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Epsom Derby: Queen’s horse pulled out of race

5 May 2022

The Queen’s racehorse Reach For The Moon has been pulled out of the Classic after failing to recover from an injury in time. The horse was injured late last year.

The horse, trained by father-son duo John and Thady Gosden and ridden by Frankie Dettori, was the 3rd favourite.

The colt was tipped as one of the favourites to win on June 4th after finishing first at the Solario Stakes at Sandown Park last August. He later sustained an injury that was not thought serious enough to rule him out of the Epsom Derby, this was apparently not the case.

John Gosden told the Racing Post he would not contest the Classic at Epsom.

“Following a setback last autumn, Reach For The Moon has been given all the time and care he requires in his training programme,” said Gosden.

“We had planned to run him in the Dante Stakes at York next week. However, in the best interests of the horse, we have decided that this race is coming too soon for him.“

“Consequently, he will not run in the Derby and will be pointed towards Royal Ascot.”

Midhurst & Easebourne 2 – 1 Epsom & Ewell, Southern Combination League – Division One Playoff Semi-Final

5 May 2022



Reporter: Richard Langley, Photos by Gemma Jarman

Report Source: eefconline.co.uk

A poor start leads to a premature season’s end

After three very tight meetings between ourselves and Midhurst & Easebourne this season, this Playoff Semi-Final always threatened to follow a similar path and over the ninety minutes we witnessed another even contest. Unfortunately, a poor opening twenty minutes left us 2-0 down and we were never able to recover, eventually losing by the same score as we had just four days previously in the Division One Cup Final. Both teams appeared to be at full strength for this match, although for us that meant once again that Player/Manager Jamie Byatt was unable to take the field. At the back, Gideon Acheampong was able to start and upfront Mario Qurassaca made his first start. As a result, Jerry Antwi and Mo Cisse started on the bench, although both would enter the playing arena later.

For those who noted my gladiatorial reference to an arena here, it is largely because of the way these two teams squared up following the conclusion of the aforementioned Cup Final, and if I’m honest I expected more fireworks here. However, Referee Paul Saunders was totally on top of this match and ensured that hardly any extra-curricular activity took place this time. We had an early free-kick from which Ricardo Fernandes gave Josh Bird some early catching practice, but were behind in the sixth minute when Lewis Hamilton drove through our static defence and slotted the ball past Sheikh Ceesay from close range.

This was an awful start and it got worse in the 22nd minute when a deep ball in was met by a looping header towards goal, but somehow Liam Dreckmann was able to reach it first to force the ball in from close range. We didn’t know it for certain at the time, but the damage was already done, although we fought back well from this point and made it a much more even contest for the remainder of the afternoon. A corner was flicked onto the far post where Tyreke Leslie struck at goal from a narrow angle, but Bird was equal to the shot and turned it around the post. Next to try was Mike Hill with a long-range strike that Bird clawed away from under pressure from Qurassaca, although our striker was flagged offside, so it wouldn’t have counted as he was definitely in Bird’s line of sight. Then in the 39th minute, we pulled a goal back and it was a bit of a strange one really as a ball over the top fell kindly for Qurassaca who then failed to control it, but as a result of this, Bird came out of goal only to then realise that he wasn’t going to get there in time and Qurassaca then nodded the ball over him and it bounced over the line and up into the roof of the net from eighteen yards. He had a half-chance to

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score another as a deep cross was headed over at full stretch, but as the halftime whistle went, it looked like we had finally got going and there was still plenty of time to go to salvage this.

An early Hill header in the opening minute was covered easily by Bird but the majority of this half would be spent in midfield as the home side kept us largely subdued. In the Cup match they had negated our threat on the wings by putting two men on them; a trick Roffey had also used against us back in March, but in this second half both Luke Miller and Athan Smith-Joseph seemed to play deeper, which meant that our service to Qurassaca was extremely limited and he too then dropped further back leaving us with no one upfront. Midhurst then cut us apart on the hour with a deep ball over on the left that was volleyed across goal but fortunately with no one there to meet it.

