EPSOM & EWELL TIMES
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Joust in Lancing drawn

17 October 2022

Montpelier Villa **0-0 Epsom & Ewell FC**. Southern Combination League – Division One. Saturday 15th October 2022. Last January, we witnessed a mad encounter at **Culver Road, Lancing**, West Sussex, that ended 5-4 to the home side. Fast forward nine months and we witnessed a goalless draw instead as our hosts took everything that we could throw at them and held on for a well-earned point that also ends our winning league match run at eight; a mark only beaten three times in the last seventy years, and our joint seventh best run in club history.

We had some changes from our win over Hailsham seven days previously. Ricardo Fernandes started a two match suspension, while from last week's starting eleven Jaevon Dyer was ill, and Athan Smith-Joseph and Steve Springett were moved onto the bench. Jubril "Jibs" Adamson, Josh Alder and Aaron Bogle took their places.

We nearly had a stunning start to the match with little more than five minutes on the clock when Ryan "Butch" Smith tried a shot from nearly forty yards with the wind at his back and it just glanced the post just under the height of the crossbar. It would have been quite an amazing opener.

I don't know who won the toss of the coin but I have always maintained that it is better to go with the wind in the second half because by the time you have got used to playing with it in the first period, you are often quite a long way through it. This was the case here as through ball after through ball just ran out for a goal kick or straight to the keeper and it was disappointing that we didn't find a way to do something else with the ball while we had the advantage. As a result our best threats came from deliveries from wider angles and from one of those, Nick Wilson's free kick found Josh Owen at the far post, although his shot from an angle was well saved by the home keeper after 19 minutes.

Josh Alder then saw a similar result when the ball was fed into him from the right wing and then just before half time Gideon Acheampong put a good ball over to Owen who saw his shot well blocked by the keeper. And that was it! For almost 45 minutes of possession and a strong wind behind us, these were the only moments of real threat. Clearly the wind was a factor, but we have played at far more windy venues in the past and we should have adapted our plan earlier. Strangely enough, against the wind in the second half, we appeared to do this less, just when it looked like that would be the best time to do it, as passes would have held up more!

The Villa managed a long shot on target at the start of the second half but Kane Charles fielded it comfortably and we were back on attack soon after. And Adamson fed the ball back to Gavin Quintyne, whose shot from the edge of the area was kept out but not held by the keeper, although as Owen ran in for the loose ball he was flagged offside.

For all our attack, it is fair to argue that Montpelier Villa's only real chance was probably the best one of the match. Brad Peters lost the ball around the half way line and the striker moved in on goal before squaring it to their number nine, but he sliced his shot well wide from inside the penalty area. In response Athan Smith-Joseph and Warren Colman came on, with the latter particularly looking quite dangerous, but Alder's shot was blocked again on the hour and then Smith thought he had been fouled and said something to the referee who immediately sent him to the sin-bin, which reduced us to ten men from the 71st minute.

I've no idea what he said, but we have now had a few visits to the sin-bin in addition to four red cards and this indiscipline threatens to hamper our league title hopes. Fortunately we were so much on top on this match, that the ten minute absence passed quickly and without alarm. With only ten minutes of normal time remaining though, we were struggling to break through. A punch clear from the keeper went as far as another sub in Springett, who tried to head the ball back from where it had come, but was wide of the target.

As we approached the end of the ninety minutes the home side sent a free kick just over our bar, but the final moments and nearly ten minutes of injury time were almost all played out around the Villa penalty area, and in the 99th minute Smith's full blooded strike from the edge of the area was superbly turned away by the keeper's left hand, and another close range save from a header moments later ensured it was not going to be our day. I'd like to advise their keeper's name and give him proper credit, but the opposition never even advised their line up and that was a pity, as the Villa side clearly belied their league position, defended extremely well and deserve credit.

I've said all season that we have enormous strength in depth and if one person isn't available then their replacement would be of a similar standard, but we really missed our young striker Dyer in this match. It is clear to me that with him in the side, we have more of a cutting edge and without him we failed to break down a committed and organised team. I'm sure our Management will be well aware of this, as both Hailsham and East Preston before them appeared to play us with one eye on damage limitation too.

It wasn't due to a shortage of effort either. In fact, our full backs Acheampong and Zach Powell got forward more in this contest than in any other match this season, so we definitely put the yardage in and also monopolised the ball for most of the ninety minutes. We just found ourselves going sideways far too frequently and ultimately our failure to score came down to an inability to adapt to the conditions better.

We will no doubt face a similar situation on Tuesday when we re-visit Forest Row in our next League match, but for now we must still take heart from the fact that we remain top of the table and have dropped less points than any other team. We would have taken that at this stage of the season had it been offered to us.

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Epsom & Ewell: Kane Charles, Gideon Acheampong, Zach Powell, Ryan ‘Butch’ Smith, Brad Peters (c), Aaron Bogle, Nick Wilson, Josh Owen, Josh Alder, Jubril “Jibs” Adamson, Gavin Quintyne

Subs: Athan Smith-Joseph for Adamson (61), Warren Colman for Owen (61), Eldi Baze for Alder (70), Steve Springett for Powell (70)

Report Source: www.eefconline.co.uk

Epsom’s Rugby Lane draws a crowd

17 October 2022



SUTTON & EPSOM 15 – LONDON WELSH 15. Saturday 15th October. It had been many years since **London Welsh** had visited Rugby Lane. In fact, it was 1958 and their side despite containing four full internationals only narrowly won a highly entertaining contest by 13-8. Fast forward to Saturday afternoon and both sides arrived with a meagre one win from five league matches and were much in need of a morale boosting victory. The visitors would argue that the fixture computer had not been kind as they had already faced four of the top five and perhaps their lowly status in the bottom three did not reflect their potential. At the final whistle the sides could not be separated, and it ended 15-15.





Freddy Bunting initiated proceedings as the Black & Whites kicked off in bright sunshine with a notable crosswind and ominous clouds looming on the horizon. From the outset London Welsh’s intentions were clear as they spread the ball wide and all their backs got their hands on the ball. Sutton and Epsom held firm and demonstrated a steely defensive reserve. Not surprisingly in the wind played havoc with many of the early line-outs. There were many early scrums from the throws blown awry. In the scrummage the hosts were encouraged by early dominance as they shunted the Welsh pack, depleted by injuries and absentees, into reverse. Despite their dominance in the set-piece scrums twice Sutton and Epsom were penalised for driving upwards, much to the irritation of the front row triumvirate of Mount, Craig and Boaden. In contrast in the loose the visitors were in control providing their backs a stream of possession as the back row trio of Davies, George and Williams burrowed and scavenged to great effect.

London Welsh had the first scoring opportunity but their endeavours were scuppered when they were penalised for crossing near the Sutton line. A swift riposte by Sutton and Epsom saw them take quick tap penalty with the ever-alert Ross Parsons breaking downfield. This led to a series of attacks with James Caddy prominent but the visitors’ defence was resolute and organised and the crowd continued to wait patiently for an opening score. The Old Deer Park XV sought to convert their favourable possession statistics into points. First of all their pack’s relentless advance to the line was halted as they were held up over the line. Freddy Bunting’s drop out from the Sutton line was a temporary respite. A moment later it required a superb collective effort to bundle the speeding Jonathan Ilori into touch by the corner flag. There followed relentless red shirts besieging the Sutton line. Finally, the Welsh dropped the ball in the left-hand corner stretching for the line. Sutton’s heroic defence was rewarded with a 5-metre scrum and the siege was lifted by a magnificent kick to halfway.

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In the last ten minutes of the half the hosts found their rhythm and gained some possession. Kyren Ghumra had a run, Archie Fitzgerald muscled his way through and Robbie Martey continued to impress in his new role at 15. The best opportunity came from a wonderful break by Ross Parsons but a couple of phases later a very unforgiving long pass led to a knock on. The half ended with a penalty awarded to the visitors that was within kicking range. Dafydd Manley's effort was blown wide. There was time for one last Welsh flurry as Elliot Hopkin jinked down the touchline before finally being bundled into touch. The first period finished 0-0 but the game was anything but boring as both defences had found immense reserves of resilience and defiance to prevent any score.

The match resumed with Robbie Martey prominent in defence and attack for the hosts. Sutton & Epsom opened the scoring in spectacular fashion after five minutes. Stealing the line out ball in their 22 they ran the ball from defence, wonderfully timed passes saw them break into the Welsh half where the ball was transferred to Ollie Baptiste-Wilson who finished in style evading all challengers in a 40-metre burst. The redoubtable Bunting added the conversion from the flank for a 7-0 lead. Ten minutes later, roared on by their numerous supporters, London Welsh levelled the score. From a line out on the S&E 22 the Welsh pack advanced remorselessly towards the posts, finally halted on the line the ball was released and scrum half Hywel Williams scored. Dafydd Manley added the simplest of conversions for 7-7.

The weather worsened as an initial drizzle transformed into driving rain in a ferocious wind. The more the weather deteriorated the more prominent the visitors became. The talismanic Rohan Pixley was introduced on the hour by London Welsh as S&E switched props with Will Lloyd replacing Alex Mount. The visitors were awarded a penalty that they kicked to the corner and the crowd anticipated another catch and drive score but the Sutton pack held firm to win a 5-metre scrum. Relief was short-lived as the Red shirts battered the Black & White line as viciously as the rain swept the pitch. Rohan Pixley was denied but passed to Tololima Savaiinaea who was held up near the line before Dafydd Manley popped over for the try. The centre failed to add the extras to his try but London Welsh led 12-7.

Sutton stormed back at once and encamped in the Welsh 22. Awarded a 5-metre penalty they battered the line but the forwards could not breach the defiant defence. The ball went wide and Archie Fitzgerald forced his way over in the corner. The conversion from the flank drifted wide but the scores were level, 12-12. The storm abated and the ground was bathed beneath a spectacular rainbow as the game entered its final 5 minutes. With the game in the last minute of normal time the hosts were awarded a penalty. Despite the 50-metre distance Freddy Bunting stepped up to put S&E into a 15-12 lead that was greeted with a deafening roar of approval. Joy turned to agony in time added on when London Welsh were awarded a penalty of their own in front of the uprights on the Sutton 22. A calm Dafydd Manley sent the Old Deer Park supporters into raptures levelling the game at 15-15 and a minute later it was all over. It had been a magnificent occasion, in no little part due to the wonderful and numerous London Welsh supporters, and a draw was a very fair result. The visitors will reflect on their first half dominance and multiple chances that were denied by the parsimonious S&E defence. The hosts will rue their naïve game management after taking the lead at the death. However, both teams can take great heart in immense defence in a contest where every yard had to be earned. For Sutton sporting their livewire back three, Robbie Martey was magnificent and Ollie Baptiste-Wilson, once again, scored a spectacular try. The hosts not only kept a clean sheet in the first period despite having so little ball but showed real character to retake the lead in the dying moments. Meanwhile, despite so many absentees, the visitors adapted to the situation with aplomb to put in a performance that would have swept aside a less cussed opponent. Their pack was tireless and particularly effective at the breakdown.

Next Saturday, **22nd October**, Sutton and Epsom play Royal **Wootton Bassett**. It will be the first time in the club's history that they will play the Wiltshire club. The kick off will be 3pm at Malmesbury Road and any supporters might like to avail themselves of the team coach.

Sutton & Epsom
Robbie Martey, Kyren Ghumra, Archie Fitzgerald, Freddie Bunting, Ollie Baptiste-Wilson,
Jamie See, Ross Parsons, Alex Mount, James Craig, Tom Boaden, Matt Harwood, George
Drye ©, Tom Brooker, Rob Hegarty, James Caddy.
Replacements: Will Lloyd & Chris Farrell. Austin Bell (not used)
London Welsh
Dylan Casella, Elliot Hopkin, Tololima Savaiinaea, Dafydd Manley, Jonathan Ilori, Osian
McAvoy, Hywel Williams, Andrew Black, Jack Burnett, James Buncle, James Downing,
Charlie Bramble, Ben Davies, Rhydian George & Tom Williams.
Replacements
Max Brewer, Rohan Pixley & Adam Nixon.

Epsom and Ewell FC Top the Table

17 October 2022

Epsom & Ewell 2-0 Hailsham Town. Southern Combination League – Division One. Saturday 8th October 2022.

It was back to League action on Saturday following our midweek League Cup defeat, as **Hailsham Town** made the visit to Fetcham Grove for what was only our third home league match of the season and were defeated 2-0. Just like the two

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previous encounters at the Grove, the match was fairly comfortable for much of the time and extended our perfect league record there for the season. It wasn't the only winning sequence continued though, as this was our eighth straight League win and also our sixth straight win over the Stringers. More good news followed at the final whistle when Selsey's home defeat to Godalming Town confirmed that we went top of the table for the third time this season, and this time we will have the opportunity to stay there for a while.

If I'm honest though, this wasn't our greatest performance. The previous week we had dominated against East Preston, but this match was a lot tighter for much of the contest as we appeared to play for much of the ninety minutes in third gear, which ultimately proved to be enough this time.

