



Mulletts salted in table top match

25 February 2023

Team	P	W	D	L	F	A	Diff	Pts
Shoreham	22	16	6	0	61	18	43	54
Dorking Wanderers B	24	14	4	6	44	25	19	46
Epsom & Ewell	21	14	2	5	49	24	25	44
Godalming Town	22	12	5	5	46	26	20	41
Wick	22	12	3	7	45	36	9	39
Arundel	21	9	7	5	39	32	7	34

Epsom & Ewell 3-2 Arundel. Southern Combination League – Division One. Wednesday 22nd February.

In an important battle at the top end of the table, our boys came through a tense and tight encounter to take all three points from visiting Arundel, courtesy of a late winner from the evergreen Jamie Byatt in front of a disappointing crowd of 70, despite this Wednesday night match being one of very few played in the area.

Byatt, who surely will become the final Salts player to have been born before I started watching Epsom back in October 1981 rolled back the years and in his twenty minute cameo might have resulted in two goals, but an earlier effort was denied by a smart low save.

However, the real story here is that we have now recorded consecutive wins for the first time since October and this result against a team in good form and who drew with leaders Shoreham just four days previously is an indication that maybe our poor form over December and January can now be placed in the rear view mirror. Maybe though we should wait until our next two home matches against East Preston and our recent nemesis the Dorking Wanderers B team before we can be sure.

Sometimes though you just have to get the result, regardless of the performance and going into this match I felt it was important that we take at least a point against Arundel (*nickname the Mulletts*) to keep them at arm's length in the play off race. The visitors probably also felt that a draw would have been a good result, but they will be kicking themselves for the way this match turned out, as they led and missed a few other chances before the match swung in our favour just before half time.

We took the field with two new debutants Tom Theobald in goal and Chris Boulter, the vastly experienced player slotting in at the back. Gideon Acheampong returned to the starting eleven after injury while Alex Penfold made his first start since returning to the club. The players missing out were the suspended Toby McKimm and the absent Steve Springett, Kevin Moreno-Gomez and Nick Wilson.

The opening encounters were fairly even. The visitors had the ball in the net in the fifth minute with a looping header, although the offside flag had already been raised. Then Ollie Thompson made an important clearance for a corner but from the resultant delivery in the fifteenth minute, Harry Russell marked his comeback for Arundel after suspension with a close range header that gave Theobald no chance.

In response Athan Smith-Joseph put in a dangerous low cross but we had no one gambling enough to attack the ball and it fizzed past everyone and out the other side of the six yard box. However, the visitors then had a great chance when the dangerous Carl Brown broke through on the right, but with just our keeper to beat, Theobald stood up well and eventually blocked the shot before the danger was cleared.

Jaevon Dyer was asking a few questions of the Arundel defence, but found himself on the receiving end of some fairly brutal treatment, firstly from Steve Herbert and then from Jordan Dudas who scythed him down with a two footed tackle that angered many of our players, although only resulted in a yellow card.

Penfold picked up a slightly harsh yellow as Brown seemed to throw himself at our man and then to the ground, but the real twist came in the 43rd minute. We started to put a little pressure on and from the edge of the penalty area Gavin Quintyne struck low into the corner; the ball grazing a defender's boot on the way in. This came as a bit of a surprise as the visitors had fashioned most of the chances to this point, but luck then turned our way too in the final minute of the half when a loose ball was picked up by Jaan Stanley and his shot was parried by Andy McCarthy, only to see the ball then strike an incoming defender and dribble over the line! This was the second time this season we have scored in such circumstances after Smith-Joseph's strike at Oakwood and like that goal, this will have to go down as an own goal, regardless of the club's rather hasty announcement that Stanley had scored. He will have to wait a little longer for his first goal in Epsom colours.

Most importantly and despite a fairly average forty-five minutes, we had turned this match around. A big second half was coming up although we'd need to do it without Penfold who was replaced at the break by Dylan Merchant-Simmonds with Gideon Acheampong moving over to left back. However, we seemed to look more solid with Brown providing much less of a threat in this half, and the ball spent much of the time in the middle of the park as the game became a little bit tighter. Harrison Mott then picked up a yellow card for Arundel following a high foot, although the referee appeared to indicate that it was for an accumulation of fouls.

We had a chance on the hour after good work from Smith-Joseph who pulled the ball back for Stanley, but his shot was blocked and cleared. Stanley had another chance when put through in the 66th minute and rode a high tackle which resulted in him being forced out wide and our bench demanding a free kick which may well have been followed by a red card as the player concerned was the last man back. Maybe our player was too honest and should have gone to ground, but the chance had gone.

Byatt joined the fray in the 68th minute for Smith-Joseph with Stanley moving out to the left to accommodate our fit again



striker. However, we then had a major scare as an Arundel right wing cross was headed straight at Theobald who couldn't hold on to the ball and Tom Jefkins blazed the loose ball over from close range in the 69th minute. This was a real let off.

Dyer found himself on the deck once again after a blatant body check from Rob Madden which earned him a yellow card, and just three minutes later he was on the ground again after a collision with Mott off the ball. The Assistant clearly had a good view of the incident and flagged vigorously, advising the referee of what had happened, whereupon Mott then received a second yellow card. This incensed the visiting Management team and one of them was then the recipient of a straight red card as a result of his reaction. Dyer was the victim of some fairly unpleasant challenges in this match and it is hoped he is fit enough to go again on Saturday.

However, as we proved at Hailsham Town, you don't necessarily pack up just because you go down to ten men and from a free kick awarded some twenty-five yards out, Herbert curled a peach of a strike into the top corner of our net to level things up at 2-2 in the 80th minute.

With ten minutes to play the visitors appeared to be wanting to settle for a draw, as they slowed the game down a bit, but in the 83rd minute Stanley produced a good delivery for Byatt, whose shot was half blocked and then gathered by McCarthy almost on his goal line. You felt that a fully match fit Byatt might have given the keeper no chance, but he was there again two minutes later on the end of a great crossfield pass from Quintyne and his downward shot beat McCarthy at the near post and crept into the net to put us ahead for good. Theobald had one more shot to deal with, but he kept it out and after nearly seven minutes of injury time the whistle blew for full time.

A lot of people were very happy after our Hailsham win, particularly in view of the harshness of the early red card, but Hailsham were in a low position in the table and I felt that this match would provide a much better indicator of where we were. If you'd asked me at half time whether we had really turned the corner, I'd have said no, even though we had just taken the lead, as the first half wasn't great from an Epsom point of view. However, by the end of the match I felt we had done just enough to claim the three points, although you can't help but wonder what might have happened if the visitors scored a second goal when they were in the ascendancy. I'm sure they will have been wondering that too as they make the long journey home.

Epsom & Ewell: Tom Theobald, Gideon Acheampong, Alex Penfold, Ryan Smith (c), Chris Boulter, Oliver Thompson, Jaevon Dyer, Gavin Quintyne, Jaan Stanley, Thompson Adeyemi, Athan Smith-Joseph

Subs: Dylan Merchant-Simmonds for Penfold (HT), Jamie Byatt for Smith-Joseph (68), George Owusu for Dyer (80), Musa Beegun for Adeyemi (86), Tyreke Leslie for Stanley (86)

Wimbledon on the Up and Up

25 February 2023

Sutton & Epsom Women 20 Wimbledon Women 43. Saturday 18th February. Sutton & Epsom had enjoyed a comfortable 26-0 triumph at Beverley Meads in November. However, they were only too aware that that result bore no resemblance to the recent form of the Dons. In 2023 they have taken the scalps of not only Hammersmith & Fulham last week but also the Guildford Gazelles and most notably Battersea Ironsides. After 80 minutes of thrilling rugby and an eleven-try bonanza Wimbledon returned to SW20 with the points after an exhilarating 43-20 triumph.

Hannah Gutteridge kicked off for the visitors on a mild and sunny afternoon that was ideal for running rugby and both teams capitalised on the conditions. After the initial sparring with both sets of forwards carrying the ball ferociously and being met with thunderous tackles it was the Barham Road team who opened the scoring. The Dons were awarded a penalty when an S&E player failed to roll away. A splendid tackle by Abby Wynne thwarted the first sortie but it was spread wide for Jade Whareate to squeeze in at the corner for a 5-0 lead. The game went from end to end as Sutton tried to get onto level terms whilst Wimbledon sought to extend their lead. With Aegean Leech to the fore the Dons defence stood firm.

Sutton suffered a self-inflicted wound when Abby Wynne's long clearance was brought back due to S&E players failing to retreat. Gifted with free possession and the bonus of a penalty on the host's 22 the visitors exploited the situation to the maximum. Fluent play from the backs set up Maddie Healey who finished with aplomb out wide. Trailing 0-10 the Rugby Lane team were also forced into a change as an injured Hannah Smith was replaced by Natalie McCall. Maddie Healey was soon in the thick of the action once more with another electric burst of pace which should have created a try but the ball hit the deck when the line was begging.

The fates then conspired against the Black & Whites as a raking clearance kick from Hannah Gutteridge took the cruellest of bounces to wrong foot the cover. Maddie Healey got to the ball first and intelligently fly-hacked the ball to the vacant in-goal area. The quicksilver winger won the race to the line to touchdown for her second try of the afternoon. Hannah Gutteridge made light of the challenging conversion to extend Wimbledon's lead to 17-0. Sutton & Epsom pressed hard to get on the scoreboard before the break. The Dons knocked on the restart and provided the perfect platform on the 22 for an S&E attack but once more they could not find a way through the opposition defences. In addition winger Ella Zeqiri was injured in a tackle and had to be replaced by Lucy Hoad. All the hosts' efforts were in vain as the first period ended with Wimbledon leading 17-0.

Sutton & Epsom were pro-active at the break and brought Joanne Evans and Jayne Maddox off the bench as they went in search of an early score in the second half. The latter made an immediate impact with her running and probing boot. However, the next score went to the visitors. A stunning break by fullback Ellie Seagrave put the S&E defence under severe pressure. The hosts conceded a 5-metre penalty. A couple of rumbling carries by the SW20 pack narrowed the defence and then the ball was spun wide. Zoe Johnson was on hand for the clinical finish to earn the bonus point for Try Number 4.

Sutton now mounted a stunning comeback. Aegean Leach stole the ball and her swift counter nearly led to a try. The retreating defence were forced into conceding a penalty and the referee issued a yellow card. The Black & Whites took immediate advantage of their numerical superiority with the tap penalty sent wide where Joanne Evans battled her way over the line to score. Trailing 5-22 the crowd only had a moment to draw breath before they were cheering another Sutton score. S&E secured the restart and Jayne Meadows crossfield kick was gathered but a bone-shaking tackle from Aegean Leach turned over the ball and the talismanic Sutton back set off for the line from halfway. Her powerful run down the touchline culminated in a jolting hand-off to the last defender before scoring. The visitors' lead was now only 22-10 and they were still 14.

It was now Jayne Meadows turn to turnover the ball. Natalie McCall was awarded a penalty after a strong carry which was quickly taken and Jayne Meadows carried it to the 22. The ball was spun wide until Aegean Jones cut back and her angled run saw her collect her second score under the posts. The momentum of the match had swung dramatically in the hosts' favour as they now only trailed 15-22. However, their wings were clipped when not only they temporarily lost the influential Joanne Evans to a yellow card for a high tackle but they also lost Aegean Leech to an injury.

It was now Wimbledon's turn to take advantage of the yellow card scenario. A fabulous run from depth by Ellie Seagrave fielding a Jayne Meadows clearance almost saw the 15 score but support was on hand from replacement Shenay Nurse who crossed the whitewash. Hannah Gutteridge added the extras for 29-15 and clear water between the two teams. Sutton returned to attack mode and a flurry of penalties saw another yellow card being awarded to one of the Dons. S&E failed to convert the pressure from 5 metres out and Hannah Gutteridge relieved the pressure with a huge clearance kick. They say a kick is only as good as the chase and Shenay Nurse raced after the ball and her pressure resulted in a knock on. The visitors were in no mood to ease off and centre Jade Whareate scored a marvellous solo effort to garner her second try of the afternoon. Hannah Gutteridge bisected the uprights as the Beverley Meads team stretched their advantage to 36-15.

Joanne Evans returned as S&E sought out at least a solitary bonus point for the fourth try. But Wimbledon had not finished and as if she had felt left out of the action outside centre Sophie Jackson set off in search of glory. Her powerful run carved through the defence and she had enough in reserve to burst through the last tackle and score under the posts. Hannah Gutteridge added her fourth conversion of the afternoon to make it 43-15. However, the final moment belonged to Lucy Hoad. The winger collected the ball near halfway and began an arcing run across the width of the pitch, having outflanked the defence she only had one opponent left who she promptly sidestepped for a stunning score. That concluded the scoring on a pulsating afternoon of rugby.