Unfortunately, we were then forced into a couple of substitutions as Hill departed, but also Brad Peters who appeared to suffer a recurrence of the injury he picked up at Mile Oak seven days previously. They were replaced by Cisse and Antwi respectively. Miller's shot was then blocked by a defender before Bird clawed away another deep delivery. We had a little incident when Dreckmann squared up to Ceesay who pushed back and I thought that the award of a yellow card for both was a little harsh on our keeper. Ceesay then made an important save after our defender missed a ball in from the left, but our man was out quickly to smother the ball which squirted out for a corner, which was then headed over by Marcus Bedford. Josh Uzun entered the fray with five minutes left as we made an attacking substitution, but five minutes from time Acheampong then dragged Bedford back as he threatened to get through and picked up a yellow card that could have been red, had he committed the offence a little closer to goal instead of back on the halfway line.

As time ran out we had a bit of good pressure and Fernandes' low shot from outside the penalty area was powerful enough, but wide, and Smith-Joseph had the last meaningful attempt on goal in the fourth of seven minutes of injury time, but Bird was able to make the easy save.

And this summed up the match and to a certain extent the season. We were never really able to hurt our opponents enough in this match and you just felt that a fully fit Byatt would have been the difference in many of these matches this season. As I look back at the stats I can see that he scored thirty-one goals in twenty-eight appearances, of which we lost just six, but the unseen statistic here is that he was unable to take the field in thirteen matches and we lost six of those too. Without him, we just weren't the same and at the age of forty, it will be interesting to see whether he retains the tag of Player/Manager next season or whether we have seen the last of him as a player.

So Midhurst & Easebourne progress to a playoff final at home to Shoreham, who defeated Seaford Town 2-0 on their own pitch, while we now face another season in Sussex at Step Six, our fifth season at that level. There are worse places to play football without a doubt, but it feels somewhat underwhelming that a team this good has fallen away so badly this season, finishing with four straight losses. For sure it has been a horrible end to the season if you are an Epsom fan and no, there is no time left to bounce back.

Epsom & Ewell: Sheikh Ceesay, Gideon Acheampong, Louis Chin, Brad Peters (c), Steve Springett, Luke Miller, Athan Smith-Joseph, Ricardo Fernandes, Mario Qurassaca, Mike Hill, Tyreke Leslie

Subs: Mo Cisse for Hill (64), Jerry Antwi for Peters (64), Josh Uzun for Chin (85)

Match Report: Midhurst & Easebourne 2 – 1 Epsom & Ewell, Southern Combination Cup Final

5 May 2022



Reporter: Richard Langley, Photos by Gemma Jarman

Report Source: eefconline.co.uk

Salts fall in the final seconds

After two very even contests already this season, it was no surprise that this third meeting at the neutral venue of Alfold FC produced another close encounter. Unfortunately for our boys, a 96th-minute goal from James Liddiard came too late to reply to and we had to accept defeat by two goals to one.

With a very important playoff match coming up against the same opposition on Saturday, I wondered how the teams would line up, but both went as strong as they could. Brad Peters was good to go at the back after limping off on Saturday at Mile Oak, while Mike Hill was back in the starting line up as was Mo Cisse. Kofi Quartey and Josh Uzun found themselves on the bench alongside the fit-again Gideon Acheampong.

And we got off to a flyer. Athan Smith-Joseph broke through the middle and had time to steady himself before slotting the ball low to the right of Midhurst keeper Josh Bird to open the scoring in the fourth minute.

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The opposition sent a dangerous free-kick through our six-yard area and out the other side, but this was to be a game of few actual chances. Midhurst nearly got back on level terms after a low ball in from the left was well blocked and then kicked away by Sheikh Ceesay just before the half-hour mark before Hill and Liam Dreckmann picked up a yellow card each for an episode of handbags. This was typical of much of the first half as a niggly match was played out, aided and abetted by a referee who wanted to stop play every few minutes, although he also missed Hill getting clattered on the side of the head. Then when Hill was kicked up in the air by Harry Giles he received a lecture, but no card.

It was apparent though that our opponents were beginning to gain the upper hand in the match and they deservedly drew level in the 39th minute with an acrobatic overhead kick from Marcus Bedford from close range that gave Ceesay no chance.

At the half, Hill was replaced by Acheampong with Louis Chin moving into midfield and despite the loss of our gifted playmaker, our team began to tick a little better as a result. Ricardo Fernandes made a good run on the left only for his cross to be palmed away by Bird just ahead of Tyreke Leslie before Luke Miller tried his luck in the 69th minute with a powerful strike from a very narrow-angle, but he was also off target.

We had a flashpoint in the 71st minute when Bird was out quickly to clear a through ball just ahead of Fernandes and on his way back to goal he patted our man on the head, which Fernandes clearly didn’t like and his reaction earned him a yellow card after the obligatory ten-man scuffle had settled down. Meanwhile, Bird wasn’t even spoken to!

In the 76th minute Mario Qurassaca made his debut, coming on for Leslie as we began to threaten a little more. Cisse struck well from 25 yards and was inches wide of the post with Bird unsure and scrambling, although at the other end we were then caught our by a deep ball from the right, only for substitute Will Essai to blaze over from a decent position about twelve yards out.

Then in the 89th minute we had a golden opportunity as a Peters pass rebounded kindly for Qurassaca who was through on goal as a result, but after riding a challenge he then dragged his shot just beyond Bird’s right hand post from twelve yards with the other side of the goal looking like the better option.

Uzun came on for Cisse as we approached injury time, presumably ahead of what was looking like a sure-fire penalty shootout, but Midhurst had one more card to play and a low near post strike was kept out by Ceesay, but only for a corner. From the delivery James Liddiard rose highest to meet the ball, glancing it in from close range in the sixth minute of injury time. Ceesay was appealing for a foul and it did appear that he may well have been held back, but the offence wasn’t spotted and seconds after the restart the match was over.

Having spoken to a number of people after the match, no one could work out exactly why we played as much as six minutes extra time, but this was almost forgotten as upon the final whistle there was a big scuffle between the players which seemed to go on for quite a while and when the smoke cleared and everyone had calmed down Jerry Antwi had received a red card. I don’t believe this will keep him out of Saturday’s rematch in Midhurst, but it would definitely rule him out of any playoff Final should we get there.

Did we deserve to lose this cup final? No, we didn’t, but equally, it could be argued that we didn’t do enough to win it either, although we did improve in the second half. It was a tight match that just didn’t go our way. Maybe on Saturday, the positions will be reversed, but one thing appears certain. It should be another close match!

Epsom & Ewell: Sheikh Ceesay, Louis Chin, Jerry Antwi, Brad Peters (c), Steve Springett, Mo Cisse, Athan Smith-Joseph, Ricardo Fernandes, Tyreke Leslie, Mike Hill, Luke Miller

Subs: Gideon Acheampong for Hill (HT), Mario Qurassaca for Leslie (76), Josh Uzun for Cisse (89)

Match Report: Epsom & Ewell 1 – 2 Dorking Wanderers Reserve, Southern Combination League – Division One

5 May 2022



Reporter: Richard Lambert, Photos by Gemma Jarman

Report source: eefconline.co.uk

With our aspirations of the title mathematically disappearing on Saturday, our hopes of a home playoff match took a massive knock with a 2-1 home defeat against Dorking Wanderers Reserves who became the second club to record a

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“double” over us in the process. Results elsewhere meant that we dropped back below our opponents, but more significantly in terms of playoffs we also slipped behind Seaford Town and even a win at Mile Oak on Saturday will not guarantee us a home match in the post-season lottery, with a trip to Seaford now looking the most likely outcome.

Worse still, this great club I have supported loyally for forty years and which used to be such an inclusive and friendly, family community outfit, but nowadays only pays lip service to those attributes, showed a complete and utter lack of class in refusing to hold a minute’s silence for former Scottish Amateur International player Gerry O’Rourke, who made 43 appearances for us in 1976/77, scoring twelve goals, and had passed away eight days previously. No reason was provided for the refusal and in my time here nobody has ever knowingly been denied a minute’s silence, be it player, official or long-term supporter.

Following our win at Arundel on Saturday both Tommy Smith and Athan Smith-Joseph were unable to go in this match and this was unfortunate as I’m certain that both would have made a difference in this encounter. The visitors opened up by putting a decent chance wide in the opening minutes while Mike Hill struck at goal from distance but without troubling Barnett in the visitor’s goal. Then we had the further misfortune as Manager Jamie Byatt limped off, clearly frustrated and annoyed in the 20th minute.

We had shaded possession to this point, but without providing much of a real threat. Ricardo Fernandes did well on the right-wing to deliver a ball across goal but there was no one there except for Hill at the back post, and his delivery back in was then miscued by Fernandes as he tried a spectacular volley.

We went behind in the 34th minute when George Membrillera received the ball about ten yards out and turned his defender far too easily, rolling the ball back across Sheikh Ceesay for the opening goal. Things became worse when Nabeel Ghannam struck at goal from at least twenty yards out just before half time and the ball sailed over Ceesay’s head and into the net for a second goal, although our keeper redeemed himself with a good save from Conan Torpey who had broken through on goal moments later. Unfortunately, almost the final act of the first half was the departure of Hill into the dressing room as he was struggling with his breathing after putting in two tremendous shifts for us in the last week. His reappearance for the playoff matches will be absolutely crucial to our hopes.

With no Byatt and no Hill, it was always going to be an uphill shift for our boys in the second half, but they made a decent fist of it. Daryl Spiers came on for his debut after joining from Horley Town in relief of Tre Towers and we nearly pulled one back through another sub, Tyreke Leslie after a corner reached him at the far post, but his shot was blocked by Barnett’s legs. Minutes later Luke Miller struck at goal, only for the ball to strike Kofi Quartey and deflect just wide of the post. It could have gone anywhere!

Josh Uzun was next to the show, and he reached a ball ahead of Barnett, but the keeper stood his ground and he had to pass back out and the danger was cleared. The visitors were being pushed further back though, with Quartey causing his defender a lot of problems and Miller attacking from the left and in the 66th minute, his run was ended abruptly by a defender in the penalty area. However, Uzun’s spot-kick was a really poor one by his standards, straight at the keeper and without any real power and Barnett was actually down to save before the ball got there. This was probably why he was unable to hold on to it, but we were unable to get the loose ball in and the danger was cleared again.

Next to try was Fernandes after Quartey was brought down, but his free-kick from twenty yards just dipped over the bar, clipping the netting on its way down. Then Miller struck at goal, but it was just going wide before Leslie got ahead to the ball, but couldn’t get it on target despite being only a few yards out.

The visitors were picking up yellow cards on a regular basis, three of them for delaying restarts, or in Nathan Hawkins’ case, simply throwing the ball away over the fence! We were piling on the pressure and Spiers sent a header wide from a deep Louis Chin free-kick before Spiers found Quartey in a good position, only for our man to lob the ball well over the bar.

We finally opened our account in the 89th minute when a deep Spiers ball in was flicked on to Quartey at the far post and his volley sent the ball back across goal and in off the far post. There was still time to save a point, but when the ball fell to Leslie at the far post with the keeper committed, he missed the target from close range! We kept pushing and Miller sent another dangerous ball in left-footed, only for Quartey to miss the ball which was then cleared.

By the end of a frustrating ninety minutes, it is fair to say that we definitely deserved something from this match, but when you look at the league table, you will see that a point makes no real difference to our situation. We needed all three and we failed to get them and will now almost certainly have to travel larger distances if we are to gain promotion now. It isn’t beyond us, assuming we can get some of our injured players back and the good news for us is that we don’t have to meet our local Dorking rivals again this season. It was about the only bit of good news though.

Epsom & Ewell: Sheikh Ceesay, Louis Chin, Jerry Antwi, Brad Peters (c), Steve Springett, Tre Towers, Luke Miller, Mike Hill, Jamie Byatt, