufficient points to overhaul us. This is a concerning time for our club and we now need to pick up some more points against much tougher opponents in Fleet Town and Abbey Rangers before our season ends at Guildford City. We do at least have eleven more days before those fixtures to try and sort this out, but confidence and belief need to change radically and this needs to come from our Management who might want to take a leaf out of the Spelthorne book for advice.

Epsom & Ewell: Dan O'Donovan, Ayran Kugathas, Ethan Nelson-Roberts (c), Adam Green, Reece Tierney, Callum Wilson, Luke Miller, Matt McGillivray, Will Kendall, Thompson Adeyemi, Jaevon Dyer

Subs: Jerry Antwi for Kugathas (86), Sirak Negassi for Dyer (86), Zach Ingham-Wright for Miller (86), Luke Taylor for McGillivray (86)

Report Source: www.eefconline.co.uk

Sutton and Epsom leapfrog Old Colfeians in the end

12 April 2024

Old Colfeians 22 – Sutton and Epsom RFC 31. Saturday 23rd March.

In bygone years this was a regular league fixture and Saturday bore witness to the sixteenth such encounter between the clubs. Old Colfeians is a club to be mentioned in whispered tones whilst in the company of James Clark's title-winners of 2006-07. That Black and White celebrated side saw their perfect record spoiled on the club's last venture to Horn Park in January 2007. The 2023-24 vintage may not have won this league but they headed home with a 31-22 victory and replaced the hosts in eighth place in the league table.

The revolving door of selection meant that only Messrs Lennard and Bunting were in the same shirts in a reshuffled Sutton back division following the culling of Cobham. For the pack it was a minor disruption that saw Tom Boaden elevated from the bench in the absence of Alex Mount. Sutton played with the significant advantage of the elements in the first period as a strong wind tore down the pitch. Despite this handicap Colfeians started on the front foot. A sublime moment of legerdemain by Tom Chapman put Ollie Burkett into space and the full back was only denied by an eleventh hour cover tackle by Tom Lennard. The wind hampered the Sutton lineout and led to an OCs scrum. The set piece wheeled and the alert home Number 9 Jed Wylie wriggled free to score from 5 metres out. Chris Harris added the conversion for a most valuable 7-0 lead in less than advantageous conditions.

Sutton replied instantly as the Horn Park XV struggled to deal with the restart gifting

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the visitors with a prime attacking penalty position 5 metres from their line. The initial surge from the set play failed to secure the score but a couple of phases later Josh Pulvirenti forced his way over in the corner. The touchline conversion was blown wide and the Black and Whites trailed 5-7. Moments later a counter by Kyren Ghumra ended in an SandE penalty that was drilled into the corner by Freddy Bunting. From the 5-metre lineout the Sutton pack went through multiple phases inching not only closer to the try line but also the uprights. Robust Colfeians' defence was finally ended by Mr Tobias Whinney awarding Sutton another 5-metre penalty. Once more the attacking tapped option was taken rather than a kick at the posts.

Again the forwards took control and ushered hooker Chris Farrell over the line. Normal service resumed for the Bunting boot and the visitors led 12-7 after a dozen minutes.

From the restart Sutton's counter was penalised for crossing and it was Colfeians turn to put the ball in the corner and attack from a 5-metre lineout. The Black and White line held but infringed. Playing the advantage a Colfeians deft chip just sailed over the head of Chris Harris but the winger punished SandE by adding the three points when play was brought back for the penalty. OCs trailed 10-12 in a game of fluctuating fortunes in the first quarter.

Approaching the half hour Sutton secured their third try. With their best passage of play of the match so far the backs and forwards combined through several phases before Ellis Rudder was stopped deep in the 22 but the cover infringed on the deck. On this occasion it was Callum Gibson who was the beneficiary with a try from the forward effort from the tapped penalty. Freddy Bunting's touchline conversion was even more impressive as he made it at the third attempt having aborted his first two approaches as the wind blew the ball off the tee. Sutton had extended their advantage to lead 19-10.