Wimbledon deservedly won the contest 43-20 with their excellent back division scoring a magnificent seven tries. On the back of the strong ball-carrying of their forwards the distribution, handling and finishing of their backs showed what can be done with exemplary core skills. The revitalised Sutton after the break seriously threatened to overturn the 22-point deficit and the final margin of defeat probably did not reflect the competitive nature of this wonderful contest. Next Sunday, 26 th February, Sutton & Epsom will be looking to return to winning ways when they travel to the Guildford Gazelles who they have yet to play this season.

Sutton & Epsom

Abby Wynne, Ella Zeqiri, Rachel Kinsella, Olivia Lambe, Charlotte Mahoney, Aegean Leech, Zoe Smith, Tia Jones, Caroline Styan, Hannah Smith, Beth Evans, Robyn Bloomfield, Alice Clarke, Bernadette Rees & Harriet Forsyth.

Replacements: Georgina Farrington, Isabelle Keith, Lucy Hoad, Natalie McCall, Joanne Evans, & Jayne Meadows.

Wimbledon

Ellie Seagrave, Zoe Johnston, Sophie Jackson, Jade Whareate, Maddie Healey, Hannah Gutteridge, Sophie Blackett, Nikeisha Hendricks, Willow Ingleton, Maryam Nejand, Zoe Adams, Zoe Leake, Tracey Smith, Heather McNaughtan & Lucy Boiling.

Replacements: Stacey Malinowski, Karen Williams, Shenay Nurse, Jennifer Croke & Lauren Morton.

Knights give Sutton & Epsom a hard day

25 February 2023



Havant RFC 50 - Sutton & Epsom 5. Saturday 18th February.

The traditional close encounters of the rugby kind between Sutton & Epsom and Havant had a Rugby Lane resurrection in November when the Hampshire men secured a hard fought 30-27 success. The Hooks Lane faithful are enjoying a splendid campaign this season having eight wins out of nine at home with only the table-topping Dons have downed their colours to the tune of 16-11 in a game where the hosts suffered four yellow cards. It was always going to be a mighty challenge for the Black & Whites against the club sitting second in the league and there was to be no underdog story as Havant enjoyed an 8-try triumph by 50-5.

On a cold, overcast afternoon with the sound of the rattlers in the grandstand Freddie Bunting kicked off the match. The opening five minutes was one-way traffic and the blue sign with the white arrow was pointing towards the Sutton try-line. Eschewing thoughts of kicking the ball Havant were keen to stretch the legs of their stylish back division. The initial sparring ended with the ball being brought back for a penalty that the hosts kicked to within 15 metres of the visitors' line. Ross Parkins caught the lineout and the forwards advanced. The backs were released and a long pass introduced fullback Cam Smith into the line and relishing the gap in the defence he opened the scoring. Though the conversion drifted wide it was 5-0 to Havant and moment later it would be 12-0. Following concerted pressure Reuben Knight was stopped under the posts but a dextrous backhanded pass out of the tackle gifted brother Joel the simplest of scores and he added the extras to boot.

Sutton & Epsom are not unfamiliar with trailing matches in the first quarter this season. Finally, they had some phases but having made little progress they were advanced by a well-placed Freddie Bunting kick. Soon after they won a penalty and chose to decline the 3-point option and they kicked into the corner. The disappointment at losing the 5-metre lineout was replaced instantly by euphoria. Havant tapped the ball into their in-goal area and Tom Brooker reacted the quickest for a Sutton try. Though the conversion from the flank drifted narrowly wide the Black & Whites only trailed 5-12. From the restart problems began to mount for the visitors. They were penalised under pressure at the scrummage. The ball was kicked into the corner and the initial triumph of halting the Havant catch and drive was tempered by James Caddy being shown a yellow card. The hosts took advantage of their numerical superiority with Try Number 3. The next 5-metre lineout was overthrown but recovered by Reuben Knight and from the ruck the ever-alert Ben Holt sniped from close-range. The errant conversion meant that it was now 17-5 to the Bedhampton boys at the end of the first quarter.

In the Rugby Lane fixture Havant were denied the bonus point being tryless in the second period. Invoking that spirit Sutton set forth to reduce the deficit. The pressure from the Surrey men saw Havant receive a yellow card as Will Brock left the fray. Just before that Mr Tompkins was very busy with his notebook when James Caddy returned S&E emptied their bench as Messrs Bell, Boaden & Tame were replaced by Messrs Farrell, Parsons & London, though the latter had temporarily switched with Baptiste-Wilson for an earlier scrummage. This was tactical rather than injury-induced. Though Sutton Mark 2 fared little better against the Hooks Lane XV who were not prepared to rest on their laurels. Robust running from flanker Wes Dugan saw him swat away would-be tacklers and touchdown under the posts. Joel Knight added the easiest of conversions for 24-5 and a bonus point was deposited into the bank. The hosts had not finished and rounded off the first half with their fifth try. The ball found Harry Carr on the flank who used his speed and strength to score in the corner. The conversion failed but the hosts led 29-5 and soon after the half concluded and the teams retreated to the warmth of their dressing rooms for words of



encouragement.

The hosts were in no mood for charity and extended their lead within five minutes of the restart. The Sutton cause was not helped by dropping the kick-off that gifted territory and possession to the Havant XV. After sustained pressure Joel Knight forced his way over from short distance for his second, and Havant's sixth, try. The centre converted his try for a 36-5 lead. The Hooks Lane coaches rang the changes in personnel in a more singular fashion than the visitors. Firstly, the sizeable lineout presence of Ross Parkins was replaced by Matt Whitehead and five minutes later Jonah North was swapped for Rory Penfold on the wing. The Black & Whites started to enjoy more possession but their improving efforts were undone by poor passing. The Hampshire scrum-half, Ben Holt, fell victim to white line fever and ignored Richard Janes to be held up over line by excellent S&E cover. Moments later the errant Holt made amends and finished clinically from a metre. Joel Knight bisected the uprights for 43-5.

The game entered the final quarter with the result beyond doubt but plenty to play for in terms of pride. Whether it was going to be a case of damage limitation or a spirited finale with consolation scores for Sutton remained to be seen. George London, as he has done so often before, took the game to the opposition, driving his tackler back yards in contact he sought to inspire the Black & Whites. Their followed a bizarre passage of play when the visitors turned over the ball four times in just over a minute. To be fair drizzle and dropping temperatures had made handling increasingly challenging as the game became somewhat scrappy.

Inside the last ten minutes winger Harry Carr produced a moment of brilliance with a blindside break at express pace. Though he was denied the individual glory replacement Matt Whitehead was on hand for the final flourish to score Havant's eighth try. Joel Knight made it five from eight from his boot that added to his brace of tries brought his personal tally to 20 points in the 50-5 scoreline. Soon after Ben Holt added a yellow card to his entertaining afternoon and retired to the sidelines and Wes Dugan stepped in at 9. Sutton, with the extra man, pressed hard for a consolation try. Teams do not sit second in the table if they have a porous defence and the hosts defended their line as if they led by a solitary point rather than 45. Time and again thumping tackles repelled the S&E pack. The ball went wide and the adamant line stood firm as the Rugby Lane men knocked on. Havant cleared and the Black & White army retreated with renewed sympathy for Sisyphus. In the last knockings it was the hosts who looked like ending with a final score. A fine break by Joel Knight saw the inside pass blocked. Then Harry Carr was denied a try as he just failed to reach his chip ahead. The referee blew his whistle and Havant had deservedly won with a bonus point by 50-5.

The combination of robust ball carrying forwards and dynamic backs spearheaded by the trio of Knights was more than enough to defeat the visitors. For the Black & Whites it was the third Saturday on the trot against top three opposition and once more it was a case of spirited resistance in adversity. Their cause was not helped by early scotomata in their defensive alignment. Though they had to make do with limited territory and possession they were too often undone by errant passing.

Next Saturday S&E head to the coast to fulfil the Brighton fixture that succumbed to the freezing temperatures before Christmas. At Rugby Lane in September the Black & Whites enjoyed their finest hour with a thrilling 42-24 triumph and would dearly love a repeat performance.

Sutton & Epsom

Alex Mawdsley, Kyren Ghumra, Sam Hurley, Lawrence Elliott, Ollie Baptiste-Wilson, Freddy Bunting, Austin Bell, Tom Boaden, Alex Mount, Will Lloyd, George Drye ©, Josh Glanville, Ben Tame, James Caddy & Tom Brooker.

Replacements: (all used) Chris Farrell, George London, & Ross Parsons.

Havant

Cam Smith, Harry Carr, Joel Knight ©, Jacob Knight, Jonah North, Reuben Knight, Ben Holt, Luke Marks, Sean Shepherd, Tam Lindsay, Richard Janes, Ross Parkins, Will Brock, Wes Dugan & Dylan Lawley.

Replacements: Jez Smith, Matt Whitehead & Rory Penfold.

Hackney Impress To Dent Sutton's Title Ambitions

25 February 2023

Hackney Women 32 Sutton & Epsom Women 17. Sutton & Epsom womens rugby had not played a match since their 8 th January victory at Hammersmith & Fulham. They had been frustrated by the weather when hosting Hampstead and then endured the unexpected decision by table-toppers Battersea Ironsides to forfeit their fixture. The result was five weeks of competitive inactivity as they travelled to Hackney who were looking for revenge for the 22-5 defeat they suffered at the



hands of S&E at Rugby Lane in November. The host's honour was restored with a hard fought 32-17 victory over the Black & Whites.

Hackney kicked off on a gloomy but still Sunday afternoon thankfully free from rain. The visitors failed to deal with the kick which would be a portent for things to come. Hesitation from Sutton and pressure from Hackney saw the hosts turn over the ball to gain possession in a prime position. S&E were under considerable strain defending scrums, lineouts and penalties in their 22 as the Londoners pressed for the opening score. Courageous defence against the rampant forwards delayed an inevitable score until it was spun wide for fullback Rachel Castola to squeeze in at the corner. The challenging conversion was missed but it was first blood to Hackney who led 5-0.

Sutton & Epsom went in search of a rapid reply forcing their opponents back into their 22. An offside penalty was kicked to the corner for the 5-metre lineout. The disappointment of losing the throw was immediately offset by a magnificent turnover. The backs were released and Aegean Leech finished with aplomb in the corner despite the attention of several defenders. With the scores level at 5-5 the Rugby Lane team prepared for the restart. Once again they invited pressure on themselves by not dealing adequately with the kick. In no time at all Hackney had the ball in their hands and took advantage of an overlap with a clinical finish on the flank by winger Allie Nelkom to restore Hackney's lead at 10-5.

Sutton returned to the offensive with Beth Evans carrying powerfully. The referee's whistle became a regular feature with a particular penchant for offside. As the offences mounted up the official issued a stern warning that the next infringement near the line would be costly. True to his word he flourished a yellow card to give S&E numerical superiority. At once the Black & Whites took advantage and Beth Evans, running an intelligent angle, took the pass near the ruck and was unstoppable from close-range. Another conversion fell short and it was all-square once more at 10-10.

The pendulum swung back with Hackney on the attack as their powerful pack provided plenty of ball. The pressure was ceaseless from the hosts and the defence heroic by the visitors. Twice players were held up over the line but the drop out clearance just initiated another attack from Hackney. Finally, Louise Edwards scored under the posts and with the conversion successful S&E trailed once more by 17-10. There were no further additions to the score as both sides listened to the sagacious words of their coaches during the interval. For the hosts it was a question of whether they could maintain their effort as they were dominant in the scrum or whether the tremendous workload already put in by their pack would see them fade in the latter stages. For the visitors they needed to reply once again and return to parity on the scoreboard and start to impose themselves on the game.

The second period started with Aegean Leech on a one-woman mission to level the scores. Taking the game by the scruff off the neck she took a quick tap penalty near halfway and was only halted in the 22. The retreating defence was penalised again and another Aegean Leech tap and go penalty saw her cross the whitewash. The conversion was added and for the third time Sutton had levelled the scores. It was the perfect start to the half but whether this was the turning of the tide remained to be seen.