We had a slight delay to the start of the match as the two Assistants were unable to get to the match following traffic issues on the way. As a result, two volunteers stepped in and it has to be said didn't appear to make any mistakes, which was more than could be said of the referee, of which more later! Incidentally, the last time we were an official short at a home match was just over ten years ago when John Bonner stepped in for a league match against Wembley in January 2012. John was actually present at this match, which probably brought back memories of that day at Merstham!

We made three changes from our previous outing. Firstly, we saw the return of Kane Charles between the posts in place of Matt Walton, while Steve Springett made his first start since his injury at Worthing United in place of the absent Aaron Bogle. Our third was our main threat on the day, Jaevon Dyer, who came in for Ricardo Fernandes and was the focal point of many of our attacks. He broke through on goal as early as the fourth minute before being pulled down by a defender from behind around 25 yards out in a central position. Now, I'm not entirely convinced that there was a lot of contact, but once the referee had decided it actually was a foul, surely a red card had to follow, but only a yellow was issued. Strange indeed!

We nearly made the visitors pay immediately as Ryan "Butch" Smith's free kick just cleared the bar, clipping the netting as it fell, it was that close. Hailsham responded with a couple of long range efforts before Conor Berwick had to make a fine close range save from Athan Smith-Joseph and he then punched clear a Smith corner as we continued to press.

However, in the 27th minute it was the visitors who almost opened the scoring as a good overlap on the right resulted in a deep cross and a header back across goal, where Kane Edwards sent a header off our bar and over for a goal kick from just six yards out. It was a lucky escape and we picked up the pace a little from that point and should have gone ahead ourselves. On the half hour mark Dyer beat two men again before unselfishly squaring the ball to Josh Owen, but he made a hash of it and ended up trying a back heel which was not even on target from a few yards out. We continued to press and Nick Wilson beat a couple of players before his shot was deflected into the path of Smith-Joseph who poked the ball wide.

A few minutes later Owen found Dyer in a good position and he twisted and turned before firing a shot just beyond the far post and then Smith tried his luck from twenty-five yards, which Berwick parried as far as Dyer who got a shot away before being clattered into by the keeper. It wasn't exactly Harald Schumacher at the 1982 World Cup (look it up kids) but it absolutely should have been a penalty, something that one of the Hailsham defenders openly admitted in conversation with people on the sidelines.

So the teams went in goalless, but it didn't stay that way for long as we were in front inside 120 seconds of the restart. Wilson played a nice pass to Owen in a central position; he then threaded the ball through to Dyer who finished clinically past Berwick from close range. He nearly scored again eight minutes later after beating two defenders before unleashing a shot that is best described by saying it hit Berwick and flew to safety, rather than him making the save. Either way, it stayed out and we then had another warning from our opposition as a free kick from twenty yards was struck fully against our crossbar with Charles beaten, and the ball flew off it to safety.

It was therefore a very good time to calm any nerves by scoring a second goal just a few minutes later. The 62nd minute to be exact and it started with a Smith-Joseph strike that was saved but not held, and the ball was fed back in again to our substitute Jubril "Jibs" Adamson whose close range shot was half saved by Berwick who had to then watch the ball dribble over his line. There was a little retribution here for Jibs, whose "goal" on Tuesday had been disallowed, despite crossing the line before being cleared. This one counted.

It should have been three-nil a minute later when Smith-Joseph roasted the full back on our left, but his low ball in was met by an air shot from Owen just three yards out. As it turned out, that would be the end of the scoring, but not the end of the controversy. Gavin Quintyne was robbed, clearly unfairly in the middle of the field and left in a heap while the attack continued. fortunately for us it came to nothing, but Quintyne made his view clear to the referee who then threatened to send our man to the sin-bin. As it was, he was about to be subbed off anyway, but it was a poor decision, regrettably it wouldn't be the last.

We added further subs in Josh Alder and Warren Colman while another, the increasingly versatile Fernandes slotted in at full back just three weeks after scoring two goals in an advanced role. Alder saw his shot deflected wide while Colman headed a deep Smith corner wide at the far post, but both players showcased our strength in depth and it certainly looked like we would be getting another goal shortly.

However, it didn't come and in the 90th minute things all went a bit strange. Firstly, a Hailsham striker got past Fernandes who then appeared to bring him down, clearly outside the penalty area, but he fell inside the box and the referee gave a penalty and booked our man. This was hugely frustrating, especially after we had been denied a clean sheet in injury time the previous week, but this time Charlie Playford's penalty wasn't a great one and Charles made a fairly easy save to preserve our clean sheet. However, this wasn't the end of it, as Fernandes wanted to continue his discussion with the referee who then waved a second yellow card in his direction to direct him to the sin-bin, only to then wave a red card at him moments later. It's obviously hard to know exactly what the referee actually sent him off for and indeed, we will probably only find out by the length of his suspension! As an aside, to ease any confusion and seeing as the "respect" rule appears to be here to stay, maybe it's time for a different colour of card to be issued if someone is sent to the sin-bin?

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Either way though, it was a fairly shoddy display from the man in the middle, who would have earned far more respect if he had got his decisions correct and consistent. Despite the irritations though, we held on and for what it's worth, I think 2-0 was a fair scoreline over the ninety minutes. Hailsham clearly should be higher than their current position, and I'm sure by next April they will be. Meanwhile, we are back at the top and if we can keep this winning run going, who knows what we could achieve on the field this season.

Epsom & Ewell: Kane Charles, Zach Powell, Steve Springett, Ryan 'Butch' Smith, Brad Peters (c), Gideon Acheampong, Nick Wilson, Gavin Quintyne, Jaevon Dyer, Athan Smith-Joseph, Josh Owen

Subs: Jubril "Jibs" Adamson for Dyer (60), Ricardo Fernandes for Springett (60), Josh Alder for Quintyne (70), Warren Colman for Smith-Joseph (75)

Report Source: www.eefconline.co.uk

Epsom and Ewell pressed-on to Victory

17 October 2022

East Preston 1-3 Epsom & Ewell Southern Combination League – Division One. Saturday 1st October 2022
Report Source: www.eefconline.co.uk Reporter: Richard Lambert.

We won our second consecutive match by the score of 3-1 on Saturday at East Preston, but the two contests could hardly have been more different. On Tuesday at Godalming Town, we didn't play particularly well and relied on a late goal to clinch the points from an even match, so supporters came away fairly happy. On Saturday though, our first visit to the Lashmar was a much more impressive performance, and we arguably could have won by many more. However, a 93rd minute Alfie Moss goal for the home side spoilt the clean sheet that our boys deserved and left a slightly disappointing taste in the mouth.

There was originally just one change to the line up following the win at Godalming as Josh Owen came in for Jaevon Dyer, but then Johnny "Sonic" Akoto tweaked a hamstring in the warm up, so we needed to make a second change. Fortunately we had a more than able replacement in Gideon Acheampong ready to go. In terms of the substitutes, Dyer wasn't originally named on the five man list, but the non-appearance of Jubril Adamson meant that he was included just before kick off and he would also come on and score later! It was also interesting to see the return of Josh Alder in that group, having returned from a brief but very successful spell at Oakwood last month.

Pos	Team	P	W	D	L	F	A	Diff	Pts	Form
1	Selsey	9	7	1	1	20	7	13	22	
2	Epsom & Ewell	8	7	0	1	27	9	18	21	
3	Wick	9	6	0	3	18	14	4	18	
4	Dorking Wanderers B	10	5	2	3	20	13	7	17	
5	Godalming Town	9	5	1	3	21	12	9	16	
6	Shoreham	7	4	3	0	16	4	12	15	
7	Arundel	9	4	2	3	18	17	1	14	
8	Chessington & Hook	9	4	1	4	16	12	4	13	
9	East Preston	8	4	1	3	10	9	1	13	
10	Billingshurst	11	4	1	6	18	26	-8	13	
11	Mile Oak	9	4	0	5	16	16	0	12	
12	Worthing United	9	3	2	4	11	17	-6	11	
13	Seaford Town	9	2	4	3	14	15	-1	10	
14	Hailsham Town	8	2	2	4	8	13	-5	8	
15	Oakwood	9	2	2	5	11	18	-7	7	
16	Forest Row	9	1	0	8	10	28	-18	3	
17	Montpelier Villa	10	0	2	8	3	27	-24	2	

Southern Combination Football League

On a sunny day with a little shower now and then, we kicked off heading towards the remaining trees at the clubhouse end. When I had visited on a ground hop back in 2001 I thought there were more trees, but a club official pointed out that

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many had to be removed during the summer, which left the ground a lot more open to the sunlight, but lacking a little in character as a result. I hope they are able to replace them.

We started off well and just kept going. Ricardo Fernandes sent an early shot wide of the post before Nick Wilson and Athan-Smith Joseph both struck at goal only to provide comfortable saves for Maj Kason. Owen was a constant threat in this match and he set Fernandes through with a clever pass, but the shot went wide from a good position. The pair combined again as Owen flicked on a long throw to Fernandes, but he was unable to keep his header on target.

We continued to press. Kason had to punch away a dangerous delivery before a Ryan Smith corner to the far post was headed back across by Brad Peters only for Aaron Bogle to miss a straightforward header from five yards out, glancing it wide instead. Fortunately, we took the lead in the 35th minute after Smith received the ball just over twenty yards out and drilled it low into the keeper's left hand bottom corner. Fernandes also had another try but his equally powerful strike went wide of the post.

This had been an extremely one-sided first half against a team in the top half of the table and the only criticism you could level at our team was that we probably should have been in a position of greater dominance on the scoreboard. We had a slight delay to the second half as an Assistant was unable to continue, so a home official ran the line for the remainder of the match and he was very busy as almost all of the play would again be contained within the East Preston half.

Athan Smith-Joseph was unfortunate to strike just beyond the top corner from nearly twenty yards and his next delivery was palmed up into the air by Kason, but a defender was able to head clear before it reached Fernandes. The home side did get a shot blocked by a defender for a corner which, disappointingly for the home side, went straight out of play and we made them pay as a nice through ball set Smith-Joseph in on goal from a central position where he clipped the ball past the keeper before rolling the ball into the empty net with his left foot for our second goal in the 54th minute.

Chances kept coming. Owen struck just over the bar after beating two men and on the hour Fernandes intercepted a pass across the back and was through on goal, but telegraphed his shot and Kason saved low down to his left. Dyer came on for Smith-Joseph in the 63rd minute and he found the net nine minutes later, although much of the credit goes to Owen who did well on the right before sending the ball over from the left for Dyer to side foot home from eight yards. Kason nearly managed to keep it out, but there was just too much power in the shot and it was 3-0.

Alder joined the fray and sent one powerful strike at goal but Kason did well to block the shot, then Alder set up Wilson who struck powerfully enough, but it went just over the bar from only ten yards.

Seven minutes from the end of normal time we saw the return of Steve Springett after his nasty injury at Worthing United back in August and he did well to head a rare home attack away, but unfortunately we were caught out ten minutes later with a looping header that dropped over Matt Walton and into the net. It was an unfortunate way to end the match from an Epsom point of view, but it shouldn't be forgotten that this was still our seventh League win in a row and with leaders Selsey being held to a draw by Seaford, we closed the gap at the top to a point and hold a game in hand. Despite the late drama it was a good day in terms of the bigger picture.

Epsom & Ewell: Matt Walton, Gideon Acheampong, Zach Powell, Ryan 'Butch' Smith, Brad Peters (c), Aaron Bogle, Nick Wilson, Gavin Quintyne, Athan Smith-Joseph, Ricardo Fernandes, Josh Owen

Subs: Jaevon Dyer for Smith-Joseph (63), Josh Alder for Owen (73) Steve Springett for Powell (83), Lewis Jupp for Acheampong (88)

Sutton and Epsom Rugby Just Fall Short

17 October 2022

BOURNEMOUTH 28 SUTTON & EPSOM 25: Sat. 1st Oct. Sutton & Epsom travelled to Chapel Gate with confidence following their opening win of the season against Brighton the week before. The revolving door of selection was again in evidence as the Black & Whites lost influential fly half Gareth O'Brien and Ben Tame to injuries sustained at training on Thursday night but Messrs Craig, Glanville and Clemett returned from the sick list.

Freddy Bunting kicked off in bright sunshine playing against the significant wind and up the slight slope. From the outset both teams were keen to spread the ball wide and a thoroughly entertaining contest had begun. The host's early dominance was assisted by S&E conceding far too many penalties. It was from one of these infringements that Grant Hancox opened the scoring after five minutes for a 3-0 lead. Moments later they had the chance to extend the lead but opted to kick the penalty into the corner for the attacking 5-metre line out. The Sutton defence repelled the first couple of strikes before the ball was spun wide for Brad Law to score. Grant Hancox added the extras from the flank to lead by ten points in as many minutes.