The visitors were soon threatening another score. A wonderful break by Tom Lennard from his own half released fullback Ciaran Mohr who stepped inside the cover, took the last tackle before passing to Alfie Baker but the ball was not gathered and a wonderful score was denied. In addition Ciaran Mohr injured his ankle and was replaced by Austin Bell. A rampant Sutton did not dwell on this missed opportunity and shortly afterwards had their bonus point try. The impressive Josh Pulvirenti made a break and marauded into the 22 and passed to Angus Findlay who was rewarded for his excellent support play with the try. Bunting moved to the ball with his familiar constabulary stroll and converted with a laconic air for 26-10. Ten minutes later and SandE added a fifth try from a precise lineout routine that saw Rob Hegarty burst through a gap to score. Though the conversion failed Sutton had a healthy 31-10 lead.

With the first half near completion SandE ran the ball from their 22 from the restart looking to maximise their advantage from the windy conditions. They were brought back for a forward pass and there began a lengthy final play. It was a rugby version of 'Groundhog Day'. The teams scrummaged, the hosts were awarded a penalty, the visitors prevented a score and the referee brought them back for the penalty and Colfeians chose to scrummage again. Finally, after 52 minutes in the first period, and a yellow card for Sutton's Dan Jones, winger Tom Chapman squeezed in at the corner. A very challenging conversion fell short and the first half ended with the Black and Whites 31-15 ahead.

The interval had comical overtones as Sutton stayed out on the pitch whilst their hosts enjoyed the warmth of their dressing room. With a sable sky, a hailstorm swept the pitch and Sutton players took shelter behind their bulkier colleagues. Perhaps it was the reward of the Gods for braving the weather as the game restarted in sunshine and becalmed as cruelly the Colfeians were to be denied the strong wind enjoyed by Sutton. The second half was a curious affair. With excellent tactical acumen and pragmatism the numerically inferior visitors spent their punishment time in the opposition 22. This benevolent occupation was then extended to practically the entire second half. Old Colfeians adopted the mantle of Horatio and Rorke's Drift in heroic defence whilst Sutton became a hybrid of Sisyphus and Tantalus.

With the game approaching full time Old Colfeians finally made it into the Sutton and Epsom half and won a penalty. The ball was drilled into the corner for a 5-metre lineout. The throw was secured and the mountainous figure of captain Andy O'Malley powered over to score. Chris Harris then reduced the arrears to 22-31 and the crowd awoke from their slumber at the prospect of a thrilling climax. After their prolonged territorial dominance Sutton's character was now put to the test as an element of doubt over the outcome entered into the equation. If the first period was inordinately lengthy the second period was unbelievably time consuming as it racked up 57 minutes. There were several stoppages with the physios in attendance but once again it was last play that endured. Sutton were again reduced to 14 when Rob Hegarty departed following a high tackle but Colfeians could not force another score to garner any points. The game ended with the hosts defending and frustrating SandE who failed to add to their score in the second period. The match finally concluded with the Black and Whites victorious by 31-22.

There may be aficionados who love nothing more than a reset scrum and a catalogue of infringements as frequent stoppages deny free-flowing rugby as with this second half. However, that seems as likely as someone preferring the brutalist architecture of a housing estate in Stalinist Russia to the Taj Mahal. It was a shame as a sizeable crowd had gathered for Past Players' Day adding greatly to the occasion and superlative bonhomie in the clubhouse after the game. Sutton were the deserved winners but Old Colfeians failed to exploit their superiority at the scrummage as discipline and errors undermined their performance. In the lineout and the loose the SandE pack played with great control.

Angus Findlay, starting for the first time in his preferred Number 9 shirt, gave an assured performance releasing the back division that showed moments of fluency and quality. The Black and Whites failure to convert pressure into points in the second half was more down to the courageous Colfeian defence than the inadequacies of the Sutton attack.

The Easter weekend offers a rest for the teams before the league season concludes on Saturday 6th April. Old Colfeians will be taking a trip to relegated Cobham and have the prospect of ending the campaign with a thumping victory. Meanwhile at Rugby Lane Sutton and Epsom will host Reeds Weybridge aiming to make amends for a 27-12 loss on the opening day of the season.

Sutton and Epsom
Mohr, Baker, Rudder, Bunting ©, Ghumra, Lennard, Findlay, Boaden, Farrell, Gibson, Glanville, McTaggart, Jones, Pulvirenti and Hegarty.
Replacements: Al Khaldi, Tame and Bell.

Old Colfeians:
Burkett, Harris, Hepden, Jones, Chapman, Smith, Wylie, Whichello, Newins, Rameaux, O'Malley ©, Cunningham, Walker, Carter and Smith.
Replacements: Orubo, Greatorex-Sanderson and Nagel.

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Generous in defeat

12 April 2024

Epsom & Ewell FC 1-4 Horley Town. Combined Counties League – Premier Division. Saturday 23rd March 2024

A strange contest took place at the Madgwick on Saturday as we hosted Horley Town in our latest League match. We created most of the chances over the ninety minutes, yet didn't take them and our opponents took full advantage of our generosity to win the match 4-1.

We fielded our sixth goalkeeper in just ten matches as Faebian Witter had been injured recently and with former keeper Shay Honey already departed for Staines & Lammas, Dan O'Donovan came in between the posts, although he was advertised as David! It never fails to amaze me how our club continues to get our player names wrong so often and wonder what sort of message this sends out to them. In other changes it was good to see the return of Carl Oblitey up front, as he provides us with a greater attacking threat; something we were sorely lacking at Balham in our last match. At the back, we also saw the return of Reece Tierney and Callum Wilson, although the absence of Ayran Kugathas meant that Nick Wilson had to play in the right back position, although he was restored to the Captain's position once again, while Matt McGillivray moved into midfield. Zach Ingham-Wright and Tijani Eshilokun moved to the bench, although the latter would join the action in the second half.

There was a minute's silence before the match for former Banstead Athletic Chairman Terry Molloy, who passed away this week. Our club had an awkward relationship in our time there as tenants from 1993-2010, so it was a little surprising to see us hold a tribute, particularly when our club elected not to do so for recently departed prolific strikers Gerry O'Rourke and Ben Forey. Not that anyone knew at the time exactly who the silence was for, as it wasn't announced by the club and I had to ask an official.

We opened up fairly brightly and an early Luke Miller ball into the danger area was just ahead of Thompson Adeyemi, before a similar cross from Ethan Nelson-Roberts also just missed the incoming strikers. McGillivray was the first to pull a decent save from George Hyde the long-serving Horley keeper, with a low shot from the edge of the area with Adam Green seeing his own shot deflected for a corner shortly afterwards.

It then came as a bit of a shock when Horley took the lead in the 15th minute with their first real attack. Adeyemi appeared to be brought down in midfield, but play was allowed to continue and a pass forward reached former Salt Lewis Pearch who cut inside Wilson and drilled a low shot beyond O'Donovan from 15 yards.

We almost responded immediately after Oblitey robbed Hyde out wide in the area, although he then chose to go for goal from an extremely narrow angle and was only able to hit the post. We were then denied by an excellent save after Wilson had made progress on the right, sending a shot in from about eight yards that took a wicked deflection off a defender, yet despite Hyde going to his right by this point, he somehow stuck out an arm in the opposite direction to claw the deflected ball away from the goal.

We continued to push forward and Nelson-Roberts sent in a left wing cross that Oblitey headed just wide from around twelve yards out. Moments later Horley midfielder Lewis Taylor found himself in the sin-bin for comments to the referee, but we weren't able to take advantage of the extra man. We had chances during that period though, with Adeyemi somehow getting a Miller delivery stuck under his feet just three yards out and Oblitey striking wide from 15 yards. Jaevon Dyer also struck at goal, but Hyde was equal to it, and to add insult to injury Horley went straight up the other end once they were back to eleven men and scored again with Scott Walker putting the hosts 2-0 up from close range in the 43rd minute.

Hyde tipped an Oblitey piledriver over the bar from twenty yards and the question at the break was how we had managed to go in with a two goal deficit after a decent enough attacking showing in that first half.

However, the second half was a very disappointing one and we appeared to be completely flat, as if we already knew we wouldn't be able to retrieve anything from the position we had found ourselves in. This became apparent to me as early as the 47th minute when Tierney got his foot to the ball before being brought down in the Horley area by Rylan John, yet there wasn't even an appeal for a penalty from an Epsom player. I was questioning my own eyes and even had to check with people around me that I had actually seen the incident correctly and was assured that I had, yet it wasn't until there was a break in play while Tierney received treatment before the question even asked of the referee, who understandably hadn't given anything! If we had appealed for this, maybe the game would have turned in our favour, but of course that is just conjecture on my part!