The opening exchanges of the second period saw an outbreak of tactical kicking by both teams eager to establish the territorial advantage to attack. It was Hackney who once more took the lead. A tremendous break by Ella Harte put S&E on the back foot and it needed superlative defensive tackling from fullback Abby Wynne and Beth Evans to prevent the score. But the hosts would not be denied and Allie Nelkon collected her second try of the afternoon to regain the advantage at 22-17. Thunderous tackling and tremendous swarming pressure from Hackney buoyed by their tireless pack forced handling errors by Sutton. This time the visitors could not reply and ten minutes later it was the hosts who replied. Pouncing on a dropped ball the Londoners countered and the increasingly prominent centre Nia Watson-Campbell forced her way over the line. Hackney now had clear water and led 27-17.

The Black & Whites made every effort to get back on terms but the Hackney defence stood firm and did not allow the visitors any further addition to their tally. In fact the only additional score was from the hosts. Following a rather scrappy sequence of knock ons near halfway centre Ella Harte gathered the ball and set off for glory. A wonderful covering tackle in the corner by Zoe Smith denied the outside centre but her centre partner in crime Nia Watson-Campbell was rewarded for her excellent supporting run with her second try. That concluded the scoring and Hackney had deservedly won by 32-17.

It was a pulsating contest with nine tries between two evenly matched sides. Hackney had the upper hand in the scrums and had the benefit of being able to play on the front foot whereas S&E ball came on the retreat. Great credit must be given to the Hackney pack who were relentless from the first minute to the last carrying the ball powerfully and aggressively gaining those hard yards with flanker Camilla Turchetti quite outstanding. The backs finished clinically with Allie Nelkon collecting a brace of tries but it was the centre combination of Nia Watson-Campbell, who also scored twice, and Ella Harte that ensured that their possession was put to good use.

For Sutton & Epsom there was much to be commended. Emily Grainger's thunderous

tackling set the tone for the determined pack with Beth Evans was very prominent in the loose. The talented back division did their utmost with limited possession with Aegean Leech to the fore. The defence was exceptional near their own line with fullback Abby Wynne making several try-saving tackles. Ultimately Hackney enjoyed the majority of the territory and possession and made good that statistical advantage. Though this was a disappointing result in terms of their title aspirations their chances for glory still lie in their own hands and were aided by Wimbledon defeating Hammersmith & Fulham 31-14. Sutton & Epsom return to Rugby Lane next Sunday 19th February for the visit of local rivals Wimbledon. The kick off will be at 2:30pm as the Black & Whites look to return to winning ways and press on towards the Promised Land of Promotion in what is turning out to be a most fascinating and competitive league.

Sutton & Epsom

Abby Wynne, Lucy Hoad, Aegean Leech, Olivia Lambe, Rachel Kinsella, Joe Evans, Zoe Smith, Tia Jones, Harriet Forsyth, Beth Evans, Robyn Bloomfield, Isabelle Keith, Alice Clarke, Bernadette Rees & Emily Grainger.

Replacements: Georgina Farrington, Natalie McCall, Charlotte Mahoney, Holly St George.

Hackney

Rachel Castola, Alex Nelkon, Ella Harte, Nia Watson-Campbell, Caroline Mitchell, Katie McAndrew, Flora Gibbons, Jessica Evans, Vanessa Riscado, Louise Edwards, Beth Patterson, Zara-Louise O’Toole, Camilla Turchetti, Carol Anderson, & Zoe Durbin.

Replacements: Kate Davidson, Ka Ling, Diane Anstis, Victoria Bibby, Justine Despins & Megan Hollyman.

Top thrashes bottom

25 February 2023



Sutton & Epsom RFC 5 - Wimbledon RFC 42 - Saturday 11th February. When these two clubs met last season the dominant Dons arrived at Rugby Lane as the unbeaten leaders after eight matches and overwhelming favourites against a Sutton and Epsom XV who were languishing with a couple of wins that included a walkover against the hapless CS Stags. S&E upset the odds and added a further dose of unpalatable medicine to their neighbours when they also beat Wimbledon at SW20 for good measure. That happy memory for Sutton & Epsom fans now seems like Ancient History as the Wimbledon juggernaut arrived on Saturday as league leaders with 17 wins on the bounce, including a November 41-10 victory over the Black & Whites, and pressing for promotion. There was to be no Hans Christian Andersen storyline nor a story penned by Roald Dahl as the visitors departed as 42-5 victors.

Image courtesy Robin Kennedy

	Team	P	W	D	L	Pts
1	Wimbledon	19	18	0	1	90
2	Havant	19	15	0	4	76
3	Camberley	17	15	0	2	
10	Banbury	17	4	2	11	27
11	Royal Wootton Bassett	18	5	0	13	26
12	Sutton & Epsom	18	2	2	14	20

Wimbledon kicked off on an afternoon unaffected by the elements and most suitable for 15-man rugby. Sadly Sutton and Epsom could not resist the Circean charms of the modern fad of aerial ping-pong that resulted in conceding the opening score. The Dons pounced on an ineffective clearance and ran the ball back past the grandstand crowd with outside centre Paul Hendry scything through the defence for his first try of a personally very productive afternoon. Ed Morgan effortlessly added the extras for a 7-0 lead. Sadly S&E’s starts have often been more pedestrian than express pace this season and the Cape Town centre added his and Wimbledon’s second try moments later. The hosts won a lineout in their



22 and Ross Parsons exploited the blindside but the ravenous visiting pack stole the ball and released their backs and Paul Hendry made the break to saunter home. Ed Morgan did the necessary and the centre was set for the fastest ever league hat trick against the Black & Whites as the hosts trailed 14-0.

The SW20 outfit were determined to turn the screw and continued to dominate proceedings with their excellent winger Ollie Kitto to the fore. Ollie Kitto is not a winger who languishes forlornly on the flank waiting for service but buzzes around the pitch like the most irritating and evasive mosquito. He was denied an assist when his legerdemain was dropped in the but he was soon crossing the whitewash. Wimbledon burst into the 22 and the ball nestled in the winger's hands and he made light of the surrounding traffic to dance his way under the posts. Ed Morgan made it 21-0 at the end of the first quarter.

Things needed to change for the Rugby Lane team and quickly. The team dusted themselves off and reminded themselves that this was a derby game by evoking memories of not only former glories against the Dons but also of their performance against Camberley the previous Saturday as they belatedly entered the contest. Sutton and Epsom began to play with more urgency and worked tirelessly to deny their exalted visitors time and space. Their reward was instantaneous as they were awarded a penalty that they kicked into the corner. From the lineout the forwards ushered Tom Boaden over the line with clinical efficiency. The conversion from the flank drifted wide but the try injected confidence into the body of the Black & Whites. Though the league leaders enjoyed the statistical superiority in terms territory and possession for the remainder of the first period the hosts were far more competitive. The back row triumvirate of London, Hegarty and Caddy were tenacious in the tackle and on the deck and Ollie Baptiste-Wilson started to gain yardage on the extremities. There was a far more determined defence that thwarted the visitors in their quest for the vital fourth try that would secure their bonus point. Steely resolve was evident in abundance as S&E defended for the final five minutes of the first half. A flurry of a 5-metre lineouts and 5-metre penalties were all overcome as Mr Priestley ended the half with Wimbledon 21-5 to the good.

The table-toppers looked for a reprise of the start of the match and Ollie Baptiste-Wilson was forced into defensive duties as he fly-hacked the ball through the dead ball area to prevent a try. Once more Sutton stayed strong five metres from their line. The sniping effort of Rhys Morgan was denied and a subsequent surge was held up over the line. The siege was relieved as a grateful S&E accepted the drop out from under the posts.

As the Black & White defence pressed hard to deny their opponents time on the ball the error count mounted for their illustrious opponents as passes were knocked on. The cool, calm machine that had swept all before them in the opening exchanges was becoming increasingly frustrated in their search for the fourth try. What had been a ceremonial procession for the soon to be anointed champions was now a serious contest. Throughout this period the Rugby Lane team's attempts at narrowing the deficit were thwarted by the defensive excellence of Wimbledon. Too often the host's possession was disrupted at the breakdown by the scavenging efforts of Messrs Freeman and Pearce.

The Dons tackled with the ferocity of a side who relish their defensive duties and stripped the ball in contact on more than one occasion. In the dying embers of the third quarter the leaders finally secured their fourth try after a frustrating forty fruitless minutes. The vital score followed excellent Sutton defence that included a backpedalling interception and an excellent Austin Bell tackle but the weight of numbers finally told as Paul Hendry completed his hat trick. Ed Morgan bisected the uprights for 28-5.

The game entered the final quarter with the Dons hoping to improve on their impressive points difference in the table and Sutton searching for consoling scores. From the restart replacement Mark Scott powered his way to halfway but the support failed to fully capitalise on his break. The Barham Road Boys, more relaxed after the bonus point, forced another drop out as they encamped in Black & White territory. They were rewarded with a fine score from a scrum. A quick strike was gathered and a couple of passes exchanged saw fullback Ally Duddell surge to the line. The impeccable Ed Morgan converted for 35-5. From the restart the hosts pressed hard to add to the scoreboard.

Ross Parsons took a quick tap penalty and made yards but it was brought back for Sutton and Epsom to have a second chance with a kick in the corner. Despite a fine take by Josh Glanville there was no repeat of the first period success as the Dons halted the drive and earned a scrummage. The final flourish came from Wimbledon as they countered from deep and a flyhack ended up in their grateful hands and replacement Tim Ridler scored try number six. Ed Morgan kept his 100% record with the boot to extend the lead to 42-5. Soon after the referee brought proceedings to a close. Wimbledon were excellent value for their deserved victory with periods of sustained power and pace. Additionally at the breakdown and in their tackling they were disruptive. Who knows why Sutton and Epsom so regularly begin a contest in a lacklustre fashion? Please send answers on a postcard to the Club Secretary. Then they transform into a team trading blows toe-to-toe with the opposition and play with great spirit and no little skill.

This result has propelled Wimbledon closer to the Promised Land of Promotion. For Sutton and Epsom, nails and coffins spring to mind but one must never give up hope and their followers should find solace in the story of Gilbert's poteroo. Next Saturday they travel to Hampshire to take on Havant who currently lie second in the table.

Sutton & Epsom

Ciaran Mohr, Austin Bell, Sam Hurley, Lawrence Elliott, Ollie Baptiste-Wilson, Freddy Bunting, Ross Parsons, Tom Boaden, Alex Mount, Will Lloyd, George Drye ©, Josh Glanville, George London, Rob Hegarty & James Caddy.

Replacements: (all used) Jack Howes, Chris Farrell & Alex Mawdsley.

Wimbledon

Ally Duddell, Ollie Kitto, Paul Hendry, Jack Reville, Max Lufkin, Ed Morgan, Rhys Morgan, Tom Boot, Jake Farnworth, Sam Gratton, Matt Grobler, Jack Cooke ©, Max Freeman, Connor Pearce & Zane Dillinger.

Replacements: (all used) Bradley Ugodulunwa, Mark Scott & Tim Ridler.



10 man away win a turning point?

25 February 2023



Hailsham Town 2 - 4 Epsom & Ewell FC. Southern Combination League - Division One. Saturday 11th February.

Cast your mind back to the 19th of November. It was the day we made our last visit into Sussex when we made the journey to Wick and came away with a 2-0 win. That was also the last time we won a match, so it's pleasing to report that we now have another positive result to our name after this 4-2 win at Hailsham Town.

What made the result even more impressive after this chaotic week at the club is that there were more new faces on show, replacing others who had departed, including a new keeper in Toby McKimm. However, he was harshly sent off after just 27 minutes of his debut and the ten men, including emergency keeper Nick Wilson managed to produce the goods when we really needed it.

Pos	Team	P	W	D	L	F	A	Diff	Pts
1	 Shoreham	21	16	5	0	60	17	43	53
2	 Dorking Wanderers B	23	13	4	6	40	24	16	43
3	 Epsom & Ewell	20	13	2	5	46	22	24	41
4	 Wick	22	12	3	7	45	36	9	39
5	 Godalming Town	20	11	5	4	41	23	18	38

http://www.scll.org.uk/tables.php?comp_id=2

McKimm was not the only player making his debut this week as new signing from Raynes Park Vale Jaan Stanley played up front and later on George Owusu from Sutton Common Rovers would come on to score on his first appearance.

We were missing Gideon Acheampong, Jamie Byatt and Johnny Akoto who were all advised as injured, while Josh Owen became the latest player to leave the club. Also on the bench was the returning Alex Penfold; a decision which surprised me, but will have annoyed other supporters, given his sending off and subsequent suspension and release from the club last season. I have always found Alex to be a decent chap, but bearing in mind the tumultuous events of the previous match against Oakwood, his arrival just in time for the next one could definitely have been timed better.

With Steve Springett coming in for the released Aaron Bogle, Kevin Moreno-Gomez retained his position at left back, while Wilson played at right back for the first time, although of course, not for that long as it turned out and later on the spot would be filled by another unlikely full back in Jaevon Dyer.

Another knock to our club history and traditions occurred when we took the field in our red third kit, seeing as our club colours have been blue for 105 years, and on a pitch likened by one of our supporters to a crumpet, the ball took a number of odd hops and bounces so it was clear that passing football was not going to be the order of the day. We would have to be a little more direct. We had a little scare on the quarter hour mark when the home side sent the ball in from the right, but the striker failed to make a decent contact and it drifted wide of McKimm's goal. A Ryan Smith corner was headed on, but over the bar by Springett at the near post before Ryley Tate picked up an early booking for a cynical trip on Athan Smith-Joseph with just eighteen minutes on the clock.

Two minutes later we nearly went ahead in bizarre circumstances. The referee allowed a good advantage and Smith-Joseph attacked down the left wing, with his low ball in being deflected onto the post by George Whitley and then out for a corner. However, from the corner in the 21st minute we went ahead anyway after Smith's corner was met by the giant Adeyemi and his header landed at the feet of Stanley who simply laid it back for Ollie Thompson to poke the ball into the opposite corner from around six yards out to register his first goal for our club.

Unfortunately celebrations were short lived as just four minutes later a harmless enough long ball led to a miscommunication between Thompson and McKimm and under pressure from a Hailsham striker an arm struck the ball just outside the area, for which McKimm would receive his marching orders a couple of minutes later. However, the view I was given by a number of people nearer the incident than I advised that the Hailsham player pushed Thompson into the ball where his arm then knocked the ball. Either way, it appears that McKimm was harshly dealt with and Wilson then took over between the posts; a job I'm told he had done before at Croydon in similar circumstances. Our defenders would protect him fairly well in this match, but he did well when called upon.

The resultant free kick was deflected off our wall for a corner amidst some appeals for a penalty and the corner was then cleared to Smith-Joseph, standing just inside his own half, from where he promptly ran fifty yards at goal from an angle down the right wing and from about twelve yards out literally lashed the ball as hard as he could past Ed Cooper and into the roof of the net for our second goal with 29 minutes on the clock. It was a fantastic strike and provided that little cushion a team needs when it is low on confidence and down by a player. The game continued in a fairly stop start fashion until the break with the only notable item to report being a yellow card awarded to our Manager in the 41st minute, presumably for something he said.

As the second half got going Adeyemi picked up an early yellow card for a handball, but the match settled into a pattern, with the home side trying to break through, but not having much success. Wilson was forced into a decent save in the 67th minute from a shot out on the right, with the rebound bouncing up a little too far for the incoming striker who couldn't keep the shot down from close range.

In the 73rd minute though, we saw another brilliant goal as Smith-Joseph fed Dyer on the overlap and his cross was met by a stunning scissor volley from Adeyemi which flew into the roof of the net from fifteen yards to become the second Epsom player in this match to register his first goal for the club and put us three - nil up.

And another would follow as Owusu forced in a great low Smith-Joseph cross six minutes later after only being on the field for nine minutes. However, in between these strikes Hailsham had pulled a goal back through Tate after the ball reached him a few yards out after Wilson and / or a defender had done well to keep the original threat out, with a little help from a post in the 77th minute.

The final words went to the home side as Luca Bish, better known to younger supporters as a partner of footballer Michael Owen's daughter Gemma on TV's Love Island in 2022, but this time he did manage to score! It was another decent strike from just inside the area and gave Wilson no chance, although with the clock already showing the third minute of injury time, there was to be no further fightback and the match ended in a 4-2 victory to maintain our perfect record at the Beaconsfield of four wins from four visits dating back to 1993.

This result may just re-start our season on the field and may prove to be one of the most important results of the year when we look back.

Epsom & Ewell: Toby McKimm, Nick Wilson, Kevin Moreno-Gomez, Ryan Smith (c), Steve Springett, Oliver Thompson, Jaevon Dyer, Gavin Quintyne, Jaan Stanley, Thompson Adeyemi, Athan Smith-Joseph

Subs: Alex Penfold for Moreno-Gomez (51), George Owusu for Stanley (70), Musa Beegun for Adeyemi (81)

Poor play spoilt by “Cantonesque” antics

25 February 2023



Epsom & Ewell FC 1-2 Oakwood, Southern Combination League - Division One. Saturday 4th February 2023.

Ten weeks to the day since we last had a League contest on a Saturday and nearly five since we had a match of any kind, we emerged from our hibernation with an absolute shocker of a performance as we lost 2-1 to Oakwood; a team we had beaten by five clear goals on their own ground in August and who were sitting in the bottom four of the table. This was our fifth defeat in a row, which represents our worst run of form since 2019 and our first defeat on this date since 1995 after six previous straight wins.

Unfortunately, this awful performance is only one half of the story as our club's name was sullied further by a frightening incident at half time when one of our players chose to leave the field of play to “have it out” with a spectator, who just happened to be the father of our goalkeeper Kamrun Zain. He was then promptly and correctly sent off by the referee whilst both were actually standing in the main body of terracing on the clubhouse side of the ground; a quite bizarre sequence of events quite unprecedented in our club's history.

But back to the start. The club had heralded the arrival of three players in the last few days, yet none of them were in the squad, while our Coach Jack Porter was named as one of the subs, which, with no offence to Jack, usually happens when we are short. The irony here was that only one man actually made his debut in the starting eleven, Thompson Adeyemi and the club hadn't ever mentioned him joining! Our Manager Anthony Jupp was unavoidably absent for this match so Matt Chapman and Kevin Espinosa took charge in the dugout.

Despite our healthy league position and the fact that we had been without competitive football for so long, only 84 were present on a perfect day for football and it was a shame that there was so little of it on display. The club described the figure in their brief report as “good”, but on a day when mid table Selsey registered 192, and with title rivals Shoreham getting 182 at home the week before, I would beg to differ. We were missing our main striker Jamie Byatt, Ben Bauchop and Johnny “Sonic” Akoto while Ryan Smith took over the armband, following the departure of Brad Peters to Step Five Broadbridge Heath, where according to our Chairman's programme notes he is now playing Step Four football! There was no Josh Alder to take Byatt's place after he joined Alfold and so Josh Owen took on the central striker's role.

The first half was without doubt, the worst forty-five minutes supporters will have witnessed at this club this season as we failed to impose ourselves in any way against a team that were extremely limited in their ambitions at first, and understandably so, following our August win and a 6-0 drubbing last time they visited us. However, it became apparent after around fifteen minutes that we were only able to play one way; sideways, followed by balls down the flanks to either Athan Smith-Joseph or Jaevon Dyer, both of whom failed entirely to create a single delivery of note for Owen. With few other midfielders appearing willing to join the attacks, they were seen off with relative comfort.

Nick Wilson sent a powerful shot over the bar after Dyer's pull back to the edge of the area, but in the 23rd minute the visitors took the lead from a completely innocuous free kick way out on their left flank. The ball in looked like it would



reach Zain, but Adil Raman nipped in front and poked the ball past our keeper from eight yards. Whose fault was this? It's hard to know for certain, but the absence of the commanding presence of Peters was instantly noticed as no one took charge of the situation and we paid for it.

This was concerning. Neither team had really looked like scoring to this point and it was a horribly frustrating half of football to watch as passes went astray. Oakwood were no better, but for a team like ours with substantial experience of playing at a higher level it was extremely disappointing to witness nobody really taking control of the situation. The referee was also being a bit fussy by this time and Wilson and Owen both received warnings for complaining about decisions before the latter picked up a petulant yellow card for raising his boot to try and block a goal kick; the sort of thing you learn not to do in kids football.

The whistle blew for half time and the crowd began to conduct its own post-mortems. However, something was going on in the opposite corner of the ground to me. It transpired that a spectator had been loud and abusive throughout the first half, so much so that it could be heard on my side of the pitch by some spectators. Most of the abuse being given out was in the direction of Aaron Bogle, and it was from our keeper's father who was clearly upset with some of the communication Bogle was giving to his son between the posts. As the players went off for the break it spilled over and although Bogle was originally escorted away from the area, he returned and confronted the spectator on the terracing with an altercation between them resulting right in front of a number of our supporters, some of whom feared for their safety.

Almost out of nowhere the referee appeared and he had no alternative but to send our player off for this atrocity. There is no excuse for leaving the field of play, even under provocation and we await further news of what further actions will follow, once the referee's report is studied.

The second half commenced, quite probably with many people being completely unaware of what had actually happened while they had their half time pints! Strangely, despite being a man down we were actually better in the second half, although admittedly that wasn't hard to achieve! Smith-Joseph was much more prominent in this period and was involved in most of the attacking threats we created, setting up Dyer for a low shot in the 50th minute which was just wide. A corner shortly afterwards was met by an Owen header that was well tipped over by the Oakwood Captain, Andrew Graves and then Smith-Joseph's ball in was only punched clear to Adeyemi in space just fifteen yards out, but his powerful strike at goal flew inches over the crossbar and hit the fascia of the Bernard Edwards stand instead.

Almost immediately we paid for this miss as the visitors scored a second goal, when from just short of forty yards Darrell Agyemang spotted Zain a little off his line and struck the ball over him and into the net in the 65th minute. It was a superb goal and the absolute highlight of a match of such low quality. In response, we threw on Musa Beegun for his debut and Gavin Quintyne and in the 76th minute we had a goal back as Beegun and Dyer linked well before threading the ball to the advanced Gideon Acheampong. His deep cross caught Graves out and looked like it may go in on its own, but the ball was bundled over the line by Smith-Joseph who admitted after the match that it may have gone in off his arm!

Our winger almost scored again after a wild defensive pass went straight to him in the 86th minute, but his shot was well blocked and cleared. The Oakwood bench made it quite clear to their player what they thought of the wayward pass as it had nearly cost them two points, but apart from a late Wilson header that just missed the far post, we were all out of ideas and Oakwood claimed all three points to give them an excellent chance of escaping relegation.

I wrote after the Chessington defeat that we had worked hard to get up the League, but that another poor performance would not receive such a forgiving report. Quite simply this one was completely unacceptable to our extremely patient supporters and bearing in mind that our visitors are one of many clubs in this league without a playing budget, our players should be handing their wages back after this one. There was not a single redeemable feature to take from this match, yet worryingly, this was not the worst part of the day.

So what happens now? Well, for starters I can advise that our keeper has chosen to leave the club, as a screenshot of his message saying so was put out on social media in the last 24 hours. Maybe this is not a surprise, but either way, our Manager will have his hands full finding replacements in time for our trip to Hailsham Town next weekend. Be clear of one thing though. Promotion from the play offs is not the biggest disaster, particularly as Shoreham are now way clear of us at the top. However, further performances like this one will see us start to slip out of the playoff positions, which would not be acceptable to supporters.

What happens to Aaron Bogle is less clear as I write this some twenty-four hours after the event. Our club have belatedly put out a statement advising that the incident was unacceptable and will be dealt with accordingly. You would therefore draw the conclusion from this that he is to be released, but it is bizarre in the extreme that this hasn't happened yet. It is easy to think back to December 2021 when the club's decision to release Alex Penfold was publicised within a couple of hours of that match being abandoned, yet in my opinion, this Cantona-esque episode was worse and can only result in his release and subsequent long period of reflection from the sidelines. Concerningly, and as evidence of the club's disjointed Media policy, there is no appearance of the statement on the club's "official" website, and literally just one sentence in its match report covering the half time fracas, almost as if the club want to bury things and pretend they didn't exist. Our club seem quite simply unable to grasp the situation and the number of times they have "read the room" wrongly is embarrassing in the two and a half years since the "new regime" and its new culture came in.

At a time when our club is about to ask for help from its supporter base with reference to its plans for the Hook Road Arena sporting hub, this club cannot afford to have such a situation hanging over it. Supporters at the game genuinely feared for their safety and I have had a number contacting me to express their disgust and explaining how the matter could have been handled better. Rather oddly I have also seen one occasional supporter has commented along the lines that the club could do no more at this time than to issue what was a vague and poorly written statement. That is their opinion, but I vehemently disagree with it. The Surrey FA will be watching and waiting for an extremely quick response here as charges will surely follow and our club's reputation needs to be protected. We need to be doing something and should have done this already.