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#	Team	P	W	D	L	PF	PA	+/-	TB	LB	Pts
1	Oxford Harlequins	5	5	0	0	144	97	47	2	0	**22**
2	Wimbledon	5	4	0	1	216	88	128	4	1	**21**
3	Maidenhead	5	4	0	1	193	106	87	5	0	**21**
4	Havant	5	4	0	1	147	96	51	4	1	**21**
5	Camberley	5	4	0	1	151	83	68	3	0	**19**
6	Bracknell	5	3	0	2	123	117	6	3	0	**15**
7	Bournemouth	5	2	0	3	109	136	-27	1	0	**9**
8	Brighton	5	1	0	4	128	182	-54	3	2	**9**
9	Sutton & Epsom	5	1	0	4	124	155	-31	1	2	**7**
10	London Welsh	5	1	0	4	105	159	-54	0	1	**5**
11	Banbury	5	1	0	4	105	171	-66	1	0	**5**
12	Royal Wootton Bassett	5	0	0	5	48	203	-155	0	0	**0**

https://www.englandrugby.com/home

Emboldened by their fine start the Lions ran the restart from the 22 and only an errant pass prevented Josh Wickens from the opportunity to make a telling contribution. In fact the ball was recovered by Freddy Bunting and the Black & Whites had their first attack. Once more the visitors were thwarted by conceding a penalty and were soon on the back foot in defence. Following sustained pressure a long pass was thrown out to Jordie Wayman who was hugging the touchline. The bounce favoured the Chapel Gate team and the wing touched down in the corner. The challenging conversion failed but Bournemouth had a significant 15-0 lead in the first quarter.

George Drye, relishing in the role of captaincy, led the riposte that saw the visitors have a line out deep in their opponent's 22. Unfortunately Mr Long spotted an infringement and Sutton's hopes of getting on the scoreboard were thwarted by a careless technical error. However, five minutes later it was a case of 'Action: Take 2'. Great control by S&E was matched by superb defence until Bournemouth conceded a penalty near the uprights. The visitors opted for a scrum, the ball went wide and after a powerful carry by Archie Fitzgerald the ball was transferred to Kyren Ghumra who squeezed home in the corner. Freddy Bunting's touchline conversion went agonisingly close as Sutton trailed by 5-15. With the interval fast approaching the next score went to the hosts as Grant Hancox chipped over a drop goal as the Dorset side stretched their advantage to 18-5 with the elements.

The hosts pressed hard to add to their account and secure a sizeable buffer before they faced the strong wind. Dogged Sutton defence repelled a 5-metre line out that was followed by the Lions conceding a penalty at the scrum. Freddy Bunting cleared to halfway as the clock ran down. But on the final play of the half the alert scrum half Harry Warr intercepted and raced away to score. With Grant Hancox successful conversion the whistle blew with Bournemouth leading 25-5. The home team had dominated the breakdown and had been on the front foot for the majority of the contest and were worthy of their 20-point advantage. The Sutton cause had not been helped by the early departures of Ciaran Mohr and Dan Jones who were replaced by Sam Hurley and Luke Halford but many of their wounds were self-inflicted with the penalty count far too high.

The question on the lips of the crowd was whether a 20-point cushion was enough to counter the wind in the second period. Obviously the Black & Whites needed an improvement in quality and an early score. Having hardly made a mistake in the first half Bournemouth knocked on Ross Parsons clearance kick on halfway. An emboldened S&E spun the ball out to Kyren Ghumra who punished a weak tackle and ran in to score from
distance. Freddy Bunting added the conversion and Sutton grasped the lifeline to now trail 12-25 and were back in the contest. The Lions looked for an immediate reply but the Sutton defence held firm before a penalty enabled them to clear. From a perfect catch and drive George Drye secured the ball and the pack marched to the line and Alex Mount added the finishing touches. Freddy Bunting did the necessary for 19-25 and the match was now very much in the balance with 25 minutes still to play.

The Surrey men were playing with confidence and in their next sortie Owen Clemett broke into the 22 but the scrambling home defence intercepted his inside pass that would have resulted in a try. As the game entered the final quarter S&E lost their hooker, James Craig, and the front row was re-organised with Alex Mount taking over throwing duties as Will Lloyd returned to the fray. Both teams looked more than capable of adding to the score. An error by the hosts, kicking the ball out on the full, gave the visitors a prime attacking position. Kyren Ghumra charged into the 22 with his hat trick in the offing but he was brought down by a superb tackle. Sutton had the consolation of a penalty and Freddy Bunting cut the deficit to three points as the Lions led 25-22. Within five minutes the Sutton centre had levelled the scores at 25 apiece with another calmly executed penalty. Trailing by 20 points at the break Sutton had overcome the significant deficit with ten minutes to play.

Bournemouth stormed back desperate to turn the tide. They were rewarded with a penalty of their own and Grant Hancox made no mistake to retake the lead 28-25. The Rugby Lane men threw everything at their opponents in search of another score. Rob Hegarty was prominent in the loose linking well with the ubiquitous George draw. Robbie Martey with intelligent angled runs threatened to make the telling strike. But the home defence was superb and once they got possession they managed the clock and closed out the game. A thrilling contest finished with Bournemouth recording their first victory of the campaign since the opening weekend of the season.

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The 28-25 score reflected the closeness of a contest that could have gone either way or ended honours even. Bournemouth's defence was of the highest quality and they started the contest magnificently and bullied Sutton at the breakdown. However, S&E's response after the break was exceptional to level the scores. Owen Clemett playing out of position at 10 led the line with aplomb. George Drye was outstanding, securing the ball at the line out, leading his team and being at the heart of all Sutton's best moments. The returning Kyren Ghumra with a brace of tries was a potent threat. Once again the Sutton fitness shone through in the last quarter and Rob Hegarty was tireless. Ultimately the Lions shaded the contest with cool heads and fine match management in the final stages of a game that had the crowd on the edge of their seats.

Next Saturday the league goes into abeyance and the players can have a deserved weekend of rest and recuperation. Hostilities resume on Saturday 15th October with, perhaps, the highlight of the season being the visit of the historic London Welsh RFC. The Exiles have been making a rapid ascent of the league pyramid following the financial difficulties that led to an enforced reset in the lower leagues. The kickoff will be 3pm at
Rugby Lane and it might be wise to arrive in good time as a sizeable crowd is anticipated.

Sutton & Epsom
Ciaran Mohr, Robbie Martey, Archie Fitzgerald, Freddy Bunting, Kyren Ghumra, Owen Clemett, Ross Parsons, Tom Boaden, James Craig, Will Lloyd, Matt Harwood, Josh Glanville, Dan Jones, Rob Hegarty, George Drye ©.
Replacements: (all used)
Alex Mount, Luke Halford & Sam Hurley

Bournemouth
Antony Fitch, Jordie Wayman, Brad Law, Grant Hancox, Josh Wickens, Mike Pope, Harry Warr, Tom Napier, Conrad Carkreet, Alan Manning ©, Matt Warwick, Joe Desmond, Ben Kimber, Ciaran Smyth, Jake Guildford.
Replacements
Luca Firetto, Connor McCaffery & Jack Young.

Ring-tails are heads for Harriers

17 October 2022



Epsom and Ewell Harriers sang "God Save The King" and then won some races on Ashtead Common. Sunday 25th September. **Lauren Johnson** triumphing in the 10K fun run and her son **William** in the 2K. A week later than originally planned, due to the passing of Her Majesty, the **17th Ashtead 10k and 2k fun run** took place on Ashtead Common. Right after singing the Club's first ever rendition of "God save the King" the 2k race was off. A tight sprint finish led to **William Johnson** taking pole position, putting the pressure on his mum in the 10k. Lauren didn't disappoint, coming in first for the ladies in a time of 43:40, and securing first place for the **Epsom & Ewell Harriers**. That wasn't the only good news for the local Harriers, snatching 2nd and 3rd place too, with **Sophie Lomas** coming in 2nd at 44:18 and **Sophie Glencross** 3rd at 44:54.

Away win for Epsom and Ewell FC

17 October 2022

Godalming Town 1-3 Epsom & Ewell FC. Tuesday 27th.

After a ten day break, a strong Salts line up had to work extremely hard to secure victory at Weycourt on Tuesday evening. It wasn't pretty for large periods of the game and the hosts certainly had at least as much possession as we did, but we held out well defensively and maybe for that reason alone deserved the points from this attritional contest.

For the first time this season, and unsurprisingly following our 6-1 win over Wick, we kept an unchanged starting eleven and won an early free kick, but Nick Wilson's delivery was off target. The hosts then attacked and from a corner Matt Walton had to claw the ball away from under his bar.

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However, we then took the lead in the 17th minute and it was a great move, started by Athan Smith-Joseph, who beat a couple of men on the left before delivering a low ball in from the left. Alfie Mickley in the Godalming goal was able to push the ball away, but it fell to Ricardo Fernandes, and as he had his back to goal, he laid it back into the path of Wilson who chipped Mickley from eighteen yards to register his first goal for the club.

Godalming fought back and forced a good block from Walton after we had lost the ball in defence, but we extended our lead in the 24th minute. A clever ball over the top of the defence was controlled beautifully by Jaevon Dyer whose touch took him past his defender, and his second touch cut outside onto his right and took the keeper out, leaving him the simple finish into the net from ten yards. It was an extremely skilful goal and Dyer looks like a real prospect. Expect him to be playing at a higher level in the not too distant future.

Dyer received a bit of treatment as a result of taking a knock during his run to the goal and another injury would require him to leave the field for good after 42 minutes. This was a real shame as he looked in excellent form and we weren't quite the same after his departure. Fernandes missed a good chance after he had broken through, while Rob Parrott was booked for diving in our penalty area. It was hard to see whether this was the right decision as the lighting was rather poor. What was clear though, was that our opponents were beginning to look more dangerous and a close range finish from Sam Boultwood from a good low left wing delivery reduced the arrears in the fifth minute of first half injury time.

The second half was a tight and competitive affair with little in the way of goalmouth action for either side. Walton chased a wide ball, which he was unable to reach first and the ball was then delivered back into the danger area before he could recover; fortunately Brad Peters was there to block the header on our goal line, before another dangerous ball in was headed just wide of our far post, but very little of real note happened in the second half and we were gradually beginning to see the game out. However, the hosts weren't done yet and an excellent close range save from Walton denied a Godalming equaliser with just a couple of minutes of normal time remaining.

We then had another scare in the 91st minute when a low cross from the right was met at the far post, but despite being only a couple of yards out, the ball was placed wide of the goal. This was a major let off and we made the hosts pay in the 96th minute when Johnny "Sonic" Akoto made a great run all the way down the right touchline, being brought down in the penalty area just as he was about to deliver a cross. If I'm honest, it was a bit of a soft decision, but we've seen them given against us too, so this time it was our turn and Richard Pingling stepped up to deliver a clinical finish from the spot.

The final whistle blew shortly after this and we were able to secure our sixth league win in a row. For those who are interested, the club record is 13, set in 2012/13. Without a doubt though, it was a tough challenge and we really couldn't have complained had this match finished even.

They say it is a good sign if you can still win without playing particularly well, but we will have to improve notably if we are not to face a similar set of challenges on Saturday when the club makes its first ever visit to East Preston for another tough looking league match.

Epsom & Ewell: Matt Walton, Johnny "Sonic" Akoto, Zach Powell, Ryan 'Butch' Smith, Brad Peters (c), Aaron Bogle, Athan Smith-Joseph, Nick Wilson, Jaevon Dyer, Gavin Quintyne, Ricardo Fernandes

Subs: Richard Pingling for Dyer (42), Josh Owen for Fernandes (75), Adam Grant for Smith-Joseph (75), Gideon Acheampong for Smith (90), Jubril "Jibs" Adamson for Quintyne (90)

Report Source: www.eefconline.co.uk

Epsom's rugby team beat Brighton

17 October 2022



SUTTON & EPSOM 42 – BRIGHTON 24. Saturday 24th September. Rugby returned to Rugby Lane, Epsom on Saturday after a temporary weather induced hiatus. Brighton arrived on the back of a fabulous 39-38 triumph against Havant whereas S&E were still striving for their first victory of the campaign. The Black & Whites made a further eight changes to last week's roster and gave a debut to Ollie Baptiste-Wilson. There was also a notable return for veteran Steve Munford who spends his days with the coaching unit on the touchline rather than engaged in the action. In a high-scoring and thoroughly entertaining affair Sutton won 42-24.

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Bathed in glorious sunshine but with a stiff breeze Freddy Bunting set the ball in motion with S&E playing towards the clubhouse but Brighton having the elements in their favour. The opening exchanges set the tone for a match that was to be played at a high tempo with plenty of scoring opportunities. The hosts were the first to threaten as debutant Ollie Baptiste-Wilson was bundled into touch five shy. Moments later a superb sweeping counter set up the visitors in their opponents 22. A try in the corner looked a formality but the scrambling Black & White cover forced Aled Edwards to put a foot in touch as he grounded the ball. Sadly after 10 minutes Isaac Lea was forced off with a serious shoulder injury and was replaced by Ewan McTaggart who went into the second row as Ben Tame retreated to the flank. It was not long before the Blues were again pressing hard for the opening score. They declined a kickable penalty and opted to kick to the corner. Sterling S&E defence was capped by Rob Hegarty seizing on the loose ball enabling Ross Parsons to clear.