It was unclear how many matches O'Donovan has played recently, but of course he was a virtual stranger to our defenders, and maybe unimpressed with the standard of defending he had seen to this point, he chose to come out of goal to chase a clearance himself, yet found himself almost 40 yards out from his goal. Fortunately the long range attempt from the visitors went over the bar or it might have proved to be a rather embarrassing afternoon for him! Regrettably he would be picking the ball out of the net shortly anyway as a near post corner was headed past him from close range by Matt Rapson on the hour to make the score 0-3.

Dyer took advantage of John misjudging the bounce of the ball to break through, but drove his shot wide from 18 yards and he was replaced not long afterwards. Our flying winger was superb last season, but looks to be lacking confidence since he has returned to our club and there appeared to be a lack of belief across the playing ranks as this match petered out. Even when Green sent in a lovely flat free kick which was met by an Adeyemi bullet header just inside the far post from twelve yards to pull a goal back in the 83rd minute, there was little by way of celebration of any kind and the remainder of the match was equally disappointing with Green, Callum Wilson and then substitute Jerry Antwi all receiving yellow cards for lunges at Horley players. Fortunately, none of the challenges were severe enough for red cards, but we then conceded a fourth goal in the sixth minute of injury time despite O'Donovan standing up well to make a good save, but no one reacted to the loose ball that was then knocked in from close range. A 4-1 defeat was only marginally better than our 4-0 defeat there, exactly three months previously.

I believe that our players are good enough to get us out of trouble this season, but we really need to pick up a few more points before we can be assured of safety and aren't playing very well right now. On paper our fixtures are favourable, particularly when compared to those around us, but as we know football isn't played on paper and a home match against a team that started the day just three places above us, should have been enough motivation. Instead, we fell away in the second half again, and whilst we did make a lot of chances in this match, which was a notable improvement on the previous Saturday, we are going to need to take some of these if we are not to get caught by the clubs below us. We now have a ten day break before we reconvene at the Madgwick for the visit of Spelthorne Sports; one of the clubs in the bottom five. We absolutely cannot afford to be flat for that one.

Epsom & Ewell: Dan O'Donovan, Nick Wilson (c), Ethan Nelson-Roberts, Adam Green, Reece Tierney, Callum Wilson, Luke Miller, Matt McGillivray, Carl Oblitey, Thompson Adeyemi, Jaevon Dyer

Subs: Tijani Eshilokun for Oblitey (63), Jerry Antwi for N.Wilson (77), Sirak Negassi for Dyer (77)

Report Source: www.eefconline.co.uk

Epsom squash team stand the squeeze

12 April 2024

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When five girls from **Rosebery School**, **Epsom** formed the school's first ever squash team just six months ago with a view to entering the England Squash National Schools Championships 2023/24, little did they know how far they would go in this tough and prestigious tournament. Being a state school with no on-site squash facilities, they knew they would be competing against a lot of private schools around the country, many with their own squash courts and dedicated coaches. They were, however, all keen squash players and junior members of **Ebbisham Sports Club** in Epsom where they trained on a regular basis.

By dint of their considerable success in Stages 1 and 2 of the Championships, held respectively at Limpsfield Club in November 2023 and **Epsom College** in January 2024, the Rosebery School Girls Squash Team were delighted to learn that they had done enough to qualify for the Finals held in Birmingham on 14th March. One of the top eight teams from around the country to reach the Finals, the Rosebery Squash Team battled hard through three very tough matches during the course of a long day, with some excellent individual match wins and some very close losses. Whilst they came extremely close to beating one of the other schools, in the end the Rosebery team had to settle for final place, but did so with a smile on their faces and knowing they had given the Championships their all.

Gillian Mead

Sutton and Epsom blow the Cobwebs away

12 April 2024

Sutton & Epsom RFC 49 Cobham 13. Saturday 16th March.

Having lost to the basement boys of London Cornish, the Exiles gaining their first win on the road for over a year, Sutton and Epsom supporters arrived at Rugby Lane with a sense of mild trepidation. Could the proverbial lightning revisit with the arrival of eleventh-placed Cobham who had lost their last eleven matches. For those fearing that the wheels had come off the Black & White charabanc it appears, on Saturday's evidence, to have passed its MOT and was in perfect working order as the team ran in a magnificent seven tries for an emphatic 49-13 triumph. The victory mathematically secured Sutton & Epsom's position in Level 6.