This horrible incident at what tries to portray itself as a family and community club could and should have been prevented by its officials. Committee members advised supporters that they had not heard the extremely loud abuse going on during the first half, but this is hard to believe as evidenced by people hearing it across the other side of the ground. Then, when it all happened, the player was removed from the area rapidly enough, but the supporter was not. In fact, he then wandered to the other side of the pitch. The person concerned was finally escorted from the ground by our Vice-Chairman Barry Gartell midway through the second half, but the moment he walked away from the entrance, the supporter just walked back in and watched the remainder of the match.

Epsom & Ewell: Kamrun Zain, Gideon Acheampong, Kevin Moreno-Gomez, Ryan Smith (c), Oliver Thompson, Aaron Bogle, Jaevon Dyer, Nick Wilson, Josh Owen, Thompson Adeyemi, Athan Smith-Joseph

Subs: Musa Beegun for Adeyemi (72), Gavin Quintyne for Owen (72)

Camberley Bounce Back Against Spirited Sutton

25 February 2023



Sutton & Epsom RFC 26 - Camberley 50. Saturday 4th February. This fixture was scheduled for December but fell victim to the freezing weather. Camberley arrived smarting from a most unexpected defeat, only the second of their campaign, at the hands of lowly Bournemouth and were keen to return to winning ways. In contrast Sutton hoped to gain inspiration from the Chapel Gate upset and record a priceless win. After a wonderfully entertaining encounter with a dozen tries it was the visitors who claimed the victory, but not all the plaudits, with a 50-26 success.

Image courtesy Robin Kennedy

Liam Prescott kicked off towards the clubhouse for Camberley and S&E were soon awarded a penalty at the breakdown. Sutton had the first opportunity to open the scoring from the line out on the opposition 22. Rob Hegarty carried well and that began an onslaught on the opposition line. Probing runs from George Drye and Stefan Cooksammy saw the ball move from one side of the pitch to the other against sterling defence by their lofty opponents. Then, agonisingly, George Owen intercepted the ball 5 metres from his line and after some juggling secured the ball and sped away down the touchline to score the first of his hat trick of tries. Liam Prescott impressively slotted the conversion from touch for 7-0. Undeterred by the setback Sutton stormed back and the sidestepping Kyren Ghumra was stopped 5 metres short. The ball was quickly spun to the opposite flank for Ollie Baptiste-Wilson to score. Freddy Bunting levelled it for 7-7. It was a mightily impressive reply considering the deflating nature on the earlier score.

Sutton & Epsom had started impressively and had met Camberley's first sorties were met with resolute defence as both sides tried to assert themselves territorially with well-placed kicks. As the end of the first quarter approached the Watchetts XV kicked a penalty into the corner. Their lineout very efficient lineout catch and drive set up prop Adam Pickett for a try. Though Liam Prescott failed with the conversion they had regained the lead at 12-7. This score initiated 20 minutes of stunning rugby as Camberley produced the best passage of play seen at Rugby Lane this season or, indeed, on any of the Black & Whites' travels this campaign.

From another attacking line out the well-oiled machine churned out another try as Dom Sammut powered over. Liam Prescott added the extras for 19-7. If these two scores were functional and efficient the next four were far more thrilling in their execution. As if to prove they were not one trick ponies the next line out ball was spun wide to be touched down in the corner by George Owen. Liam Prescott converted from the touchline for 26-7 and the vital bonus point was secured. A clinical finish that was a mere hors d'oeuvres to the sumptuous feast that was to follow. Camberley won a scrum near halfway and went left and Liam Prescott put the runner into space as wonderfully angled running and passes were interchanged to see centre Alex Young score. Liam Prescott bisected the uprights for 33-7. Sutton cause was not aided as they lost Stefan Cooksammy to a dislocated shoulder. The emboldened visitors were in no mood for sympathy and were running the ball from everywhere. A 50-metre burst from their 22 down the left was then recycled and spun to the right as brisk well-timed passes saw try number six. Moments later try number seven was a replica of the previous one for 43-7. The timing of the passes, the pace and the unselfish play were breathtaking as Nick Barry scored and Alex Young collected his second try. The only surprise was that Liam Prescott's conversions had drifted wide. Sutton were dealt another injury blow when winger Kyren Ghumra withdrew injured. The

rearranged back division saw Ross Parsons off the bench to 9, Austin Bell retreat to 15 and Lawrence Elliott slot in in the centres. Meanwhile Captain Chris Farrell was press-ganged into the backs. From adversity sprung hope as the half ended with prop Alex Mount crossing the whitewash and Freddy Bunting converting to make the score 43-14 at the break. It had been a half of fabulous rugby but the Rugby Lane crowd must have been a little bit concerned over their interval beverage how their emergency three-quarter unit would cope against the expected second half onslaught.

The contest resumed and Sutton put on a display of rare character and courage against their esteemed opponents and making light of adversity they threw themselves into attack in glorious style from the first whistle. Replacement prop Joe Reid was added to the mix and Sutton won a penalty from the scrum they had been awarded from the restart. Ross Parsons took it quickly and broke down field as excellent support play saw Josh Glanville score. Freddy Bunting made it 21-43 for a perfect start to the second half for the hosts. Both sides threw caution to the wind confident in their ability to add to their tally of tries. It was breathless stuff with S&E with limited possession not only resolute in defence but attacking with panache at every opportunity. The hosts secured a bonus point with their own catch and drive try that saw George Drye touch down which was a deserved reward for a superb display by the lock forward. The only blemish was a rare miss from Freddy Bunting as the Black & Whites now trailed 26-43.

Camberley attempted to reassert their scoreboard superiority but the Rugby Lane team was emboldened by their tries and were now formidable in defence. Ross Parsons and Chris Farrell in quick succession stopped the visitors near the line. S&E withstood a 5-metre catch and drive and turned the ball over on the line. The siege was lifted and Sutton returned to the front foot seeking another score. Indeed, it took until the final play of the game for the Black & White line to be breached. It needed a deft piece of skill by Liam Prescott to deflect the pass under pressure to George Owen who squeezed in at the corner to complete his hat trick. The redoubtable Prescott converted from touch and Mr Powdrell concluded proceedings with Camberley 50-26 winners. The visitors were excellent from 1 to 15, they not only had power and pace but clinical precision exploiting every overlap in a thrilling display of 15-man rugby. However, by keeping Camberley to a solitary second half try in the final moment was a measure of the quality, character and determination of S&E's performance in the second period. Making light of the mitigating circumstances of the injuries they again showed at Rugby Lane they are a XV that plays well above their lowly position in the table.

Next Saturday S&E host local rivals Wimbledon who are on the crest of a wave having won every game this season following an opening day blip against Camberley. Having not being inconvenienced by the elements they sit on top of the table with the handsome advantage of points secured on the board. At Barham Road in the reverse fixture against S&E the Dons were 41-10 winners despite a very spirited display by the Black & Whites. The match will kick off at Rugby Lane at 2:30pm.

Sutton & Epsom

Lawrence Elliott, Ollie Baptiste-Wilson, Sam Hurley, Stefan Cooksammy, Kyren Ghumra, Freddy Bunting, Austin Bell, Alex Mount, Chris Farrell ©, Will Lloyd, George Drye, Josh Glanville, George London, Rob Hegarty & Tom Brooker.

Replacements: (all used) Joe Reid, Tom French & Ross Parsons.

Camberley

Victor Hardwicke, Max McCarthy, Alex Young, Jaid Wiltshire, George Owen, Liam Prescott, Alistair Walton, Adam Pickett, Michael Clarke, Nicholas Barry, Sam Voight, Dom Sammut, Ed Grosvenor, Chris Bird ©, Alex Hughes.

Replacements: (all used)

George Franzel, Josh Watson & Joseph Wood.

Sutton & Epsom Receive an Oxford Education

25 February 2023



Oxford Harlequins 67 - Sutton & Epsom 20. Saturday 28th January. Our local rugby team travelled to Oxfordshire to play the Oxford Harlequins. In the reverse fixture at Rugby Lane the crowd enjoyed a thrilling game that was in the balance until the final whistle. On that occasion the visiting Harlequins held on to win 22-19. A lot has happened since that afternoon as Sutton & Epsom are now staring relegation in the face whilst their hosts sit comfortably fifth in the



table. There were to be no surprises or a much-needed upset for the Black & Whites as the hosts strolled to a 67-20 win.

Kyren Ghumra and Robbie Marty were unavailable for S&E and were replaced by Messrs Hurley & Baptiste-Wilson on the wings and George Drye returned to the second row. It was the first time that the Black & Whites had played at the Horspath Sports Ground but in contrast it was the 150th appearance in the league for James Caddy. Freddy Bunting kicked off and a couple of minutes later he was in a very similar location lining up a kick at goal. Once more his prodigious boot bisected the uprights from a considerable distance to give S&E a 3-0 lead. A minute later the hosts lost flanker John Ireland to an injury to be replaced by Ben Jenkins. Despite these early setbacks the Oxfordshire men were soon ahead on the scoreboard. From a 5-metre lineout hooker Joshua Archer scored and Ewan Fox added a finely struck conversion for 7-3.

Freddy Bunting kept Sutton within touching distance with another superb penalty cutting Sutton's deficit to a single point as they trailed 6-7. Then Tom Varndell made his first impact on proceedings making the initial break before the ball went to the opposite side and Ben Jenkins scored in the corner. Ewan Fox missed the conversion but was soon to make amends. Tom Varndell with a powerful run down the flank stayed in play enabling the ball to be spun open and this time Ewan Fox was the beneficiary with exquisite footwork he weaved his way over. The try scorer converted his score for a 19-6 lead at the end of the first quarter.

The Surrey team had an opportunity for a swift response. The Black & Whites not only failed to exploit their 5-metre line out but allowed the hosts to break from defence far too easily. On the half hour the Horspath crowd were applauding the bonus point try from winger Josaiiah Ratulaveta. Oxford Harlequins were disappearing over the horizon and were benefiting from poor tackling by the visitors as they led 24-6. S&E set about the task of getting a foothold in the game. With the interval approaching a tremendous catch and drive set up the visitors and Ollie Baptiste-Wilson was only denied by an offside player intercepting. The miscreant Varndell was shown a yellow card and S&E were awarded a penalty try for 13-24.

Sutton failed to take advantage of their numerical superiority. Firstly, James Caddy was shown a yellow for a high tackle and the game became 14-a-side. Secondly, Ewan Fox extended the host's lead with a penalty to make it 27-13. Soon after the referee concluded the half. It would take a considerable effort and a comeback reminiscent of the Rugby Lane encounter if the Black & Whites were going to get anything from their afternoon's endeavours.

If there were any doubts about the outcome of this fixture they were resolved in the opening five minutes of the second half. The hosts were in no mood to sit back on their laurels and coast home as they turned up the heat in search more tries. Try Number 5 came from a catch and drive from an impressive distance that saw Ben Jenkins collect his second try of the afternoon. Ewan Fox did the necessary for 34-13. Try Number 6 followed a couple of minutes later and it was a close-range effort courtesy of fine play by the pack with flanker Tom Walton getting the glory. With the extras added the score was 41-13 and the contest was over and it was only a question of how many the hosts would score.

The Black & Whites rallied and threw everything at the Harlequins perhaps in the belief that attack was the best form of defence. A quickly taken tap penalty by the returning Caddy and a 5-metre line out created a chance. Drye, Boaden and Hegarty went close before the ball was knocked on in the face of a resolute defence. As the game opened up with both sides eager to run the ball S&E were handicapped by the loss of their quicksilver 10 Jamie Flatley to an ankle injury. On the hour the hosts replaced Ewan Fox with Oliver Brian. Immediately his half-back partner, scrum half Harry Burn, was crossing the whitewash to give him his first shot at goal. Replacement Brian duly obliged for 48-13.

The crowd then were treated to the Tom Varndell Show. His first score was a classical run on the outside of his man demonstrating blistering pace considering his 37 years. The second came moments later and was the best of the afternoon. If the first was orthodox the second was stunning as his perfectly angled run against the grain saw him collect his second. Oliver Brian accepted one of his two offerings and it was suddenly 60-13. Sutton & Epsom responded with great heart. Replacement Ross Parsons poached the ball to make an opportunist break down the touchline but was unfortunately injured in the process. However, at last the visitors took advantage of an advantageous field position. From the lineout George London drove back the defenders to be halted a metre shy but George Drye following up forced his way over the line to score. Freddy Bunting wasted no time in dropkicking the conversion for 60-20.