Not to be outdone the Black & Whites set out their stall in the Blues 22. The visitors' defence was just as miserly as the hosts and was combined with a stunning counterattack. A spectacular score was only thwarted by the excellent cover by Munford and friends. As the first quarter concluded there was moment of controversy as Gareth O'Brien's attempted interception 10m from his line was knocked on and all eyes fell on the referee. He gave a penalty to Brighton that was the least draconian outcome for the fortunate hosts. The familiar kick to the corner meant another 5m line out. To add to the Sussex men's sense of injustice Sutton turned over the ball and cleared to touch. As the half hour approached S&E made probing breaks by Mount and Drye whilst a wonderful Sean O'Hagan kick sent Sutton scuttling back to their line.

Finally the try came and it was the hosts who opened their account. From a quickly taken free kick on the opposition 22 Ross Parsons set up the pack and despite heroic goal line defence Tom Boaden forced his was over near the uprights. Freddy Bunting added the simplest of conversions for 7-0 to Sutton. The south coast men were close to an immediate reply as a subtly placed restart away from the pack only just evaded the wing and nestled into touch. However, it was the Rugby Lane team who were next to score as Freddy Bunting thumped over a penalty from 45m to make it 10-0. The visitors redoubled their efforts to get on the board but swarming Sutton defence kept them at bay. As the interval approached Brighton must have thought the fates were against them as a fabulous clearance from their 22 rolled over the opposition dead ball line. From the Sutton and Epsom scrum back on the Brighton 22 it looked as if a set move had stalled badly but Archie Fitzgerald juggled the ball and weaved through prospective tacklers to score under the posts. Freddy Bunting concluded first half proceedings with the conversion for 17-0.

The scoreline flattered S&E but the Blues had created enough chances for the crowd to realise this match was by no means over as a contest. The comeback would have to be made against a strengthening wind and an early score was a priority for the visitors. The Sussex men did exactly what was required having won a penalty from the re-start they established the attacking platform in the 22 and after concerted pressure it went wide with winger Nesi Onwabile, with neat footwork, touching down. The conversion from the flank drifted wide but Brighton were on the scoreboard and trailing 5-17. The visitors' tails were up and a fine Ciaran Mohr tackle stymied the next attack. Then came the turning point of the match. For all the world it looked like the visitors would score and be knocking on the door at 12-17 but the Surrey men turned over the ball deep in their 22. Declining the clearance kick Steve Munford threw a long pass out to Olli Baptiste- Wilson who did wonderfully well to sprint the length of the pitch to score. Freddie Bunting added the conversion for a 24-5 lead.

If that score had given Brighton the blues in contrast it filled the Black & Whites with confidence. Maintaining their fast and wide approach Ciaran Mohr cut back inside from his wing near halfway and superbly set the ball back after being tackled. Swiftly the ball was in Gareth O'Brien's hands and he burst through a gap and headed for the posts before selflessly popping the ball to the supporting runner, Ross Parsons, to score under the posts. Another Freddie Bunting conversion made it 31-5 to a rampant Sutton who had secured the bonus point. Within five minutes Brighton had a second

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try as sustained pressure from their forwards saw flanker Nick de Brett squeeze in at the corner. A brilliant touchline conversion by Sean O'Hagan and it was 31-12. Moments later S&E had a penalty and the referee did not appreciate the quizzical nature of the offenders and advanced the kick by ten strides. Freddie Bunting thumped the ball over for 34-12.

As the game entered the final quarter an inch perfect 50/20 kick by Gareth O'Brien gave the hosts a line out on the opposition line. The catch and drive led to a penalty and the forwards inched their way towards the posts. Finally it was released to the backs and a set move was perfectly executed. Replacement Joe Lovatt, on for the veteran Munford, scored in the corner with his only touch of the game. Freddie Bunting's conversion from touch missed by inches as Sutton stretched their advantage to 39-12. A victory might have been beyond the visitors but the 4-try bonus point was an achievable target and they threw everything at the Black & Whites in pursuit of that goal. In a pulsating finale Ollie Baptiste-Wilson was denied another stunning strike by a tap tackle. Not only was a try prevented but Sean O'Hagan set off on his own bouncing off tackles he broke into the Sutton half and roared into the 22 before passing to Nesi Onwabile for his second try. The creator O'Hagan nonchalantly drop kicked the conversion for 19-39.

In time added on Freddie Bunting endorsed his growing kicking reputation by hammering over a penalty from 50m to make it 42-19. There was time left for one last Brighton assault while Ross Parsons received a yellow card for time-wasting. Despite valiant defence the Blues made the extra man pay and replacement Giles Westgarth scored to earn Brighton the reward of a bonus point that was entirely warranted. The conversion drifted wide and the referee blew the final whistle and Sutton had prevailed 42-24.

This was a highly entertaining game of nine tries with thrills and spills throughout. Brighton were not at their best and were hampered by untimely errors but S&E deservedly won the contest. For the Blues it would have been harsh to have returned to Waterhall pointless and bonus point try reflected accurately on their attacking intent throughout.

After three defeats this was a most welcome upturn in fortunes for Sutton & Epsom. Gone was the lethargic and error-strewn opening that had undermined their last two attempts. This was a new high tempo S&E playing a mobile game and eager to give the ball to their back division. Ollie Baptiste-Wilson had a debut of dreams with the score that transformed the game. Gareth O'Brien led the backs astutely with the centre combination of Bunting and Fitzgerald being equally impressive in defence as well as attack. The forwards were superb with their tireless efforts relishing the open game, making vital turnovers and keeping the pressure on their opponents. Freddy Bunting's boot, that garnered 17 points, maximised Sutton's efforts.

October opens with a trip next Saturday to Chapel Gate for the match against Bournemouth. Sutton and Epsom were denied their inaugural league encounter here in 2020 due to the corona virus so it has been a much anticipated, if belated, match on the fixture list. The Black & Whites will hope that they will carry forward this fine performance into next week and gain their first win on the road this campaign.

Sutton & Epsom
Steve Munford, Ciaran Mohr, Archie Fitzgerald, Freddie Bunting, Ollie Baptiste-Wilson, Gareth O'Brien, Ross Parsons, Alex Mount, Tom Boaden, Will Lloyd, Ben Tame, George Drye, Rob Hegarty, Isaac Lea & Chris Farrell.
Replacements: (all used)
Dan Jones, Ewan McTaggart & Joe Lovatt.
Brighton
Maxx Morris, Nesi Onwabile, Ben Carson, Arthur Robinson, Aled Edwards Sean O'Hagan, Harry Alexander, Declan Peake, William Fitzpatrick, Oliver Smith, William Harvey, Richard Neil, George Orchard, Nick De Brett, Brennan Edwards.
Replacements: (all used) Andrew Rowlandson, Giles Westgarth & Peter Sowerby.

Sluggish Start Fatal For Sutton & Epsom RFC

17 October 2022



CAMBERLEY 43 – SUTTON & EPSOM 21, Saturday 17th September.

Sutton & Epsom had not played a league fixture at Watchetts Recreation Ground since January 2013. They renewed acquaintances with their Surrey rivals on a sunny but chill afternoon. On Saturday Camberley, promoted as London One South champions, were smarting from their first defeat in 11 months at Havant and Sutton and Epsom were still seeking

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their first win of the season. It was normal service resumed for the hosts with a 43-21 success whilst the wait for a win goes on for the Rugby Lane team.



Images courtesy Robin Kennedy

Sutton and Epsom fielded two debutants Tom Brooker and Archie Fitzgerald. Five minutes before the start the visitors suffered a hiatus as Kyren Ghumra withdrew injured. A hasty reshuffle brought Austen Bell off the bench to 15, Sam Hurley moved to the wing and Ciaran Mohr stepped off the 2nd XV paddock to catch a breather on the bench. Camberley kicked off and the Rugby Lane team dropped the ball near their 22 to concede the set piece. From the scrum the ball went to the left wing, Josua Lewanituva, who strolled over to score. It was the start of a spectacular afternoon for the Fijian flyer that would garner four tries. Liam Prescott added the extras for a 7-0 lead. After a series of infringements the totemic Fijian crashed over by the uprights from a 5-metre ball for his second. Liam Prescott completed the scoring to extend the host's lead to 14 points in as many minutes.

From the restart Sutton and Epsom showed more resolve. A fine line out catch and drive and sweeping movement demonstrated that the S&E machine was up and running. However, on the half hour Josua Lewanituva completed his hat trick with a magnificent 40 metre run weaving through the defence and swatting aside prospective tacklers. Liam Prescott's conversion made the score 21-0. Sutton an Epsom's despondency was short-lived as a superbly controlled advance by the forwards was rounded of by George London touching down.

Freddie Bunting bisected the uprights as Sutton and Epsom trailed 7-21. Sadly the try-scorer was to depart moments later with an ankle injury to be replaced by Dan Jones. There was no further addition to the score before the interval but there was no masking the size of the task facing S&E in the second period. As the teams turned around Sutton and Epsom at least they had the benefit of the slope as they re-started the match playing towards the clubhouse with Will Lloyd replacing Tom Boaden in the front row. The second half started in a depressingly familiar fashion as poor tackling resulted in full back Vic Hardwicke touching down for the bonus point try for Camberley. The excellent Liam Prescott touchline conversion made it 28-7. The fear of a rout soon became the hope for a memorable win. Sutton and Epsom stormed back playing their best rugby forcing the Watchetts men into defensive duties. George Drye was the first to score for S&E after Charlie Aylward had done well to keep the attack alive and Luke Halford had come close. Freddie Bunting's conversion made in 14-28. Five minutes later a sumptuous break by Freddie Bunting created a score for the supporting Ross Parsons. As Bunting added the extras for 21-28 the game was in the balance with 15 minutes to go. Sadly a minute later Tom Brooker was contentiously yellow carded for breaking his binding.

With the extra man Camberley reasserted their authority and control. Prop Joshua Thundercliffe scored from a catch and drive. Liam Prescott added the extras as well as a penalty five minutes later for a telling 38-21 lead. Returned to fifteen men the Black & Whites went in search of their fourth try in an attempt to record a bonus point. Trying to counter from their 22 in time added on Sutton and Epsom lost possession. The ball was spun wide for the hirsute winger to fittingly conclude the match with his fourth try. Liam Prescott erred for the only time and the match ended with Camberley 43-21 victors.

Camberley deserved the win as they ruthlessly capitalised on a woefully slow and error-strewn start by Sutton and Epsom. Their powerful pack dominated the scrummage. The experienced Liam Prescott calmly orchestrated his back division and kicked 13 points. Man of the match Josua Lewanituva enjoyed a memorable afternoon that included a hat trick in the first half hour and four tries in total. The step up from level 6 to level 5 may well be slightly mitigated by the restructuring but the early season form of Camberley suggests that they will be a force to be reckoned with this season.

Great credit must go to the Black & Whites for a rousing display of immense character in the second period. Unfortunately the comeback was deflated by a yellow card moments after their third goal which scuppered an enthralling finale. Tom Brooker was prominent throughout and his powerful ball carrying will be of great benefit to S&E this season. Fellow debutant Archie Fitzgerald put in several jarring tackles and did not look out of place in 1 st XV company. Dan Jones added energy off the bench in the revitalised second half. Jamie See and Freddy Bunting combined to make impressive breaks as the Rugby Lane men rallied and hinted at a memorable success.

The campaign continues with the visit of Brighton next Saturday, 24th September, and the Black & Whites will be hoping for a repeat of last season's 24-12 triumph. However, the Blues enjoyed a thrilling 39-38 over the previously unbeaten Havant in Week 3 and will travel to Sutton and Epsom full of confidence. I am delighted to report that rugby returns to

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Rugby Lane, after the brief Cobham interlude, and the kick off will be 3pm at the familiar location.

Sutton & Epsom
Austin Bell, Sam Hurley, Archie Fitzgerald, Freddy Bunting, Charlie Aylward, Jamie See, Ross Parsons, Tom Boaden, Chris Farrell ©, Luke Halford, George Drye, Ben Tame, George London, Tom Brooker, & James Caddy.
Replacements: (all used) Will Lloyd, Dan Jones & Ciaran Mohr.
Camberley
Vic Hardwicke, Josua Lewanituva, Alex Young, Chris Laidlaw, Gabe Hills, Liam Prescott, Alistair Walton, Josh Thundercliffe, John Murphy, Nicholas Barry, Sam Voight, Dom Sammut, Chris Bird, Ben Lovell-Smith, Alex Hughes.
Replacements: (all used) Adam Pickett, Ed Grosvenor & Tom Allen.

From 0-0 draw to 6-1 triumph

17 October 2022

Today we catch up with two match reports for Epsom and Ewell FC courtesy of Richard Lambert.

Forest Row 0-0 Epsom & Ewell – abandoned after 82 minutes – Southern Combination League – Division One
Wednesday 14th September 2022. Report Source: www.eefconline.co.uk

Despite holding the balance of possession in the match against Forest Row at their temporary ground of Oakwood FC, we rarely looked like scoring and with the match heading towards a goalless draw, the contest was cut short following an 82nd minute injury to Andy “Woody” Hall, which I’m informed was provisionally diagnosed as a break to one of the bones in his lower leg. Although I don’t have stats for injuries, it feels like decades since we had a player suffering a broken leg and we wish Woody all the best for a speedy recovery.