Freddy Bunting kicked off into the breeze and initiated a period of high tempo attacking rugby that saw his team living in the Cobham 22 for the majority of the opening 15 minutes. The visitors defended impressively none more so than when from a tapped 5-metre penalty Josh Glanville was held up over the line by a superb tackle. Having had all of the game Sutton & Epsom conceded the first points when, on their first sortie into the S&E half, Jonathan Holmes kicked a penalty for a 3-0 lead. A few minutes later and the Black & Whites received a second dose of unpalatable medicine as Holmes made it 6-0.

It was at this stage the classic debate of whether to kick for points or seek greater rewards was raging amongst the crowd. The hosts approach was to turn down every kick at goal and seek the higher tariff score. In the course of the first period they were to reject many kicks with several in front of the uprights. Finally on the half hour their bravery was rewarded. The ball went wide and Lawrence Elliott, running a superb line, broke through and using all of his strength powered over. Freddy Bunting splendidly bisected the uprights for a 7-6 lead. Cobham's attempt to regain the lead with a third penalty failed as the first period neared its conclusion.

Approaching time added on Cobham were reduced to 14 when Mr Priddle issued a yellow card to blindside Max Hales who departed as a result of the cumulative effect of infringements in the 22. Sutton & Epsom went for the tap penalty and it was the redoubtable Alex Mount who stretched out to secure the try. Freddy Bunting added the simple conversion for a 14-6 lead. The restart is often the most dangerous moment and the Black & Whites conceded a penalty but the visitors attempts to secure a platform to attack the Sutton line faltered and the referee blew for half-time. S&E had a vital 14-6 lead with a man advantage to take into the second period with the wind behind them.

The Rugby Lane team pressed hard to extend their lead in the opening exchanges of the second half attempting to benefit from their numerical and meteorological advantages. The Bunting boot put his team in the 22. Cobham survived for ten minutes before hooker Chris Farrell collected his sixth try of the campaign. Captain Bunting made it three out of three as Sutton led 21-6. The visitors then showed the fighting spirit one would expect from a team teetering on the brink of relegation. Awarded a penalty in the 22 they tapped and went. Sutton & Epsom had failed to retreat and they repeated the option with captain and scrum-half Ryan Saunders scoring. Jonathan Holmes converted to put Cobham back in the hunt trailing 13-21.

Barely had the inspiring words of encouragement of a comeback drifted on the wind and Cobham were standing behind their posts awaiting another Sutton & Epsom conversion. From the restart Dan Jones gathered the ball from a ruck outside the visitors' 22 and exploited a gap to streak away for the try. With the extras S&E led 28-13 and had secured their try bonus point. That score thoroughly demoralised the men from the Memorial Ground as it inspired the Rugby Lane XV. The game entered the final quarter and the hosts provided their faithful fans with their most exhilarating rugby seen at home this season.

Sensible tactical kicking by half-backs Munford and Lennard kept the hosts on the attack. A wonderful break from Tom Lennard at 10 looked certain to lead to a try but he

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was felled by a tap tackle close to glory. The crowd did not have to wait long for try Number 5. The ball went to the opposite flank and a training ground routine was executed to perfection from a lineout. The ball was secured, the line-break made and the overlap exploited as Ciaran Mohr strolled in at the corner. Freddy Bunting made light of the testing conversion for 35-13.

Try number six again owed its success to repetition on cold winter nights. A 5-metre lineout was secured and the pack advanced forward to provide Rob Hegarty with his eighth try of the season. It was a fitting reward for the quality of the lineout from the triumvirate of McTaggart, Pulvirenti and Glanville who had given Sutton & Epsom an excellent platform all afternoon. With a degree of inevitably Freddy Bunting converted and it was 42-13. For the first time this season at Rugby Lane the home crowd could enjoy a relaxing conclusion to a match. Previous contests might have been thrilling for the neutral observer but had provided far too much anxiety. Cobham attempted to end on a high point and looked destined to secure an otiose try. However a wayward pass bounced into the grateful hands of Angus Findlay who sped away from his own 22 for his first 1 st XV league try. Freddy Bunting completed a perfect afternoon with the boot and the match concluded with Sutton & Epsom enjoying a resounding 49-13 win.

Apart from the security of success it was a red-letter day for two of the Sutton and Epsom side. Steve Munford in playing his 215th league match for the club surpassed Steve Warnham's total and lies second to the 251-game Sam Frost. Meanwhile, with his first successful kick of the afternoon, Freddy Bunting broke Sam Hurley's 2015-6 record of 208 points in a league season. It was a redemptive afternoon for the skipper after he had appeared to have supped at the river Lethe on his last outing. Sutton & Epsom may be breathing easier but carnivorous creatures circle the Cobham carrion as descent into the abyss of Level 7 seems probable after Gravesend's victory over Beckenham. With the 'Jersey Reprieve' there will be the incongruous site of Cobham supporters googling the results of Chosen Hill FP, Kirkby Lonsdale and Old Crossleyans in the weeks to come. Next Saturday S&E enjoy their last away day of the campaign with a first visit to Horn Park since January 2007 to take on Old Colfeians who they defeated 21-17 in December.

Sutton & Epsom
O'Brien, Huie, Elliott, Bunting ©, Findlay, Lennard, Munford, Mount, Farrell, Gibson, Glanville, McTaggart, Jones, Pulvirenti & Hegarty.
Replacements: Boaden, Tame & Mohr.

Cobham
Penfold, Springett, Boswell, Burnett, Yorke, Holmes, Saunders ©, Aujla, Muirhead, Bliss, Westgarth-Taylor, Farmer, Hales, Blackwood & Porter.
Replacements: Nunn, Keefe & O'Connor.

Image courtesy Robin Kennedy

Balham, gateway to the .... defeat

12 April 2024

Balham 2-0 Epsom & Ewell FC. Combined Counties League – Premier Division. Saturday 16th March 2024.

On Saturday we made our second visit of the season to the Mayfields Stadium and received our second defeat. Five weeks ago we were unfortunate to lose there 5-2 to AFC Croydon Athletic, but this 2-0 loss to their tenants Balham, was far more disappointing, In fact the few supporters who were there will not remember this match for very long, not even the home ones, as this was a very uninteresting encounter, full of errors and scrappy play from both sides, and even when Balham finally did break through, there was an element of a defensive contribution towards both of the goals. I felt we were deserving of a point from a goalless draw, but could have no real complaints at the end of the match.

We made three changes from our encouraging draw at Redhill seven days previously. Carl Oblitey was injured, while Reece Tierney and Callum Wilson were unavailable, so Matt McGillivray came in for his first start at the back, while Club Captain Nick Wilson returned after his two match suspension, although it was interesting to note that Ethan Nelson-Roberts retained the armband for this match, maybe because we had done well in the previous two matches, or maybe due to Wilson's excessive number of cards in recent matches. Further forward, Zach Ingham-Wright also had his first start for the club.

We kicked off slightly late after the referee took exception to Luke Miller's blue long sleeved undershirt, even though our away colours are yellow and blue. Yes, you've guessed it, he was being assessed! Officially though, I was advised that the term is now "observed" as the previous term is now seen too much as a critique of the referee. Well, my observations were that it was fortunate that no major decisions were required on this occasion, although we had a confusing early incident after our keeper Faebian Witter was blocked as he tried to drop kick the ball, yet moments later Adam Green picked up a yellow card for us, for pulling his man back. Whilst you couldn't complain about the card for our player, it was hard to see why one wasn't given for the Balham offence.

The first half contained little to write home about. Witter rushed out to claim the ball and did well to keep it inside the penalty area, despite 95% of him being outside it, while at the other end Haydn Read was alert to leave his area to head clear after Ingham-Wright had threatened to reach a Thompson Adeyemi pass. However, these were not even half-chances really, and indeed the only event of note during the first forty-five minutes came when our Secretary Spencer Mitchell was stung by a bee on the sideline. No physio was required!

We went in at the half unsurprisingly goalless and the second half started off in a worryingly similar pattern. A Jaevon Dyer header was accidentally dropped over the goal line by Read for a corner after a few minutes, but our winger was having a quiet day and was replaced by Sirak Negassi in the 52nd minute. Balham's defence had clearly done their homework and cancelled out the threat from our wings almost entirely. We were also missing the physical presence of Oblitey who had been really impressive in the last couple of matches and although Ingham-Wright was well involved in the match, he never looked likely to add to his goal from the previous week.