The game ended with Oxford Harlequins ninth and final try. They spun the ball wide and fullback Jonathan Hughes' arcing run saw him score. Oliver Brian added the conversion to conclude the scoring as the referee signalled the end of the game with the rampant Quins 67-20 victors. The result told the story. Oxford Harlequins were vastly superior on the day. Sutton & Epsom did not help their cause with a combination of weak tackling and errors when close to scoring. The Oxford Harlequins backs had impressed at Rugby Lane without Tom Varndell but with the formidable winger in their ranks they had more than enough firepower to overwhelm S&E. Next Saturday S&E host Camberley in the fixture re-arranged from 10 th December. The visitors will be smarting from a most surprising defeat at Bournemouth that has derailed their title hopes. Way back in September Sutton & Epsom lost at Watchetts Recreation Ground by 43-21. The promotion-chasing visitors will be looking to return to winning ways to keep up the pressure

on the leaders, Wimbledon, and the match will kick off at Rugby Lane at 2:30pm.

Sutton & Epsom

Lawrence Elliott, Sam Hurley, Freddy Bunting, Alex Mawdsley, Ollie Baptiste-Wilson, Jamie Flatley, Austin Bell, Tom Boaden, Alex Mount, Will Lloyd, George Drye, Ewan McTaggart, Chris Farrell ©, Rob Hegarty & James Caddy.

Replacements: (all used) Dan Jones, George London & Ross Parsons.

Oxford Harlequins

Jonathan Hughes, Josaiah Ratulaveta, Edward Yeates, Toby Haines, Tom Varndell, Ewan Fox, Harry Burn, Bradley Cook, Joshua Archer, Joel Hopkins, Harvey Tricker, Allan Purchase, Tom Walton, John Ireland & George Primett.

Replacements: Jonathan Vermont, Ben Jenkins & Oliver Brian

Bassetts hound Sutton & Epsom

25 February 2023



Sutton & Epsom RFC 5 - Royal Wootton Bassett 26. 21st January. Sutton & Epsom had travelled to Wiltshire in October to take on the winless Royal Wootton Bassett and returned to Surrey with their tails between their legs having lost 31-29. So the return fixture at Rugby Lane saw the bottom two clubs, with only two wins each this season, desperately slugging it out to grasp a lifeline to stay in Regional 1 South Central. For both clubs every match is of critical importance in their fight to retain their status but the coaches, players and supporters would have eyed this fixture as one to win. At the full-time whistle it was RWB who were triumphant in the relegation battle winning 26-5.

Rugby Lane was bathed in sunshine on an afternoon where the hard ground had claimed half of the league fixtures that afternoon. S&E gave a debut to Alex Mawdsley in the centre and Lawrence Elliott and Jack Howes, who were replacements against London Welsh, started. Jamie Flatley's kick off was plucked from the sky by the S&E pack and Sutton were immediately on the attack. A penalty was kicked into the corner and Josh Glanville gathered the line out and was stopped a metre short. The forwards inched their way under the posts before it was spun wide to Robbie Martey to nip over in the corner. Though Freddy Bunting's conversion slid by it was an ideal start for the Black & Whites who led 5-0.

The Wiltshire All Blacks response was instantaneous. They matched S&E by regaining the restart and also winning a penalty with the only difference being they went for the quick tap. Scrambling defence denied the initial surge before the ball was delivered to the opposite touch where flanker Scott Parry crossed untouched. Rhys Floyd added the extras for the visitors to take a 7-5 lead. Royal Wootton Bassett pressed hard to extend their advantage and endured a series of near misses as they failed to exploit an overlap and were also held up over the line. It was one-way traffic and deservedly at the end of the first quarter flanker Ollie Baycroft scored for RWB. Rhys Floyd missed the conversion but his team were well worth their 12-5 lead.

Sutton were struggling to gain any fluency despite the upper hand in the set scrum and a fully functioning line out. The hosts' best opportunity to level the scores came on the half hour with some exquisite footwork from Jamie Flatley. The diminutive 10 jinked his way from halfway to five metres from the posts but his pass was knocked on under the pressure of the scrambling defence. For the remainder of the first half the Black & Whites were the architects of their own misfortune as they tried to attack from their own 22 and conceded possession. However, despite the visitors dominating territory and possession they had to be satisfied with the 12-5 interval score.

RWB opened the second period by kicking a penalty to the hosts' 5-metre line. Sutton stole the line out but an inadequate clearance was returned with menace only for the alert Kyren Ghumra to secure the loose ball. The Black & Whites were struggling to find any sustained pressure as their opponents continued to search for a third try. The Wiltshire 10 entered flamboyant mode. First Rhys Floyd chipped over the top and re-gathered the ball in the 22 but was enveloped by the cover. Then a cross-field kick was added to his expanding repertoire. With Wiltshire winger



favourite to score a cruel bounce denied the visitors.

Sutton & Epsom were clinging on by their fingernails but 15 minutes into the second period the pressure finally told. A sweeping attack was halted 10 metres short but a perfectly timed and angled run from the outstanding Number 8 Gavin Ougan saw him score. Rhys Floyd impressively converted from the flank for a 19-5 score-line. At this stage the Sutton resistance was being led by bullocking runs from Stefan Cooksammy who had replaced an injured Robbie Martey in the first period but there was very little fluency in the S&E game. Then at the start of the final quarter the Black & Whites arose from their slumber. Their best play saw Kyren Ghumra denied in the corner by a fine cover tackle. Then from a 22-metre line out the Surrey men attacked the left hand corner before switching to the wide-open spaces on the right. A try looked a certainty before an unforgiving pass left a brace of backs staring at the undefended line.

With the chance for a grandstand finish and memorable comeback fading by the minute it was Gavin Ougan that steadied the nerves of the Wiltshire All Blacks. Whether picking the ball up from the base of the scrum or receiving the ball in open play he rampaged forward clocking up the yardage to put Sutton on the back foot. With ten minutes left remaining RWB secured their fourth try and the bonus point that their superiority on the day warranted. Attacking from a line out on the S&E 22 they won a penalty 5 metres from the line. A couple of phases later winger Jamie Murray was over in the corner. Rhys Floyd made light of the angle to bisect the uprights for 26-5. The hosts were left playing for pride as they sought out a consolation score or two. A beautifully weighted kick from Jamie Flatley from 40 metres initiated a curious moment. The RWB cover gathered the ball near his line and passed it to an S&E player who immediately passed it to back to another RWB man, it was becoming one of those afternoons for Sutton. From a 5-metre scrum the retreating Wiltshire pack conceded a penalty. The Black & Whites spread themselves wide and from the tap penalty were held up over the line. The hosts returned the drop out from under the posts and nearly scored in one corner before switching directions. Jamie Flatley was in a promising position threatening a score but lost his footing and a grateful defence swallowed him up. The referee then ended the contest with Royal Wootton Bassett victors to the tune of 26-5.

With this result for Sutton the thought of relegation has shifted from possibility to probability with this crucial defeat to the side that sit at the foot of the table. In contrast RWB will be not studying the '3 Rs' but the '4 Bs' as they have fixtures against Bracknell, Banbury, Brighton and Bournemouth as the plot their route to survival. The visitors thoroughly warranted their success and will hope to maintain their momentum they have gained since the prolonged festive break. In contrast the Black & Whites remaining fixtures are predominantly against those teams in the upper echelons.

Next Saturday S&E will be visiting new territory when travelling to Horspath to play against the Oxford Harlequins. In the reverse fixture the Rugby Lane crowd saw a thrilling contest that the Oxfordshire side edged by 22-19.

Sutton & Epsom

Lawrence Elliott, Robbie Martey, Freddy Bunting, Alex Mawdsley, Kyren Ghumra, Jamie Flatley, Austin Bell, Tom Boaden, Jack Howes, Will Lloyd, Josh Glanville, Ewan McTaggart, Chris Farrell ©, Rob Hegarty & James Caddy.

Replacements: (all used) Alex Mount, Stefan Cooksammy & Ross Parsons.

Royal Wootton Bassett

Daniel Hale, Matthew Huggins, Scott Douglas, Connor Tomley, Jamie Murray, Rhys Floyd, Rhys Higginson, Ben Wilkinson, Scott Parry, Christopher Roshier, Jack Daynes, Josh McCafferty, Ollie Baycroft, Dylan Higginson, Gavin Ougan ©.

Replacements: (all used) Jamie Davison, Sam Williams & Sean Marsden.

Fine struggle to keep off league floor

25 February 2023



London Welsh 42 - Sutton & Epsom RFC 27 - Saturday 14th January. When these two sides met at Rugby Lane in October they produced an engrossing affair that ended honours even 15-15. Sutton and Epsom arrived at the famous Old Deer Park ground looking to build on the previous Saturday's win against Bournemouth as they attempt to fight their way out of the relegation zone. The Exiles fielded a much-changed team from the earlier encounter and were able this time to field the formidable trio of Couzens, Bodinham and Cowdy.

After a feast of running rugby and eight tries London Welsh prevailed 42-27. Fortunately the torrential midday rain abated in time for the kick off. Sutton had only two changes in their starting XV as they welcomed back Ross Parsons and James Caddy. London Welsh kicked off and the hosts started at full throttle forcing their way into the visitors' 22. They opened their account via the boot of Dafydd Manley for a 3-0 lead.

After one-way traffic for the opening ten minutes the Surrey men were awarded a penalty on their first incursion into the Welsh half. Though the kick was near halfway Freddy Bunting strode up and thumped over what was to be the first of his five penalties of the afternoon to level the score, 3-3. Parity did not last long. The marauding Number 8 Ben Davies passed to the towering Ed Couzens and Rhys Howells was on hand to add the finishing touches for the first try. Dafydd Manley's conversion failed but London Welsh led 8-3 after fifteen minutes.

Sutton had enjoyed limited possession and precious little time in their opponent's territory but took the lead in stunning style. After good work by the forwards Jamie Flatley was presented with the ball and with quicksilver footwork left the defence clutching at thin air to scamper in under the posts. Freddy Bunting did the necessary and Sutton and Epsom led by 10-8 at the end of the first quarter.

London Welsh did not trail for long. Scrum half Adam Nixon darted down the blindside to release Sion Cowdy whose perfectly timed pass put in Jacob Butler to restore the ODP team's lead as Dafydd Manley added the extras for 15-10. Another Freddy Bunting penalty reduced Sutton's deficit to 13-15. But minutes later it was the hosts who were awarded a penalty but they opted to kick it into the corner for the attacking line out. The pack controlled the ball and ushered captain James Buncle over the line for his first try this campaign. Dafydd Manley failed to add to the scoreboard as the Welsh led 20-13. Sutton and Epsom were still very much in the contest and with the prodigious Bunting adding another penalty with half time rapidly approaching the visitors were trailing 16-20.

The gloss was rubbed off Sutton and Epsom's first period performance when scrum half Adam Nixon finished off an attack he initiated with a quick tap penalty. When Dafydd Manley's conversion sailed between the posts Mr Michael Essam blew his whistle to end the first half with London Welsh 27-16 to the good. The Black & Whites started the second period well playing at a high tempo with excellent work from the forwards to set up camp in the host's 22. Despite the control and pressure they were only able to add another Bunting penalty to trail 19-27. In their first sortie to the Sutton 22 the ODP team consoled themselves with a Dafydd Manley penalty for 30-19. Despite this score it was the visitors who were now in the ascendancy. The Sutton and Epsom pack hammered the Welsh defences with power and control as Ewan McTaggart advanced to the line.

The red wall held firm and hooker Gareth Lewis stole the ball to relieve the siege. After such a superb defensive effort London Welsh offered a lifeline to the visitors as Ben Bodinham received a yellow card. Sutton and Epsom and Epsom replacement Lawrence Elliott made an immediate impact with a surging break as Sutton and Epsom pressed hard to make their numerical superiority pay.

The visitors were playing their best rugby of the game but had to content themselves with another Freddy Bunting penalty. Trailing 22-30 with 15 minutes to go and a man up Sutton and Epsom were very much back in the contest. Hope springs eternal but misery can deflate spectators in seconds. From the restart Sutton and Epsom knocked on and from the scrum Tom Brooker was shown a yellow card and the game continued as a 14-man contest.

To compound the problems for Sutton and Epsom the Exile's Number 8 Ben Davies burrowed his way over from close-range to extend London Welsh's lead to 35-22 with ten minutes remaining. Sutton had to get the next try but that honour went to the hosts and it was the best of their six. Sion Cowdy strode forward from halfway, chipped ahead and won the foot race as he regathered the ball he passed to supporting full back Tom Hunt who scored. Dafydd Manley added the conversion to make it 42-22 and end all hopes of a Sutton success.