It was way back in 1938 that we last won on this date and in my mind I had already written the headline. “Epsom return to the top of the table, winning for the first time on this date since the Queen was merely a Princess!” Alas it was not to be, and we actually fell one place to sixth in the table, although will retain this match in hand for now while we await a date for the rearranged fixture.

On a chilly evening that reminds you that Autumn is on its way, the players gathered together for an immaculate minute’s silence in respect of our late Queen. In terms of personnel, Hall came in for Aaron Bogle, while further forward Nick Wilson, Adam Grant and Josh Owen were in the starting line-up at the expense of Ricardo Fernandes, Gavin Quintyne and Jaevon Dyer, although all three were on the bench and would join the action later. Meanwhile in the absence of the suspended Gideon Acheampong, Brad Peters took the armband and was by some distance our best player tonight.

In truth very few players enhanced their reputation in this match. On a tricky surface, albeit one where we had coasted to a five goal win over Oakwood only a fortnight earlier, we overplayed the ball in the first half and then went far more direct in the second, yet created very few real chances with either tactic over the course of the ninety minutes.

Our opponents didn’t fare any better and we rarely looked in serious danger, although Matt Walton had to be aware to make a good block from a header in the 26th minute. We had a couple of shots on target by this point from Owen and Richard Pingling, but neither caused the home keeper much alarm. Our first really good opportunity came from a Peters run which was unfairly ended on the edge of the penalty area and Ryan Smith’s strike to the far corner was well kept out by the diving keeper on the half hour.

As the half came to a close we started to put more pressure onto the home side, but Owen’s shot was half blocked which took the sting out of it and then Smith’s free kick was headed back into the danger area by Peters, where Owen headed over from close range. The hosts put a header wide from a good position before Jubril Adamson poked a shot just wide from twelve yards and the teams went in goalless at the break.

Going down the slope in the second half I still felt we would break through and go on to win, but it was Forest Row who began to grow into the match and had a few long range shots at our goal, Walton tipped one wide for a corner, while another just cleared our crossbar. Fernandes and Dyer joined the action on the wings but still we couldn’t find a way through.

Wilson struck a low fizzing drive inches wide of the far post before Dyer had our best chance just after the hour, latching on to a pass through the defence and sending his defender the wrong way, but after doing the hard work and with only the keeper to beat, he lost his balance and never really got a shot in, stumbling over the ball which dribbled through to the grateful keeper. You begun to wonder if this wasn’t going to be our day and those fears were confirmed after Peters made a mazy run through defence, only to clip the ball back across goal, again missing the far post by inches.

Wilson picked up a yellow card in the 82nd minute for persistent fouls, but the game never restarted as the referee was then made aware that Hall was lying in the middle of the field in considerable discomfort. It looked like it had been an innocuous contact, but after a few minutes it was apparent that he wasn’t getting up any time soon and after twelve minutes with no sign of an ambulance to this point, the referee chose to abandon the match.

This was only the second time in club history where we had an abandonment for a player injury, following a similar

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situation against Egham Town back in April 2008 up at Banstead Athletic. That match was rearranged and despite rumours of this result being allowed to stand, a replay will surely be ordered. As an example, last season Worthing United v Storrington was abandoned in the 90th minute for a player injury, yet had to be contested again, and whilst our abandoned match at Dorking Wanderers Reserves was allowed to stand, the circumstances of that one were completely different! Actually, the fact that the match will be rearranged was probably the only positive to take from the evening as it would give us another opportunity to win the three points. In the meantime I can confirm that everyone's appearance will be recorded as a competitive fixture in accordance with all other abandoned matches in our history.

Epsom & Ewell: Matt Walton, Johnny "Sonic" Akoto, Zach Powell, Ryan 'Butch' Smith, Brad Peters (c), Andy "Woody" Hall, Richard Pingling, Nick Wilson, Jubril "Jibs" Adamson, Josh Owen, Adam Grant

Subs: Jaevon Dyer for Adamson (56), Ricardo Fernandes for Pingling (56), Gavin Quintyne for Owen (80)

Epsom & Ewell 6-1 Wick Southern Combination League – Division One Saturday 17th September 2022

We registered our fifth straight League win on Saturday as top of the table Wick visited Fetcham Grove and received a bit of a hiding as we ran up a 6-1 victory which, coupled with other results on the day, enabled us to rise from sixth place to take our opponent's position at the head of the table. We currently have the highest number of goals scored and the best goal difference, as of course was the case in our division last season, even though it would prove only good enough for sixth place in the final reckoning. This time I have a feeling that this might be different.

In truth this was a strange match, which started slowly and was played at quite a slow tempo, which enabled our boys to show what they could do, particularly in the early stages of the second half when we were dominant. However, for large parts of the match there wasn't a lot between the sides, even though we did look more dangerous throughout and in Jaevon Dyer we had the best player on the park, providing a constant threat to the opposition and eventually winning a penalty in the final seconds of the first half that put daylight between the teams at the break and arguably allowed us to express ourselves freely in that second period.

In terms of personnel, the only bit of bad news was that Club Captain Gideon Acheampong remained suspended, due to Wednesday's match at Forest Row being abandoned and therefore not counting as his one game off. However, Johnny "Sonic" Akoto continued in his place and such is the strength in depth with this squad that it proved a seamless transition. Aaron Bogle came in for the Andy Hall, whose bad injury on Wednesday led to the abandonment and will keep him out for some time. Also returning to the starting eleven alongside Dyer were Athan Smith-Joseph, Gavin Quintyne and Ricardo Fernandes, so Richard Pingling, Jubril Adamson, Josh Owen and Adam Grant returned to the bench after starting in Wednesday's underwhelming performance. Finally, Steve Springett remained unavailable after his injury at Worthing United but the cast will be off shortly and he was kicking a ball in the warm up, so it won't be long before he is pressing for a recall.

The afternoon commenced with another impeccable minute's silence for Queen Elizabeth II and this was followed by something that may well become a new tradition at Fetcham Grove; that of counting the crowd! Our club have recently taken the sad step of inflating the size of the gate in a misguided attempt to show that support is increasing, even though the only news the supporters get told, comes from this website. For the record, three independent counts put the attendance at 87. Performances like this one will surely lead to an increase in support, but until this practice stops, the crowd number will be recorded here.

It was clear right from the start that the visitors were playing a very high line at the back, which meant that a number of our early passes ran through to their goalie, playing on the edge of his penalty area in a sort of sweeper/keeper role. This high line had a direct effect of compressing the play into midfield and provided proof to me, which some people doubted, that Zach Powell's opener was a genuine strike at goal from fifty yards. Under normal circumstances, it might have been seen as an over hit pass from midfield, but because of the high line, it would have required a pass of no more that twenty yards. Powell's strike flew at least forty yards through the air, just cleared the retreating keeper and bounced into the net in the 14th minute. It was clearly deliberate.

We had a bit of a scare a few minutes later as Matt Walton's scuffed goal clearance from out wide went directly to Wick's danger man Dave Crouch in a central position, and from 25 yards out he struck at the vacant goal. The ball seemed to run for ages before it just went the right side of the post from an Epsom perspective.

Smith-Joseph provided a nice low ball across goal just ahead of Fernandes and with Dyer having done the same just before our goal, I was wondering about the wisdom of playing one of our hard-working midfielders in such an advanced position. This became more apparent in the 35th minute when Dyer produced a great run and low shot from 18 yards that hit the inside of the Wick post and bounced across towards Fernandes, but his attempt to knock in the loose ball from less than six yards was denied by a combination of defender and then keeper. However, Fernandes would have the last laugh by the game's end.

We had a brief stoppage a few minutes from the end of the half which seemed to come out of nothing, but led to a scuffle between a few players and accusations of foul play from both sides, but it all settled down and we began to get on top again. Dyer was causing real trouble now and he beat three men on another run before setting up Smith-Joseph for a strike, but it was an easy save for the keeper in the end. However, Dyer wasn't finished though and in the second minute of injury time, he chased another ball on the right, twisted and turned his defender who then brought him down. Ryan Smith then stepped up to score his first goal for the club from the penalty spot with the same accuracy he uses for his free kicks. The half time whistle blew immediately after the restart and we went in two goals ahead.

We came out for the second period in a more relaxed frame of mind and at times played some of our best football of the season. Smith-Joseph started to torment his opponents, pulling the ball back from the left, but Quintyne blazed over from just inside the area. Whilst Akoto was in my opinion harshly booked soon after, we extended our lead in the 55th minute when Smith-Joseph produced one of his trademark mazy runs and finished off with an unstoppable strike from ten yards into the roof of the net to make it 3-0.

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If it wasn't game over then, it certainly was three minutes after that when a great pass from midfield broke the Wick high line and with their players claiming offside, Fernandes carried on his run, drew the keeper and then slotted the ball under him for our fourth goal. I had a fairly good view of this one, but even I couldn't say for certain whether he was onside or not. It was certainly a tight call. either way though the dog's abuse that was directed at the Assistant by at least three players was inexcusable and the Wick number 6 was rightly sent to the sin-bin. He could easily have been accompanied there by other team-mates.

While the visitors were down to ten men we extended our lead to five-nil in the 65th minute as Smith-Joseph got around the back of the defence on the left and his pull back was finished off superbly into the top corner by Fernandes from fifteen yards, who in one match doubled his goals tally for the club from two to four and proved me wrong in the process for suggesting he was playing too far forward. Sorry Ricardo!

The visitors returned to eleven men soon after, while we made a number of substitutions. Whether this disrupted our play is hard to say, but either way Wick pulled a goal back in the 77th minute as Ronald Kardos ran at goal and we stood off him, inviting him to shoot, which he then did into the far corner with Walton possibly unsighted at first. This was a pity but we bounced back in style four minutes later when a great pass from Pingling put Grant through the colander-like offside trap and he finished as clinically as Fernandes had earlier to make it 6-1.

In the final moments Crouch had a shot tipped over by Walton and Owen shot weakly from a good position but it made no difference as we were convincing winners by that time and while we now sit at the top of the table it should be pointed out that we have only played two home games and scored eleven times in those matches. Has anyone else in the country got a better home scoring record right now? Yes of course it is early days, and the performance at Forest Row on Wednesday is useful to remind us that we can still play poorly at times, but Saturday's win was more than just three points, it was a statement to the rest of the league. We are here and we don't intend to let it slip this season.

Epsom & Ewell: Matt Walton, Johnny "Sonic" Akoto, Zach Powell, Ryan 'Butch' Smith, Brad Peters (c), Aaron Bogle, Athan Smith-Joseph, Nick Wilson, Jaevon Dyer, Gavin Quintyne, Ricardo Fernandes

Subs: Josh Owen for Quintyne (72), Adam Grant for Smith-Joseph (72), Louis Chin for Akoto (76), Richard Pingling for Dyer (76), Jubril "Jibs" Adamson for Wilson (82)

Saturday's rugby: SUTTON & EPSOM 22 -BANBURY 26

17 October 2022



A two minute silence for the Late Queen was observed before this tightly fought match played out on 10th September 2022. This fixture would have been the first league encounter between these two clubs at **Rugby Lane** [the home ground of **Sutton and Epsom RFC** situated just inside the borders of the **Borough of Epsom and Ewell**,] but the unusually dry summer adversely affected Sutton and Epsom's pitches. Therefore, in accordance with the regulations the hosts found an alternative venue and were most grateful to the generosity and hospitality of Cobham RFC for letting them use their splendid synthetic surface at Fairmile Lane. This was the first time in the league era that Sutton & Epsom had played a home fixture on a neutral venue though the club have experienced this situation on their travels in the past.

There were seven changes to the squad that lost the opener to Bracknell last Saturday. Returning to the fold were Sutton & Epsom's stalwarts George Drye, James Caddy and Stefan Cooksammy. In comparison Robbie Martey (Barnes) was making his debut for the Black & Whites. Meanwhile Ross Parsons, Charlie Aylward and Luke Halford were making their first appearances of the campaign. Banbury also failed to win their first game of the season as visitors Havant triumphed at Bodicote Park 26-18. Both clubs were eager to get off the mark and record their first points at the second time of asking. It was mission accomplished for the visitors who recorded a 26-22 win and a bonus point to boot.

After the observation of the silence for Queen Elizabeth II Banbury kicked off the fixture. Soon the Bulls were on the scoreboard after solid ball from the scrum it was spun down the line and Quinten Blythe broke away down the flank and passed to supporting full back Tommy Gray to score for the perfect start. Ed Phillips added the extras for a 7-0 lead. S&E came back strongly with a charge down and turn over from the restart. To add to the woes of the hosts Stefan Cooksammy departed injured to be replaced by Sam Hurley.

Having reshuffled their resources the Rugby Lane team pressed hard to draw level. Just before the end of the first quarter the Black & Whites kicked a penalty into the corner. Following a line out and another penalty hooker James Craig forced his way over from a rolling maul for his first S&E try. Freddy Bunting added the conversion to level it at 7-7.

The game ebbed and flowed with Luke Halford closest to scoring when he was held up over the line as the half hour

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approached. Five minutes later James Craig went from hero to villain as he was penalised for a high tackle on wing Alex Garbett. S&E would have to endure ten minutes without their hooker. Despite some cussed defence by the Surrey men Banbury would not be denied. Recycling the ball quickly they broke through on the blindside and lock Louis Tooth strode over to score. Ed Phillips added the kick to lead 14-7 in time added on in the first period. There was no further score in the lengthy period of injury time. Sutton returned to their full compliment but James Craig remained on the sidelines with tactical substitute George London continuing whilst the sacrificial lamb, Austin Bell, returned to the fray.

The opening quarter of an hour of the second period saw both sides best play undermined by errors. Then the Oxfordshire team knocked on from a Sutton line out. From the scrum S&E went blind and Robbie Martey touched down to score on his debut. Bunting's conversion drifted wide as the home team trailed 12-14. S&E were given a helping hand when the Bulls hooker Nick Agbo saw yellow for a deliberate knock on. Then another penalty gave Freddy Bunting the chance to take the lead and he obliged with a well struck kick for a slender 15-14 advantage with a dozen minutes to go. The lead lasted only seconds as Banbury playing their best rugby put together their phases and made the crucial line break to see winger Alex Garbett score. With Ed Phillips' conversion bisecting the uprights the visitors had a 21-15 lead. A couple of minutes later Tommy Gray pounced on a knock on, scored his second try and the Bodicote Boys had secured a bonus point for a fourth try. Despite the missed conversion the rapid 12-point burst after they had momentarily trailed meant Banbury led 26-15 with five minutes remaining of normal time.

The Black & Whites needed an immediate response and they regathered the restart and forced a penalty. A few phases later and veteran Sam Hurley was through for the try. The conversion was added by Freddy Bunting and Sutton were within a score as they trailed 22-26. The Oxfordshire men pressed hard for the decisive score but stout Sutton resistance prevailed though at the cost of an injured Josh Glanville who was forced off the pitch. In a frenetic finale Luke Halford made a 30 metre break to raise the hopes of the S&E followers but the visitors' line was not seriously threatened.

With no further addition to the score Banbury had earned their first points of the campaign and a win on the road. Sutton & Epsom were unfortunate to suffer early injuries to not only Stefan Cooksammy but also Alex Mount. However, it was their self-inflicted wounds that were their undoing in a contest that could have gone either way. Tommy Gray was the Man of the Match with a couple of tries in a performance that carried a constant threat. For the Black & Whites Robbie Martey rounded off an impressive debut with a try. It was a case of the curate's egg for James Craig with a try and a yellow card to add to the now familiar strikes against the head. Freddy Bunting endorsed his growing reputation with fine place-kicking to add to his already considerable all around game.

Next Saturday, 17th September, will see the Black & Whites visit fellow Surrey club Camberley for the first time for a league fixture since January 2013. The hosts after an impressive opening day win over Wimbledon stumbled at the second Havant hurdle and will be keen to return to winning ways. The kick off will be 3pm at Watchetts Recreation Ground as Sutton & Epsom seek their first success of the season.

Sutton & Epsom
Austin Bell, Charlie Aylward, Freddy Bunting, Stefan Cooksammy, Robbie Martey, Jamie See, Ross Parsons, Alex Mount, James Craig, Luke Halford, Ben Tame, George Drye, Tom Brooker, Chris Farrell © & James Caddy.
Replacements: (all used) Tom Boaden, Josh Glanville & Sam Hurley.
Banbury
Tommy Gray, Quinten Blythe, Thomas Burman, Louis Richards, Alex Garbutt, Oscar Triggs, Ed Phillips, James Leonardi, Nick Agbo, Sonny Rowe, Louis Tooth, Jacob Turner, James Hibbert, George Ding & Ed Berridge.
Replacements: (all used) Ian Isham, Jacob Mills & Dan Brady.

Other Results From Round 2
BRACKNELL 14 29 MAIDENHEAD
HAVANT 18 6 CAMBERLEY
OXFORD HARLEQUINS 21 13 BOURNEMOUTH
ROYAL WOOTTON BASSETT 12 22 LONDON WELSH
WIMBLEDON 55 26 BRIGHTON

Salts strike Anvils from League Cup

17 October 2022

Crawley Down Gatwick 2-3 Epsom & Ewell FC. Southern Combination League Peter Bentley Cup – Second Round. Tuesday 6th September 2022. Report Source: www.eefconline.co.uk Reporter: Richard Lambert.

Our first ever visit to the Haven produced a fine performance from our boys as they knocked Step Five Crawley Down Gatwick out of the Southern Combination Peter Bentley League Cup on Tuesday evening.

We had obviously given Step Five Redhill a decent match recently in the FA Vase, so our Management will have expected

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nothing less in this contest, despite being underdogs on paper. Fortunately we were able to recall Richard Pingling after his two match suspension was completed, although in the absence of Gideon Acheampong, Johnny “Sonic” Akoto came in at right back and Ricardo Fernandes took on the Captain’s armband.

The Haven has changed greatly since my previous visit in the 1990s and it has become an enclosed and extremely picturesque tree-lined venue. However, there is limited cover behind both goals and a rainstorm accompanied the opening minutes of the contest!

Fortunately it subsided quickly and we got off to a fine start. A Ryan Smith long range effort was deflected wide for a corner and from Smith’s low set-piece delivery to the near post in the fifth minute the ball was casually flicked into the roof of the net on the half-volley by Brad Peters, who has now registered four goals already this season. Not bad for a centre-half!

Pingling was inches wide of the far post with a low strike from a Fernandes pass, while Jaevon Dyer found himself in a great position, only to scuff his shot and the danger was cleared. Fernandes had a similar opportunity just before this and Peters headed a Smith free kick over the bar, before Pingling then intercepted a poor back pass but was then smothered by about four defenders before he could make it count. We thoroughly deserved our lead at the half and arguably it could have been larger, with the only concerns being a harsh yellow card for Jubril “Jibs” Adamson and a sin-bin for Zach Powell in the 37th minute, which was still in force as the teams went off at the half, with only a header wide of the target and a shot blocked just before the break being registered by the hosts to this point.

The second half would be more even in terms of possession, but shortly after Powell returned to the field of play we had extended our lead. A fantastic pass from Gavin Quintyne in the 47th minute was sent perfectly into the stride of substitute Josh Owen who chested the ball down, before striking the ball across the keeper into the far corner for his first goal for our club.

Crawley Down pulled a goal back in the 59th minute with a ball through our defence that was struck low beyond Matt Walton from close range, but just five minutes later we restored our two goal lead and this time the superb assist came from Pingling, way out on the right hand touchline; his deep ball to the far post being met by a left-footed volley from Fernandes about four yards out, giving the home keeper no chance.

Further substitutions came as Nick Wilson, Adam Grant and then Josh Alder came on in quick succession. I’m not sure what anyone else thinks about the new five substitutes rule, but one thing is for certain, the games become far more stop-start in the second half as up to ten stoppages can occur now. It certainly seemed to break up our flow and the home side started to press us back a lot more as they chased the match.

A long range strike looped up off a defender and just dropped over Walton’s bar, but the respite was brief as the subsequent corner was met with a far post header from close range in the 78th minute as the hosts reduced the score to 3-2, and we picked up an unnecessary card when Alder kicked the ball away. It did seem a little harsh on our boys who seemed to be penalised for things in this match that the opponents didn’t, and by the end even free kicks were being taken from advanced positions with the officials seeming not to notice. As the time ran down, a long range strike was tipped over the bar by Walton, but by now we were in the sixth minute of injury time and the final whistle blew shortly afterwards to confirm our progress.

This was a thoroughly deserved win against a good team and in truth I felt that the scoreline should probably have been wider on the balance of play, but ultimately we claimed the win and will now host Broadbridge Heath in the last 16 of the competition.

Epsom & Ewell: Matt Walton, Johnny “Sonic” Akoto, Zach Powell, Ryan ‘Butch’ Smith, Brad Peters, Aaron Bogle, Ricardo Fernandes (c), Gavin Quintyne, Richard Pingling, Jubril “Jibs” Adamson, Jaevon Dyer

Subs: Josh Owen for Adamson (41), Nick Wilson for Dyer (60), Adam Grant for Smith (68), Josh Alder for Pingling (80)

Rugby opener: Bracknell 34 Sutton & Epsom 14

17 October 2022

With ten changes to the **Sutton and Epsom** squad that ended last season and five debutants, Messrs Benton J, Bunting, Craig, Glanville and Tame, the Black & Whites embarked on the new campaign. Ciaran Mohr kicked off on a sultry afternoon playing towards the clubhouse as the hosts returned to level the lively opening exchanges Sutton & Epsom looked to play with width and **Bracknell** showed panache when countering against clearances. The first opportunity arose in the third minute when the hosts were awarded a penalty. Ollie Radford stepped up to open Bracknell’s account for the season to lead 3-0. From the restart S&E countered from the clearance as Freddy Bunting make a break and Jamie See carried it to the 22 before conceding a scrum. The Berkshire club using the blindside and the jinking footwork of captain Ian Burch surged to halfway. A pulsating opening to the match promised tries in the future for the Lily Hill Park crowd.

The Sutton scrummage was reassuringly solid for the visitors and provided the platform for Gareth O’Brien have plenty of

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time for a probing kick into the 22. However, in the blink of an eye an attacking opportunity turned to desperate defence. Fumbling pin ball at the line out saw the Greens recover the ball and explode out of defence on the narrow side with Ian Burch to the fore.

Jamie See covering back made a splendid try-saving tackle but whilst on the deck tackled the supporting runner. A penalty and a yellow card saw the Black & Whites defending a scrum 10 metres out with 14 men. The home crowd urged on their team who looked to seize the moment. Magnificent defence on their line thwarted multiple attacks until the defenders turned over the ball on their line as the attackers conceded a penalty. Freddy Bunting cleared to the halfway as Sutton survived.

Sutton & Epsom did extremely well to run down the clock whilst they endured the ten minutes of numerical deficiency. Indeed a great scrum led to a penalty and a break from Freddy Bunting got them to 10 metres shy of the line. However, every time Bracknell got the ball they were eager to make the extra man count. A fine James Craig tackle thwarted the first counter. Another powerful S&E scrum won a penalty. In the last minute of the ten on the card it looked like a perfectly timed offload by Alex Fieldhouse had set the hosts free as they sped away from halfway with a wonderful chance to score. The shrill blast of the whistle brought the play back for
a forward pass from the referee who was well placed to adjudicate. Jamie See returned as the
game entered the second quarter.

A searching kick from Gareth O'Brien was followed by an impressive catch and drive as the visiting pack looked to impose themselves on the game. The well organised Bracknell defence were containing the Sutton backs as they tried to play a wide game and were denying the Surrey club who were starting to enjoy more of the territory and possession. Another Bunting carry led to a penalty and the centre stepped up to arrow the ball into the corner. A fine catch and drive led to a penalty 5 metres out. The forwards went close, Jamie See went even closer before finally George London forced his way over under the posts after formidable defence by the hosts. In the turmoil on the line the influential Bracknell Number 8 Ken Hodgson was issued with a yellow card.

Sam Hurley added the easiest of conversions as Sutton took a 7-3 lead on the half hour. It was Bracknell's turn to survive with 14 men and Sutton brought on Will Lloyd and Jack Benton for Alex Mount and George London during this phase hoping that fresh legs would increase their chances to extend their lead. The hosts absorbed not only the visitors attacks but also scored a splendid try. Once again they exploited the narrow side but on this occasion the always dangerous Ian Burch rounded the cover and joyously touched down near the uprights. Ollie Radford added the extras as the 14 men regained the lead by 10-7. Moments later Kyren Ghumra was forced off with a groin injury and Jack Butt came off the bench as the first half concluded with no further addition to the score. Both sides retreated to the dressing rooms to receive the wise words from their coaches as the crowd replenished their glasses.

The players returned and the hosts restarted play. Sutton made one change at the interval as Mount replaced Boaden in the front row. The Bracknell pack who had struggled at the set scrum in the first period improved after the interval and after 5 minutes won a penalty as the scrum collapsed. Ollie Radford's aim was sound once more and the lead stretched to 13-7. Sutton pressed hard to get back on terms in the next ten minutes. Promising breaks were snuffed by the impressive Berkshire defences but at a cost as they lost Alex Fieldhouse and Liam Wood to injuries. Despite the visitors' pressure a solitary penalty miss from Sam Hurley was the closest they
came to reducing the deficit.

In contrast Bracknell scored on their first visit to the S&E 22. A sloppy line out saw the loose ball re-gathered by the hosts, a tackle was missed and moments later the powerful Ken Hodgson had scored under the posts. Ollie Radford made no mistake as the men in Green led 20-7. The S&E response was immediate. They won a penalty at the restart and Freddy Bunting rifled his kick to the corner. From the line out 10 metres from the line Sutton patiently mounted a series of attacks against the miserly home defence. Eventually Alex Mount squeezed in by the posts. Sam Hurley chipped over the conversion to trail 20-14. The see-saw nature of the second period had
another twist minutes later. Simon Bayliss found space and his powerful well angled run scythed through the Black & White's defences for a wonderful try. The reliable boot of Ollie Radford increased the gap as Bracknell led 27-14.