In fact, neither team looked like breaking through at any point, so when the home team actually opened the scoring in the 65th minute it came as a bit of a shock. A deep free kick was headed back out by Adeyemi, but he wasn't able to get a decent purchase on the next delivery back in, and inadvertently flicked it to the back post where it was volleyed back into the danger area for Jack Banks to strike the ball into the net from close range.

We then had our best chance of the match in the 70th minute when Adeyemi was brought down right on the edge of the area in a central position. The ball was placed literally one foot from the penalty area, yet the referee seemed totally happy to allow the defensive wall to congregate along the penalty spot, no more than six and a half yards away. Even when the referee had this pointed out to him he paced eight small steps back and moved the wall back about a yard! Ironically, had the wall stayed where it was originally, Adam Green's free kick might have taken a slightly larger deflection to put it out of Read's reach, but instead he was able to dive to his left to parry the ball out for what became a fruitless Epsom corner.

At this point we changed our shape. Reggie Savage and Jerry Antwi came on and we switched to three at the back, but to be brutally honest, it didn't work. From this point the home side seemed to find more space and although an overhead kick was sent well over our bar, former Salt Ash Snadden was set up for a strike from just twelve yards that was headed off the line by Wilson with Witter beaten. Moments later Witter made a good save down to his right, but the ball was recycled and a long shot from James Anderson from a central position around twenty yards out took a heavy deflection off Nelson-Roberts and bounced into the

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other side of the net to where Witter had been standing in the 84th minute.

Anderson picked up a late booking for clattering into Wilson in injury time, but it made no difference and Balham gave their slim hopes of a playoff place a huge boost with this win, while many others around them floundered this week.

It is difficult right now to compose a report without reference to the two teams below us, as we still need to keep looking over our shoulder to see how they got on. This will clearly continue for a while yet as Colliers Wood United and Sheerwater both won, making things a lot tighter at the foot of the table. I still believe 30 points will be enough to see us to safety, but while we remain on just 24, concerns remain.

Epsom & Ewell: Faebian Witter, Ayran Kugathas, Ethan Nelson-Roberts (c), Adam Green, Nick Wilson, Matt McGillivray, Luke Miller, Thompson Adeyemi, Zach Ingham-Wright, Tijani Eshilokun, Jaevon Dyer

Subs: Sirak Negassi for Dyer (52), Jerry Antwi for Eshilokun (73), Reggie Savage for Kugathas (73)

Report Source: www.eefconline.co.uk

Should we be going to.....?

12 April 2024

The Specsavers Surrey Youth Games is back. Following on from the success of the games last year, a wide range of activities are available in **Epsom & Ewell** again, including tennis, judo, swimming and more. 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 ideal for beginners who may not get the opportunity to attend clubs or are put off by the thought of 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 which start after Easter and are aimed at those who live or go to school in the borough. Following the training, teams can unite for a family-friendly event at the Surrey Sports Park in Guildford on Saturday 15 June.

Councillor **Clive Woodbridge**, (RA Ewell Village) Chair of the Community and Wellbeing Committee, said “I’m so pleased that we are running the Specsavers Surrey Youth Games in Epsom & Ewell again this year. The initiative provides a fantastic opportunity for young people who are still building their confidence in sport to access training free of charge.

“I hope that everyone in our borough will take a look at what’s on offer and even tell friends and family about the initiative, so that we can ensure that as many children as possible can access the training.”

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

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Salts rescue a point from the Kiln

12 April 2024

Redhill 1-1 Epsom & Ewell FC. Combined Counties League – Premier Division. Saturday 9th March 2024

An 85th minute equaliser from Zach Ingham-Wright earned us a well-deserved point from a 1-1 draw at Kiln Brow after the hosts had taken the lead early in the second half. Although they put us under pressure after an even first half, I felt we were worth a draw for our display in the final fifteen minutes, during which time we equalised and very nearly pinched all three points!

Following the confirmation that Warren Burton was now permanent Manager, we made just one change from our important 6-2 win over Sandhurst Town as Shay Honey was replaced between the posts by Faebian Witter. Our Captain Nick Wilson completed his two match ban here and so Ethan Nelson-Roberts kept the Captain’s armband for this contest. We knew our opponents fairly well with a pair of our former Assistant Managers, Jordan Clark and Matt Chapman in charge and there were four former Salts in their line up in Adam Grant, Gavin Quintyne, Ben Dyson and Tommy Smith. Redhill were of course looking for a League “double” following their 3-1 win in August at the Madgwick.

We opened up in confident mood against a team who were also in decent form, if you excluded their surprise 2-0 defeat at Camberley Town in midweek. Tijani Eshilokun had a go from around twenty yards with his curling shot missing the far post by a couple of feet, before Carl Oblitey headed an Adam Green corner just over the crossbar inside the opening ten minutes.

Oblitey then set up Luke Miller for a shot, only to find it blocked by Smith, before a long throw was knocked on by Thompson Adeyemi for Oblitey to try his luck with an overhead kick, but it went straight at Isaac Ogunseri in the Redhill goal and he made the easy catch. This would prove to be the only save made by either keeper in the first half, although the home side sent a header wide at full stretch, before a string of injuries to our players led to an extended appearance on the field by Physio Alfie Wyld and an additional five minutes at the end of the period, during which time Redhill headed towards goal, only to see the effort headed away by Reece Tierney from near the goal line just before the half time whistle.

We were obviously familiar with many of their players, but of course, the reverse applied too, and the two teams were cancelling each other out a bit, with our tricky wingers, Miller and Jaevon Dyer being kept very quiet. With Redhill’s lofty League position, I expected them to try and change things up in the second half and they came out with more intent, pushing us back quite a lot. However, we weren’t totally out of it either and in the 50th minute Eshilokun sent the ball across to Dyer, only to see it deflected for a corner. From the Green delivery Oblitey rose highest and was really unfortunate to see his header hit the full face of the bar and rebound directly to the keeper, even though he was by that time standing about eight yards away from his goal. It could have gone anywhere!

This scare clearly woke Redhill up and they forced four successive corners. From the last of these, a deep delivery was met at the far post by the unmarked Smith, who met the dropping ball with a textbook low side footed volley that gave Witter no chance from about eight yards in the 57th minute. One nearly became two just four minutes later as a header was blocked on the line by Green with Quintyne sending the loose ball over the closing defenders, but also over the bar from close range.

The hosts had another chance soon after with Witter forced into a good low save, with the ball parried out wide. It was then sent back in for a header that just missed our far post. We made a couple of substitutions with Matt McGillivray on for Ayran Kugathas and Sirak Negassi on for Dyer and the newly introduced Negassi had a chance to score with his first touch as the ball crept under a defender’s foot, but his shot from twenty yards went beyond the far post.

Ingham-Wright came on for the injured Eshilokun who had taken a bit of a battering in this match and had been on the field for about a minute before he scored

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our equaliser in the 85th minute. An unnecessary foul out wide gave us a free kick and Green's delivery was flicked on by Tierney to Adeyemi at the far post, who headed the ball across goal for our substitute to nod in from close range. If I'm honest, a few of us behind the goal all looked across at the Assistant, just in case there was an offside, but he was happy and we were then able to celebrate.

But could we hold on? Late goals had given us trouble all season, so we needed to be careful, but in reality, it became more a matter of whether we would score again as we took the match to a suddenly wobbly Redhill team and started to attack them on the flanks. We should have had a second goal when we cut them apart with a good move involving Oblitey and Ingham-Wright who fed Negassi on the right, but his perfect cross was somehow headed back across the vacant goal by Miller from just two yards out! The ball was retrieved by Oblitey, but he was at a very narrow angle by then and he clipped the post before the home side were able to scramble the ball to safety!

I'm still not too sure how we didn't take the lead at this point, but an away win would have been harsh on Redhill and they were probably frustrated enough with the draw. We saw out a rather inflated seven minutes of injury time with only a couple of nervy moments before we were able to celebrate a point that in all honesty, I didn't expect us to get before the match, but that's football! With both teams below us picking up points, it's a little tighter at the foot of the table than anyone involved with our team would like it to be, but with six matches remaining, survival is still most definitely in our own hands!

Epsom & Ewell: Faebian Witter, Ayran Kugathas, Ethan Nelson-Roberts (c), Adam Green, Reece Tierney, Callum Wilson, Luke Miller, Thompson Adeyemi, Carl Oblitey, Tijani Eshilokun, Jaevon Dyer

Subs: Matt McGillivray for Kugathas (74), Sirak Negassi for Dyer (78), Zach Ingham-Wright for Eshilokun (84), Jerry Antwi for Oblitey (92).

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