Sutton and Epsom refused to retire meekly in the gathering gloom as the game entered time added on. Tom Brooker returned to the contest and made an instant impact as the Rugby Lane men went in search of a consolation. After pressure from the tireless pack had drawn the Welsh defences to their posts the ball was spun wide and a long ball floated pass reached Tom Brooker on the wing and he scored in the corner. That was the final score in a thoroughly entertaining contest with London Welsh earning a bonus point for a 42-27 victory. London Welsh scrum half Adam Nixon

won the Devil's Bridge Rum Man of the Match and he had been at the heart of the action throughout. London Welsh were worthy winners as they created more chances and secured six tries.

The kicking of Freddy Bunting kept Sutton and Epsom in the contest and if they had been more clinical they may have gained a bonus point or two. Sutton and Epsom certainly matched the hosts for phases of the match and played some exhilarating rugby but the try on the stroke of half time and the yellow card were critical blows from which they did not recover. Next Saturday sees the basement battle as Rugby Lane plays host to the Wiltshire All Blacks, Royal Wootton Bassett, who earned a very creditable bonus point at home against Havant as Sutton and Epsom toiled at ODP. Further afield Banbury's 17-17 draw at Brighton was another result that was not welcome for the Black & Whites.

When Sutton & Epsom ventured to Ballards Ash earlier in the campaign they lost by the narrow margin of 31-29 as RWB celebrated their first win of the season. Sutton will need to turn the tables on Saturday and will hope a large and vocal crowd will gather at Rugby Lane for the 2pm start to cheer on the Black & Whites.

Sutton & Epsom: Sam Hurley, Robbie Martey, Freddy Bunting, Jamie See, Kyren Ghumra, Jamie Flatley, Ross Parsons, Tom Boaden, Alex Mount, Will Lloyd, James Caddy, Josh Glanville, Chris Farrell ©, Rob Hegarty & Tom Brooker. Replacements: (all used) Jack Howes, Ewan McTaggart & Lawrence Elliott.

London Welsh: Tom Hunt, Sion Cowdy, Rhys Howells, Dafydd Manley, Osian McAvoy, Adam Nixon, James Buncle ©, Gareth Lewis, Sam Johnson, Ed Couzens, Ben Bodinham, Charlie Bramble, Rohan Pixley & Ben Davies. Replacements: (all used) Myles Keane, James Downing & Elis Staines.

Go to <https://www.suttonrugby.co.uk> for future fixtures.

10 mile Epsom Downs run and photos for charity

25 February 2023



The race known as **The Tadworth 10** was held on **Sunday 8th January 2023 at 11.30am**, started and finished at **Epsom Racecourse**. The race is a scenic and challenging 10 miles, 2-lap course comprising 50% road and 50% tracks & grass and was supported by around 700+ runners of all abilities. Much of the proceeds from the race go towards assisting two local charities. The **Sunnybank Trust** that supports adults with learning disabilities in North East Surrey to live without prejudice and have confidence, opportunities and control over their own lives. And the **Woodland Trust** that plants trees and preserves woodland and created the 650 **Centenary Wood** in Langley vale, Epsom.

William Caruana a senior runner of **Epsom and Ewell Harriers** came 12th in a time of 1 hour 6 minutes 47 seconds, with **Jeremy Garner** of **Epsom Oddballs Running Club** close on his heels 4 seconds behind.

Local photographer **Steven McCormick** followed the event with thousands of images covering every bib number. The photographs are for sale with proceeds going to the same charities.

See his website [HERE](#)

Epsom race days confirmed next week

25 February 2023



The full list of 2023 Epsom race days could be confirmed next week, with the Derby planned for the weekend of June 3. The **Epsom Downs Racecourse** needs confirmation for some of the races in this year's programme from the **Epsom and Walton Downs Conservators**.

A meeting of the conservators, made up of councillors and representatives of the **Jockey Club**, which runs the racecourse, will discuss the proposed dates on Monday (January 16). Any race meets on a Sunday or taking place in the evening need the approval of the conservators, affecting five dates in the calendar.

It will be the first Epsom Derby to be held since the death of **Queen Elizabeth II** in September. The late Queen was a regular the Derby, and when she missed the 2022 Derby it was only the fifth time she had since her coronation, with two of those times due to coronavirus restrictions.

The meeting will also decide whether or not barbecues will be allowed on the Downs during the race days, as happened for the first time in 2022. In 2020 and 2021 the event was held behind closed doors, and in 2022 it was held with a capacity crowd for the first time since 2019, with people in the grandstand and watching from the Downs too.

As well as Derby Day on Saturday June 3, the list of races also includes Ladies' Day on Friday June 2 and other dates between April and October.

The full list of dates is below:

Tuesday 25 April
Friday 2 June (Ladies' Day)
Saturday 3 June (Derby Day)
Wednesday 5 July (Evening)
Thursday 13 July (Evening)
Thursday 20 July (Evening)
Thursday 3 August (Evening)
Friday 18 August
Monday 28 August (Bank Holiday)
Thursday 14 September
Sunday 1 October

The evening dates listed above and the race on Sunday October 1 are those which need approval from the meeting.

Barbecues on the Downs were approved by the Conservators in March 2020, but not introduced until 2022 because of the coronavirus pandemic. The Conservators will decide if they can go ahead again for Ladies' Day, The Derby and the August Bank Holiday race meetings.

An officers' report into the barbecues said a "global debate" was ongoing over their impact on air pollution, with sustainably produced charcoal possibly having a carbon neutral impact on the environment. The report said: "The Jockey Club may want to consider this research in its code of conduct for use of the barbecue area and encourage visitors to purchase sustainably produced charcoal from coppiced English woodlands or made from other sustainable materials such as coconut shells, seed/crop husks or bamboo."

Sutton & Epsom RFC Hold On For A Vital Victory

25 February 2023



Sutton & Epsom 13 - Bournemouth 8. 7th January. The combination of seasonally inclement winter weather and the Yuletide celebrations created a 5-week lay off from all league rugby for the Sutton & Epsom Rugby squad. This welcome respite from the ravages of an underwhelming campaign does have the proviso that the S&E is now forced to play on ten consecutive Saturdays to complete their fixture list. The Black & Whites gained revenge on Bournemouth, who had narrowly defeated them 28-25 at Chapel Gate in October, with a hard fought 13-8 success. Sutton & Epsom gave a debut to Jamie Flatley at 10 and Kieran Finney, back from university, made his first start of the season to become representative Number 44 for S&E this campaign.

There was also a welcome return to the colours from Messrs Bunting and Martey. The miserable weather was probably appropriate for two teams at the wrong end of the table who were desperately slugging it out for a victory. Bournemouth kicked off and Sutton had the advantage of a sporadic wind. The visitors dominated the opening exchanges and encamped in the S&E 22. A sweeping move to the left hand corner saw the hosts scrambling in defence and despite Kyren Ghumra's tackle Ryan Morrell was on hand to score. Grant Hancox's conversion from the flank slid wide but the Lions led 5-0 after an impressive opening ten minutes. From the restart Sutton were awarded a penalty and had an opportunity to open their account. Freddy Bunting thumped over the penalty and Sutton trailed by 3-5. Moments later the returning centre was addressing a more challenging kick from 45 metres but despite his best endeavours he failed to bisect the uprights.

In the opening quarter it appeared that the Bunting boot was the only Sutton & Epsom currency as they had enjoyed precious little possession. Then a startling break by Jamie Flatley had the crowd on their feet as they enjoyed S&E's best passage of play. Five minutes later Number 8 Tom Brooker intercepted a wayward pass on halfway, leaving all the chasers in his wake he strode home to score. Freddy Bunting chipped over the conversion and the Rugby Lane team led 10-5. Despite the scoreboard the men from Chapel Gate were enjoying the majority of the territory and possession. They

made light of the slippery conditions and spun the ball wide at every opportunity in an effort to replicate their earlier success. The Sutton & Epsom defence was dogged and organised and the visitors were denied any further opportunity to add to their account in the first period. Indeed it was S&E who extended their lead on the half hour via the good offices of Freddy Bunting who added another penalty for 13-5.

For the remainder of the half the Surrey men grew in confidence and began to enjoy more possession. Centre Antony Fitch, with no malicious intent, received a harsh yellow card for a high tackle on Robbie Martey and the visitors were reduced to 14 men. Moments later the referee brought proceedings to a halt with Sutton 13-5 ahead at the interval. Sutton started the second half superbly as they tried to take advantage of their numerical superiority. A powerful scrum sent their opponents into reverse and won a penalty. From the line out Tom Brooker carried powerfully to the line.

Numerous phases and carries continued to inch the ball towards the posts. Just when a try appeared to be inevitable a thunderous Bournemouth tackle dislodged the ball and the visitors were awarded a scrum. Their sterling defence was rewarded as they cleared their lines and they returned to their full compliment with Sutton having failed to score a single point against the 14 men. On the hour came a moment of great controversy. Jamie See threaded a wonderful kick behind the Bournemouth defence that came to rest a couple of yards from the line. Robbie Martey raced forward and intelligently slid in to gather the ball and the cover defence instinctively dived on the winger on the deck. Robbie Martey regained his footing and scored. However, the referee awarded a penalty to Bournemouth.

The visitors refreshed their pack with their bench and the fresh legs made a significant impact in the final quarter. It was the Lions pack who now had the ascendancy at the set scrum and from that sturdy foundation they set about reducing the deficit. The relentless pressure was rewarded with a penalty on the Sutton 22 with ten minutes remaining. Sensibly Grant Hancox stepped up to knock over the kick to make it 13-8 and put Bournemouth within a score. The closing stages of the match were to be anything but a relaxing affair for the Sutton faithful. In time added on the Black & Whites were showing commendable game management as the forwards kept the ball at close quarters. Then disaster struck as an isolated forward conceded a penalty. It was kicked to the corner and the Dorset men had a 5-metre line out. The visitors were repelled but the hosts conceded another penalty. After a lengthy discussion they opted for the tap penalty.

They followed a relentlessly slow advance towards the Sutton & Epsom posts. Inch by inch the Bournemouth pack moved towards glory and an inevitable try. It was all hands to the pump for the Black & Whites as they threw themselves desperately into every tackle and veteran centre Jamie See stole the ball. A jubilant Sutton player kicked the ball towards the 2nd XV pitch and the referee blew his whistle to conclude the afternoon's entertainment. Victory by 13-8 was essential for S&E if they were to entertain hopes of survival.

The Black & Whites will hope the nature of this victory will create the necessary confidence and momentum to ignite their campaign. Jamie Flatley made an impressive debut at 10 playing with an assured quality and demonstrating dazzling footwork that bodes well for the future. The Sutton & Epsom pack was outstanding on an afternoon made for attritional rugby. Bournemouth matched Sutton & Epsom blow for blow and could have taken the honours at the death in a contest both sides needed to win and the visitors failed by the narrowest of margins.

Next Saturday, with sincere apologies to the rest of Sutton & Epsom's esteemed opponents, is a red-letter day as the club travels to the famous Old Deer Park to play the prestigious London Welsh. It will be the third time Sutton & Epsom have visited the Exiles and this will be the third location enjoyed but the first time in 120 years that they have had the privilege. In October the two teams fought to a standstill beneath a splendid rainbow and it was honours even with a 15-15 draw that was highly entertaining.

Sutton & Epsom

Sam Hurley, Robbie Martey, Freddy Bunting, Jamie See, Kyren Ghumra, Jamie Flatley, Austin Bell, Tom Boaden, Alex Mount, Will Lloyd, George Drye, Josh Glanville, Chris Farrell, Rob Hegarty & Tom Brooker.

Replacements: Kieran Finney. Not Used: Jack Howes, & Ciaran Mohr.

Bournemouth

Ryan Morrell, Ash Taylor, Adam Higgins, Antony Fitch, Oli Granger-Williams, Ben Meaden, Grant Hancox, Alan Manning, Conrad Carkeet, Gianluca Firetto, Matt Warwick, Connor McCaffrey, Ben Kimber, Ciaran Smyth & Joe Desmond.

Replacements: (all used) Jordie Wayman, Tom Napier & Ben Goodall.

Caught hook, line and sinker

25 February 2023



Epsom & Ewell FC 1 - 3 Chessington & Hook United - Southern Combination League - Division One - Tuesday 27th December.

Oh no! Not Chessington again! Historically, we have a superior won lost record against our opponents, yet this defeat was



our sixth at home in the last eight encounters dating back to our days at Merstham. Indeed the last fifteen matches between these two clubs have produced just ONE home win between them, which I suppose bodes well for our return fixture at Chalky Lane in April! Seriously though, most of our home defeats against them have followed a similar pattern that we seem to struggle with, regardless of our playing personnel or Management; that of a team defending solidly as a unit at the back, working energetically to deny space and pinching their chances when they came.

Equally worryingly, we have started to see a similar script occurring in home matches. Worthing United and Deportivo Galicia also conceded first, yet we have allowed all of these teams back into the match from a position of strength and appear to be unable to stop them once they have gained their own momentum. We have not won at home since 29th October and this is not going to be good enough if we are to remain at the top of the table for much longer. Indeed we are now clinging to that position on goal difference alone, with the imposing threat of Shoreham now looming large in our rear view mirror.

So, if not exactly a terminal hammer blow to our title hopes due to the strong position we had created in recent months, Tuesday's defeat must have sent some very large alarm bells ringing across the club and the next couple of matches will give supporters an indication of whether it has been heeded.

I referred in my match preview to the kick off being delayed an hour to 12pm instead of the traditional 11am and how much this decision might cost us financially. Our attendance, independently counted by two people from two different positions in the ground was 127 (although the club advised 138 in their official figures). Either way, Forest Row v Oakwood (at 11am) recorded 113, well over double the average attendances for those clubs and this was noted on Twitter by Oakwood with comments as to how their ground had been swelled by a large number of ground hoppers. It is conjecture of course, but for our often feisty and entertaining local derby at a venue with great facilities, close to a train station and motorway on a Bank Holiday when there were very few other local matches, you have to wonder how many of those extra sixty or seventy supporters would have chosen to come here instead, but chose not to because of the added difficulty in getting to a 3pm kick off after our game as many of these floating supporters tend to do, and that's not including people who didn't fancy the trip to Sussex, but who might have come here. This was an opportunity to get close to, if not over 200 missed by our club and is a lesson we must learn quickly. Moving the fixture back a day from Boxing Day = "A Plus - great idea". Moving the kick off back by an hour = "E Minus - Could do better".

In terms of personnel, there were a few changes from our defeat last Wednesday. Aaron Bogle and Zach Powell returned at the back, while Brad Peters was missing, so Gideon Acheampong took the Captain's armband on and moved into the centre of defence with Johnny "Sonic" Akoto coming in at right back. Further forward Athan Smith-Joseph and Jaevon Dyer returned to the starting eleven in place of Josh Owen who was absent injured, and Steve Springett, Josh Alder and Ryan Smith, who would have to wait for their opportunities from the bench.

And things started well once again. Smith-Joseph skipped down the wing in the opening twenty seconds and his ball into the danger area caused panic, leading to a corner. However, our service would be particularly poor in this match and the delivery was weak. Then Smith-Joseph made a great exchange of passes with Nick Wilson who then set up our winger for a shot, but he delayed it after drawing the keeper and was smothered out by Chessington defenders. Dyer's shot was then deflected wide for a corner but in the 11th minute a visiting striker broke through and we were fortunate that he shot directly at Kane Charles who made the save.

Our next attempt involved a good run from midfield by Gavin Quintyne, but Chessy keeper Andrew Osei was out quickly to save after our man had received a Smith-Joseph pass. We then took the lead in the 21st minute. A ball down the right found Jaevon Dyer who made tracks before pulling the ball back to Quintyne. Feeling confident after his super strike on Wednesday, he took aim from just inside the penalty area, but only side footed the ball towards Osei who strangely failed to gather the ball and experienced goal poacher Jamie Byatt nipped in to lift the ball over the stretching keeper from close range to score his 35th goal for us in 35 appearances; a stat that moves him onto our club Hall of Fame chart for the top fifty scorers on our history.

Byatt was just wide with a header from a free kick shortly after this and we looked good value for our lead. Byatt then shrugged off a weak challenge on the half hour and was through on goal, but the referee called him back for a foul which looked very harsh. It was a pity as he would probably have given us a two goal lead, yet in the 33rd minute the visitors were back in the game with an equaliser. The play built up well on the right and we got dragged over a little, so that when the ball was sent over, Aaron Cole-Bolt had time to control the pass and get it onto his right foot before drilling the ball into the bottom far corner from just inside our penalty area.

It was not a deserved equaliser at the time, but by the time the half time whistle had blown they were in the ascendancy and Ben Bauchop's attempt from 40 yards then went way wide of the goal just before the break gave a hint as to how the play had been going. Interestingly at half time the Chessington team were back out after just a few minutes and were doing a bit more ball work. They seemed to want to send a message that they were keen and eager to fight for the points. Having said that, we were the first team to fashion a good chance just a few seconds into the second half when a short corner between Dyer and Bauchop resulted in a shot from the latter that deflected to Byatt some eight yards out, but his snap shot on the turn cannoned back off the Chessington crossbar and away to safety.

This chance would come back to haunt us as soon as the 50th minute when they broke away after being pushed back and a right wing delivery to Cole-Bolt was struck at goal, only to rebound kindly for former Salt Hakim Griffiths to slot home the loose ball past our helpless keeper from a few yards. This was such a frustrating goal to concede and our heads appeared to visibly drop.

We would still make chances for a while though and Smith-Joseph did well on the left, having switched wings with Dyer, but his pull back was just behind the incoming Byatt before Byatt himself had a shot at goal but his connection wasn't the strongest and provided an easy save for Osei, who was by this time beginning to waste a lot of time and picked up a yellow card for time-wasting shortly after. Smith-Joseph then provided a mazy run, beating three men before seeing his shot deflected for another corner which came to nothing.

We made a few substitutions but the pattern of the game was changing more in favour of the visitors and we only created one real chance after this when Byatt chased a through ball in the final minutes, forcing a poor clearance from Osei, but Ryan Dacres-Smith was unable to take advantage of the vacant net from thirty yards out with his attempt at goal not getting past a covering defender. Of course, by then we had already conceded a third goal in the 78th minute when a ball in from the right found another former Salt in space, Fabian O'Brien and he guided the ball past Charles and into the far corner from ten yards. It is notable that a lot of recent goals conceded have come from the opposition right hand side and as with our previous loss to Deportivo Galicia it is my opinion that their winger was the best player on the park, in this case Ben Anderson, giving us a lot of trouble throughout the match. However, we have looked extremely vulnerable at the back recently, with as many goals conceded this week (seven) as we have in the previous nine matches, and this must be a real concern.

Those who regularly read my reports will know that I am honest and critical where required and for sure this was a poor performance, although 3-1 was a flattering score line. However, It is more important to see how our group of talented players respond before being too harsh. After all, we are top of the table still, so many things are being done well. Next up though is another opponent we have had terrible struggles with in recent years, the Dorking Wanderers B team at the new Meadowbank; a ground we haven't won competitively at since it was rebuilt. If that challenge, added to our performance here doesn't motivate a good response, then maybe the next report won't be so forgiving.

Epsom & Ewell: Kane Charles, Johnny "Sonic" Akoto, Zach Powell, Ben Bauchop, Gideon Acheampong (c), Aaron Bogle, Jaevon Dyer, Nick Wilson, Jamie Byatt, Gavin Quintyne, Athan Smith-Joseph

Subs: Steve Springett for Powell (65), Ryan Dacres-Smith for Dyer (73), Ryan Smith for Akoto (73), Oliver Thompson for Bauchop (83)

Report Source: www.eefconline.co.uk

Lost in the fog

25 February 2023



Epsom & Ewell 2-4 FC Deportivo Galicia - Surrey Premier Cup - Second Round - Wednesday 21st December 2022.

A contest that started in farcical circumstances and ended in fairly thick fog ended with our opponents clinching this Surrey Premier Cup tie with three late goals to progress 4-2 in their defence of the trophy in front of a pitiful independently counted attendance of 46.

The most disappointing aspect of this contest was that we had done the hard work to take a deserved lead towards the end of the match, only to then throw it away with some horrible defending.

We were missing a few players from the regular squad in Zach Powell, Oliver Thompson, Johnny Akoto, Aaron Bogle, and Kevin Moreno-Gomez, who were all absent, while Kane Charles came back in between the posts for Kamrun Zain. On the bench we had the returning Mario Quiassaca and also a new debutant in Ryan Dacres-Smith, not to be confused with Ryan Smith, who was back in the starting line up after spending the Dorking Wanderers B match on the bench. This meant that Nick Wilson played in the back four for the first time while Steve Springett played his first match since completing his suspension.

The match was delayed to an 8pm start because the visitors had only eight players at the arranged kick off time of 7.45. Even when the match finally commenced at 8.06 FC Deportivo Galicia took the field with ten men, although an eleventh joined them in the third minute. A full bench of substitutes were named, but only one in playing kit ever appeared there.

And with Matt Chapman in charge due to the absence of our Manager Anthony Jupp, we could and should have gone ahead in the third minute when a poor clearance from the keeper presented Jamie Byatt with a chance, but his shot from 15 yards went wide. Two minutes later we absolutely should have opened our account after a delightful pass from Gavin Quintyne was perfectly in stride for Josh Owen, clean through on goal, but he hurried his shot straight at the advanced keeper, only to then have the ball rebound kindly back to him, yet with an open goal in front of him from 18 yards, he scuffed his shot which was then cleared by a defender and also seemed to injure his groin at the same time, which ultimately led to his replacement just before half time.

All of that didn't seem important at the time though as we took the lead in the ninth minute anyway when a poor clearance went straight to Josh Alder who set up Byatt to bury his shot low into the bottom corner from just inside the penalty area. The visitors, maybe understandably after their difficult journey, looked all at sea, but against the run of play they then equalised in the 12th minute as their right winger was allowed too much space at the far post and his shot from an angle took a wicked deflection off Springett onto Charles' left hand post and across into the far side netting.

Despite the goal, we continued to do most of the pressing and Alder's shot was fumbled before a Springett overlap and dangerous delivery appeared to be sent goalwards by a defender where the keeper made a fantastic double save, firstly from the defender and then secondly to claw the ball away as Byatt lunged for the loose ball.

However, after 20 minutes of dominance the pattern of the match began to shift and the visitors looked the more dangerous as the remainder of the half played out. Springett did well to block a dangerous chance after a Charles clearance had gone to the opposition. They then had another shot at goal, only to hit a team mate and just before the break Charles made a good low save as the shot came in from just outside the box. As the half concluded, Dacres-Smith came on for the limping Owen and it is hoped that the injury is not a serious one.

The second half started with little wisps of mist starting to appear above the pitch which would get worse as the evening progressed but fortunately we were back on top again. In fact a large part of this second half consisted of through balls against a Deportivo high line which our boys would chase, only for the sweeper keeper to kick the ball clear. It wasn't a perfect plan though and Byatt broke the offside trap in the 49th minute, but his ball in was met by an Alder shot that lacked power and dribbled wide. Then it was Byatt's turn to slice wide after Smith had broken through with a well timed run two minutes later, but pressure was building and Quintyne was desperately unlucky to see his shot from 20 yards crash down and away off the crossbar with the loose ball not coming down in time for Byatt who headed the ball wide as he ran in.

The visitors were creating little to this point and Byatt broke through once again, only for his touch to let him down. Charles needed to make a good save after Wilson lost the ball at the back, but by and large it appeared just a matter of time before we took the lead.

Finally it came in the 72nd minute when a corner was headed out to the edge of the box where Quintyne hammered a rocket back past the keeper into the roof of the net. It was a superb strike which deserved to win any match, but maybe our players thought that it was won at this point, because from this point we switched off and four minutes later a close range finish enabled the opposition to draw level out of nowhere.

Brad Peters flicked a low corner towards goal, only to see the ball cleared off the line, but Charles was forced to tip a powerful shot over the bar as Deportivo began to fancy their chances of pinching the match and on the break that's exactly what they did after an 86th minute shot was originally blocked before the loose ball was forced in. Six minutes later another ball in from the right wing was tapped in at the far post to make the final score 2-4.

We had a couple of chances in the closing minutes with Quiassaca forcing two good saves out of the visiting keeper, but in the end we had to admit defeat and face the fact that we have just sixteen league fixtures remaining in our season now, assuming that we can avoid the need for the playoffs. However, on this performance, that looks unlikely and a massive improvement will be required before we face Chessington & Hook United on Tuesday; a team we have only beaten once at home in our last seven meetings.

Epsom & Ewell: Kane Charles, Gideon Acheampong, Steve Springett, Ryan Smith, Nick Wilson, Brad Peters, Ben Bauchop, Gavin Quintyne, Jamie Byatt, Josh Alder, Josh Owen

Subs: Ryan Dacres-Smith for Owen (44), Athan Smith-Joseph for Alder (66), Jaevon Dyer for Acheampong (71), Mario Quiassaca for Byatt (74)

Report Source: www.eefconline.co.uk