Moments later saw the visitors awarded a 5-metre scrum and it was the Lily Hill Park team's turn to thwart their opposition on the line. The turnover ball and the scrum allowed Bracknell to clear the danger. Ten minutes remained but it felt like a pivotal moment when Sutton had to score. The Black & Whites failed to create any further chances and it was Bracknell who ended the contest in style. With the lengthy time added on nearly complete the man of the match, Simon Bayliss, received the ball in space and charged through neatly sidestepping the last man to score. The bonus point secured, the conversion added by Ollie Radford and only time for the restart kick it was a job well done by Bracknell as they eased to a 34-14 victory.

The score-line probably did not reflect the closeness of the game. A keenly contested first half where S&E edged territory and possession had given Bracknell a slender lead. In the second period the hosts took their chances with clinical efficiency. The wingers, Bayliss and Burch, were a threat throughout and collected a trio of tries. In the pack Ken Hodgson rounded off an impressive afternoon with the other try. Perhaps key to the hosts success was their disciplined and organised defence that contained Sutton's attempts at an expansive game. For the Black & Whites Freddy Bunting had a strong debut in attack and defence as well as kicking well from hand. Austin Bell, in the absence of the usual incumbents at 9, was in no way overawed by the occasion. The Sutton pack scrummaged and mauled impressively and had periods of dominance though the line out faltered too often. The trio of debutants in the starting pack, Craig, Glanville and Tame, all showed promise for the future on an afternoon that was not as doom-laden as the final score might suggest. Bracknell were worthy winners and great credit must be given to those concerned with preparing the pitch in testing conditions many hours of hard work and dedication resulted in an excellent playing surface.

Continuing with the topic of pitches an early decision was made not to use the pitch at Rugby Lane next Saturday due to its condition. Various alternative scenarios were explored before deciding upon playing the 10 th September fixture at Cobham RFC. It will be the first occasion in the league era that Sutton & Epsom have played a home fixture at a neutral

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venue though we have been shunted to alternative surroundings several times as the visitors. Apologies in advance for those spectators who turn up at Rugby Lane next Saturday expecting to see Sutton & Epsom v Banbury but they really should read the Epsom & Ewell Times, the club website or their email communications.

Sutton & Epsom
Sam Hurley, Ciaran Mohr, Freddy Bunting, Jamie See, Kyren Ghumra, Gareth O'Brien, Austin Bell, Alex Mount, James Craig, Tom Boaden, Josh Glanville, Matt Harwood, Ben Tame, George London & Chris Farrell ©.
Replacements: (all used) Will Lloyd, Jack Benton & Jack Butt.

Bracknell
Will Field, Simon Bayliss, Alex Fieldhouse, Ollie Radford, Ian Burch ©, Alex Frame, Matt Outson, Jasper Miranda, Bradley Waters, Jake Hodge, Callum Russell, Tom Scott, Liam Wood, Tom Field, Ken Hodgson.
Replacements: (all used) James Gregory, George Milligan & Noah Cannon.

NOTE:

The RFU have restructured the league pyramid in a desire to reflect the trends of the game in the current era. Following a lengthy survey it was decided to reduce the number of league games and the travelling involved for many clubs. Last season's London & SE Premier fourteen clubs were released to the four winds and were distributed into two 12-team leagues. Sutton & Epsom are in Regional 1 South Central and have seven new opponents for this campaign. From the London & SE structure are the newly promoted London 1 South champions Camberley who are joined by the historic London Welsh. Promoted from the South West Premier come champions Oxford Harlequins, Banbury and Bracknell. Finally, through a formula only known by the chosen few at the RFU, Bournemouth and Royal Wootton Bassett are transferred from the West.
Just when the rugby fraternity thought that normality had returned after the interruptions of covid the clubs were faced with the more traditional hurdle of weather-related impediments. As people of a certain vintage reflected upon the summer of '76 there was a flurry of communications between the RFU and League secretaries concerning the state of pitches and match preparedness of playing squads whose pre-season might have been inadvertently affected by conditions. The final RFU missive was despatched on 30 th August with eleven points that hoped to cover every scenario. Fortunately S&E opened their account at Bracknell RFC whose facilities at Lily Hill Park were in good order and their team primed for the initiation of hostilities. The last occasion that the Black & Whites visited the Berkshire club it was a day for club masochists as the hosts put Sutton to the sword to the tune of 76-0. Saturday's encounter bore no resemblance to that thrashing but Bracknell did record a 34-14 triumph to start their season with a win.

Epsom and Ewell Top the Table

17 October 2022

Oakwood 0-5 Epsom & Ewell, Southern Combination League – Division One, Monday 29th August 2022. Report Source: www.eefconline.co.uk. Reporter: Richard Lambert.

Any disappointment felt in the FA Vase defeat at Redhill on Saturday was firmly banished less than 48 hours later as we thrashed Oakwood 5-0 on the Bank Holiday Monday morning to go top of the League table for the first time this season.

It was almost a perfect day for a Salts supporter. Five goals, no bookings, a clean sheet and no apparent injuries. In fact, the only disappointment was the lack of a match day programme from the hosts, who had promised there would be one online. As far as I am aware, a programme is still mandatory in our league, yet it's the third time in recent months that this has happened and it is probably time that the League reminded the clubs of their obligation to produce something that many supporters still want to see at each game.

The quick turnaround between fixtures always meant it was likely there would be changes to our line up, although only three were made; Johnny "Sonic" Akoto was unavailable, so Zach Powell moved to left back and recent re-joiner Gavin Quintyne made his first start for us, slotting seamlessly into Powell's vacated midfield role. Up front Josh Alder came in for Jaevon Dyer and at the back Andy "Woody" Hall came back in for the absent Aaron Bogle. We would see two further debuts from the bench in this match as Nick Wilson and Jack Porter would each get their first run outs of the season.

We had performed creditably at Step Five Redhill, but so had Oakwood as they had lost narrowly 3-2 at another good Step Five team in Fisher, so although they had been struggling with early league form, this looked like it would be a tricky fixture to negotiate. However, after an even ten minutes we scored an early goal going down the slope and never looked in danger from that point onwards.

The scorer of our first goal was Jubril "Jibs" Adamson who received the ball from Tiago Andrade and curled the ball left-

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footed into the far top corner from outside of the penalty area in just the eighth minute. You couldn't have placed the ball any further into the corner of the net without hitting the post or bar and the keeper, understandably had no chance of saving it.

We had already made a couple of chances by this point with a Hall header and an Alder volley both being just off target, but the home team had put a couple of dangerous balls in to our area themselves; one coming just after our opener with a far post header from the Oakwood number 11, but we were soon back on the attack and Adamson struck at goal once again after being found by a clever back heel by Andrade, although the home keeper was able to make the save easily enough.

We nearly extended the lead when a Smith free kick was up and over the wall, but was inches wide; grazing the back stanchion of the goal from twenty yards out and then Peters, already looking for his fourth goal of the season, saw his shot deflected over, although a goal kick was awarded.

We had a shout for a penalty when the home keeper came out for a high ball and appeared to clatter into Andrade first, but the ball was only half cleared to Smith and his long range shot was deflected kindly into the path of Alder who kept his composure to slot the ball under the advancing keeper from eight yards to register his first competitive goal for our club in the 37th minute.

We had further chances before the half with Alder and Andrade both forcing saves from the keeper and then Alder dragged a low shot across goal, just beyond the far post from a good position. However, we were well in charge by this point and I was confident that we could go on and score further goals in the second half.

And that is just what happened, although we had two good opportunities before that third goal did come, firstly from Quintyne who ran on to a good pass, but then saw his shot well blocked by the keeper, and then when Athan Smith-Joseph's ball across goal took a hop on the long grass and bounced straight over Adamson's leg. Fortunately our winger was on target soon after this, thanks to a lovely slide rule pass from Quintyne, only to see the shot saved but rebound onto the knee of the retreating number 3 and dribble apologetically into the net for an own goal in the 55th minute.

Wilson, Ricardo Fernandes and then Josh Owen joined the match and Matt Walton had a rare involvement as he had to tip a header from an Oakwood corner away, but we scored our fourth goal in the 62nd minute when Owen held the ball up on the left and drew defenders before crossing for the unmarked Fernandes to stroke the ball into the far corner from ten yards.

Owen was unfortunate to see his powerful header from Wilson's free kick ruled out for an offside flag, but we had a fifth goal in the 75th minute and it came from an unlikely source as Gideon Acheampong had made a fine run and received a return pass into stride from Smith-Joseph and finished clinically low to the keeper's left and just inside the near post from eight yards out. Cue large celebrations as it was only our Captain's second goal for the club in his 69th Salts appearance.

That would conclude the scoring for this match, although Walton had a scare at the other end when he appeared to take his eye off the ball and it came back off the frame of the goal before he gathered it, while our coach Porter came on in the final moments, getting bundled over in the box, but the referee wasn't interested and to be fair, he was probably right!

In truth this was a very comfortable win for our boys. Oakwood were not in the same league on the day and with a few more performances like this, maybe the two teams will actually be in different leagues next season as for the first time in 2022/23 we can actually look down from the top of the table, even though we probably won't be there after next Saturday as we are the odd team in a seventeen team division and have no league match that day. Our next competitive match is a challenging League Cup tie at Step Five Crawley Down Gatwick on Tuesday 6th September.

Epsom & Ewell: Matt Walton, Gideon Acheampong ©, Zach Powell, Ryan 'Butch' Smith, Brad Peters, Andy "Woody" Hall, Athan Smith-Joseph, Gavin Quintyne, Tiago Andrade, Jubril "Jibs" Adamson, Josh Alder

Subs: Nick Wilson for Smith (57), Ricardo Fernandes for Alder (57), Josh Owen for Adamson (59), Louis Chin for Andrade (65), Jack Porter for Smith-Joseph (89)

Lobsters at home with Salts

17 October 2022

Salts battle hard but Lobsters progress in the Vase. Redhill 2-1 Epsom & Ewell. Isuzu F.A. Vase – First Qualifying Round. Saturday 27th August 2022. Report Source: www.eefconline.co.uk Reporter: Richard Lambert

Our first Vase match of the season also became our last as we were defeated by Redhill at Kiln Brow on Saturday, but our opponents will know that they had to work for the full ninety minutes before coming through in a match that was ultimately only decided by a defensive error.

In fact, over the ninety minutes we had the greater chances and against a team in the top four of Step Five at the time the match kicked off, it was hard to tell that there was a full step between the two opponents. Although that didn't count for much in the end, our boys deserve a lot of credit and know that performances like this will result in a promotion at the end of the season, which was and remains our ultimate goal this season.

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We made four changes to our starting line up with the injured Steve Springett, the unavailable Andy Hall and Adam Grant and the suspended Richard Pingling replaced by Johnny “Sonic” Akoto, Aaron Bogle, Tiago Andrade and Athan Smith-Joseph respectively. However, I have referred to our strength in depth and we looked as good this week as we had seven days previously at Worthing United.

Following a minute’s silence for a Redhill Vice-President, Les Smith, we had a couple of early half chances with Ryan Smith’s strike at goal and a nice bit of interplay between Jaevon Dyer and Andrade finished with a Dyer shot that was well blocked by the Redhill keeper Mike McEntegert. At the other end Matt Walton saved a low shot from Fred Hill with his feet after we were caught out by a long ball.

Our next chance fell to Zach Powell but he scuffed his shot from a good position before a defender made a great challenge to deny Dyer in the act of shooting. Then Dyer turned provider but Smith-Joseph couldn’t quite direct his header on target at the far post. Next to try his luck was Smith from fully thirty yards although it was just wide of the post.

On the half hour Dyer struck another shot which I can confirm was creeping inside the post, but a defender’s leg blocked the effort and the hosts broke with speed, earning a corner which was headed wide by Antonio Simeone. Then Walton was in action again, blocking away a shot from Jason Kaate, before Lyndon McGugan made a superb challenge after it looked as though Smith-Joseph would be able to finish easily when the ball fell kindly for him. Both of these Redhill players were with us briefly during the Covid friendly phase, although neither made a competitive appearance for us.

Dyer was giving the Redhill defence a lot of work and just before the break he was brought down by Sol Patterson-Bonner who earned the first yellow card of the day, but overall both teams looked solid in defence as we went in for half time with the goalless scoreline.

This looked like being a really tight encounter, decided by maybe just one goal, so when we took the lead in the 51st minute it looked like it might be pivotal. Dyer was again involved as he connected with a low ball in and his shot was well saved for a corner and from the Smith delivery Brad Peters rose highest to head home his third goal of the season from eight yards; his finish across McEntegert was unstoppable.

We could and maybe should have extended our lead a minute later when the ball was fed to Smith-Joseph, but his shot from ten yards was kept out by the keeper’s feet. However, the game turned in the 56th minute. Dyer was brought down inside the penalty area, but it didn’t look enough for a penalty for me. Meanwhile Redhill broke at pace and within seconds Yannick Monga ran in from the right and struck a low drive across Walton into the far corner. We had led for just five minutes.

Still we made chances as Andrade’s delicious pass to Smith-Joseph was in stride, but his shot from six yards was straight at the advancing keeper and our flying winger was denied again by a saving defensive challenge minutes later. A couple of substitutions followed as Dyer and Jubril Adamson departed, but we failed to carry the same attacking threat that Dyer had posed and then in the 80th minute we tried to play out from the back, only for Max Oldham stole the ball, ran in and drilled the ball below Walton from close range for what proved to be the winner.

Moments later our Captain Gideon Acheampong to pick up a harsh yellow card for trying to get the ball off Oldham and nudging him over, although it should be noted that Oldham also received a card, but disaster then occurred in the final seconds when our defender tried to reach the ball to block an upfield clearance and he was adjudged to have caught the Redhill player, picking up a second card in the fourth minute of injury time. Clearly our Captain was angry at the decision, which I also thought was the wrong one. As it is Acheampong will now serve a one match suspension.

It is always unfortunate to depart the FA Vase. It is a competition that we have an indelible link with, having been one of the first two finalists in 1975 and we recognise our part in its history. However, as a Step Six team currently, promotion has to be our top priority and if we were going to get the rough end of a decision like that, then at least it didn’t cost us league points. Hopefully we can put this result behind us when we face Oakwood on Monday morning as we go for our fourth League win in a row.

Epsom & Ewell: Matt Walton, Gideon Acheampong ©, Johnny “Sonic” Akoto, Ryan ‘Butch’ Smith, Brad Peters, Aaron Bogle, Athan Smith-Joseph, Zach Powell, Tiago Andrade, Jubril “Jibs” Adamson, Jaevon Dyer

Subs: Gavin Quintyne for Jaevon Dyer (69), Ricardo Fernandes for Adamson (69), Josh Alder for Powell (85)

Good start to season with Salts

17 October 2022

Pos	Team	GD	PTS
1	Wick	7	12
2	Epsom & Ewell	4	9
3	Godalming Town	5	7
4	Shoreham	5	7

Mavericks receive a repeat dose of the Salts. **Worthing United 0-3 Epsom & Ewell** – Southern Combination League – Division One – Saturday 20th August 2022. Report Source: www.eefconline.co.uk Reporter: Richard Lambert.

In October 2021 we made our first visit to the Robert Albon Memorial Ground; the home of Worthing United, and won 3-0. Ten months on we repeated the scoreline without too much alarm and moved up to second place in the table as a result.

Our Management declared themselves happy enough with the result, but not quite so happy with the performance, and

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it's true to a point, as the match was a little scrappy at times. However, the warm conditions, bone dry surface and strong winds all played their part in that, as indeed did an extremely eccentric second half performance from the officials.

I have referred previously to the size of our squad, although the starting eleven is now starting to look more regular and for the second match in a row we made just one change with Athan Smith-Joseph moving to the bench as Jaevon Dyer made his first start for the club out on the left wing.

We kicked off with the wind at our backs and made a positive start. An early Ryan "Butch" Smith corner was headed back across goal by Brad Peters for Andy "Woody" Hall to hook the ball inches over the bar in just the seventh minute before a long throw from Jubril "Jibs" Adamson bounced through the six yard box and Richard Pingling saw his close range shot blocked by a defender. Peters was then at full stretch but was unable to direct his header from a Steve Springett free kick on target. All of this occurred in just the first fifteen minutes!

Pingling sent a thirty yarder just over the bar and in the 17th minute he was the creator of our opening goal, doing well on the right to beat two men before crossing with his right foot to the near post where Adam Grant was able to head the ball just inside the near post from six yards.

Springett had a fine game on Wednesday against Forest Row, but his afternoon would end painfully and prematurely after falling awkwardly and dislocating his thumb in the 26th minute. Play stopped for six minutes and the thumb was popped back into position, but our defender had to visit the local hospital for a scan. Hopefully it will reveal no further damage. Louis Chin came on in his place with Captain Gideon Acheampong moving over to left back in our defensive four.

We had a scare just before half time after Hall bundled his opponent over just outside the box and the free kick appeared to go through our wall, but Matt Walton was there to make the save and this was the most worrying moment for our boys from a defensive point of view as Walton would go on to claim his first clean sheet for our club. In fact as the half closed Hall nearly made his mark at the other end with a diving header from a Smith corner that Mac Scott in the Mavericks goal did well to claw away. However, there were still six minutes of injury time to play and Adamson forced another save out of Scott, but in the fourth minute of injury time we scored a second after Pingling sent a high ball in on the right hand side of the penalty area. Adamson got himself in front of the defender to shield the ball, held him off and then hooked it across goal, where Dyer was able to stretch and knock the ball in from close range.

We came out confidently with our two goal lead and looked for more. Dyer made a good run on the left but was denied for a corner by a great final second block from Andrew Younger, although the defender tweaked his ankle in making the challenge and was required to leave the field after treatment. We made that one man advantage count from the Smith delivery in the 55th minute as Peters launched himself at the ball, knocking it forward, and whilst he was blocked from following it up, Dyer was there to knock the ball past Scott from close range. However, that description doesn't really tell the full story. I do not know whether our man has ever practised Taekwondo, but as the ball was heading towards goal it was behind him, and somehow he got his leg up to head height and knocked the ball in with the back of his heel for a skilful and acrobatic finish!

We made a couple more substitutions soon after this goal when Tiago Andrade and Josh Owen joined the action in the 63rd minute. However, the final twenty minutes of the match were all about the officials. I have no idea why but the referee suddenly started to issue cards, starting with Dean Sherwood the Worthing United Captain who was sent to the sin bin. While we had the one man advantage Andrade played a perfect pass into the stride of Pingling and as he drew his foot back to shoot, he was clattered into from behind by Younger, yet somehow neither the referee nor the Assistant saw the foul. It has to be one of the most clear non-awarded penalties I have seen in recent years and insult was added to injury when Andrade was involved with some good interplay with another substitute George Membrillera, but as Andrade drilled the ball below Scott the flag was raised for offside. It is possible that one or other of them may have been, but after the previous "non-call" a few minutes before, it was impossible to have confidence in the decision and certainly our players didn't seem to agree with it!

Things got stranger. Pingling was taken out by Younger in the 76th minute and as the yellow card was raised, you wondered whether it really should have been a second one after Younger had also committed the "foul" for the non-penalty. However, even though the offender had been booked, Pingling was still made to leave the field after treatment. This was confusing and a few minutes later after Pingling had been substituted, the Assistant then overheard comments from the dug out and brought the matter to the referee's attention who then sent our man off. People who were over there have confirmed that it was just conversation between people on the bench, but for some reason the officials chose to get involved.

There was still time for a home player to receive a yellow card for diving before Membrillera picked up a strange yellow card after he rolled the ball into the net after being flagged offside. This could easily have been dealt with by a quick word, but the referee then also booked Adamson in injury time for what looked like just incidental contact, following a Smith-Joseph run during which the ball had gone out of play, but which you'll probably be unsurprised to hear was also missed by the officials!

The ending of the match left a bit of a sour taste as it stopped both teams from playing football and the scoreline remained unchanged at 3-0 as the final whistle blew. Still, it was another three points and our third win in a row places us in a healthy position with our next League encounter at Oakwood coming up on the August Bank Holiday morning. Before

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that we visit Step Five Redhill in the F.A. Vase on Saturday; a good team who will certainly give our boys a test.

Epsom & Ewell: Matt Walton, Gideon Acheampong ©, Steve Springett, Ryan 'Butch' Smith, Brad Peters, Andy "Woody" Hall, Jaevon Dyer, Zach Powell, Jubril "Jibs" Adamson, Adam Grant, Richard Pingling

Subs: Louis Chin for Springett (32), Tiago Andrade for Grant (63), Josh Owen for Smith (63), George Membrillera for Dyer (71), Athan Smith-Joseph for Pingling (81)

Pos	Team	P	W	D	L	F	A	GD	PTS
1	Wick	4	4	0	0	10	3	7	12
2	Epsom & Ewell	4	3	0	1	10	6	4	9
3	Godalming Town	3	2	1	0	8	3	5	7
4	Shoreham	3	2	1	0	7	2	5	7
5	East Preston	3	2	1	0	3	1	2	7
6	Billingshurst	4	2	1	1	8	7	1	7
7	Chessington & Hook United	3	2	0	1	7	3	4	6
8	Selsey	3	2	0	1	6	4	2	6
9	Arundel	3	1	1	1	6	5	1	4
10	Dorking Wanderers 'B'	3	1	0	2	6	5	1	3
11	Forest Row	3	1	0	2	8	9	-1	3
12	Mile Oak	3	1	0	2	4	8	-4	3
13	Oakwood	3	0	1	2	3	6	-3	1
14	Seaford Town	3	0	1	2	4	8	-4	1
15	Hailsham Town	3	0	1	2	0	5	-5	1
16	Montpelier Villa	3	0	0	3	1	7	-6	0
17	Worthing United	3	0	0	3	0	9	-9	0

Thrashing good win for the Salts

17 October 2022

Epsom & Ewell 5-2 Forest Row Southern Combination League – Division One. Wednesday 17th August 2022. Report Source: www.eefconline.co.uk. Reporter: Richard Lambert.

On Wednesday night at Fetcham Grove we thoroughly deserved the three points on offer with a 5-2 League win, although required two superb headers from Brad Peters to seal the points as the visitors threatened to take something from the match with the score at 3-2 midway through the second half.

Peters had been substituted on Saturday at Seaford Town, having been yellow carded and sin-binned in quick succession and it was notable that for this match Gideon Acheampong was wearing the Captain's armband instead, but our centre-half responded well with a superb performance defensively and the two goals provided the cherry on the cake! It was just a pity that his goals were only seen by a crowd (counted twice independently) of 66 people on a Wednesday night when there were few other matches taking place.

We made just the one change to our starting eleven with Adam Grant coming in for the unavailable Tiago Andrade and retained the back four which had worked well at Seaford three days previously. Peters nearly opened the scoring in the second minute when he guided a header from a Ryan Smith free kick just wide of the post twelve yards out, before Grant saw his shot on goal blocked a couple of minutes later. However, we opened our home account for the season in the eleventh minute when Grant made a fine run down the left and his pull back skimmed off the boot of Athan Smith-Joseph out to Richard Pingling just inside the penalty area, where his low strike found the bottom corner and gave Ben Abbott in the visiting goal no chance.

Smith-Joseph was giving the opposition defenders trouble as usual and he broke through on the left; cutting in and striking across goal, but Abbott was able to claw the ball away from the danger area. He then beat some more defenders before rifling a shot just over the bar, aided by the slightest touch from Abbott, although the goal kick was still awarded. We then had a pair of yellow cards, one for each side and both correctly awarded, with Jubril Adamson receiving his for a late lunge which caught an opponent.

The visitors drew level in the 42nd minute when a nice move from the left was finished off by a cannonball strike from the 18 yard line from Brett Caiger, whistling past Matt Walton into the roof of the net. However, their jubilation was short lived as a Steve Springett cross from the left was not dealt with and Adamson tucked away the loose ball into the corner in the 44th minute, so the half ended with our boys ahead once again.

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Although Forest Row had been dangerous on occasions, we deserved our half time lead and extended it in the 47th minute when a great through ball from Zach Powell was perfectly weighted into the stride of Springett and he drilled the ball across Abbott into the bottom corner to make it 3-1.
We were on top now and Springett and Pingling forced good saves from Abbott, but then the Row pulled a goal back somewhat against the run of play in the 62nd minute when Steve Major eluded his marker to glance a near post corner across Walton into the far corner.
The game was a little too open for a while after that, but we settled down and Grant was denied from close range by Abbott and then substitute Jaevon Dyer, making his debut, made a great run through a crowd but sliced his shot wide. It would have been one of the best debut goals I'd seen, but we didn't have to wait long to make the game safe. Peters earned a corner with a dangerous ball across goal that was turned away at the far post, and from the delivery our defender remained up for the set piece and thumped the header past Abbott from close range in the 78th minute. Four minutes later he did it again from a Springett free kick, this time maybe six yards out, but still unstoppable.
As the match wound down we also had a couple more debuts as Eldi Baze and George Membrillera joined the fray late on. The latter had in fact been on the scoresheet in our last home match, although it was for the opposition when Dorking Wanderers Reserves won here back in April, but this time we were already home and dry and a late card for Grant for an unnecessary nudge in the back made no difference.
The final whistle blew soon after and we moved up to fifth place in the table as a result; only behind Billingshurst on alphabetical order. The Row had won their previous match, defeating Seaford Town 4-1, but this win tells me all I already knew from pre-season, which is that we will be challengers this term. One thing to note is that in three matches so far we have used all fifteen available substitutes and we clearly continue to have much strength in depth. We visit Worthing United on Saturday, hoping to keep our winning run going.
Epsom & Ewell: Matt Walton, Gideon Acheampong ©, Steve Springett, Ryan 'Butch' Smith, Brad Peters, Andy "Woody" Hall, Athan Smith-Joseph, Zach Powell, Jubril "Jibs" Adamson, Adam Grant, Richard Pingling
Subs: Jaevon Dyer for Adamson (52), Eldi Baze for Pingling (71), Joshua Owen for Smith (75), Louis Chin for Powell (79), George Membrillera for Smith-Joseph (82)

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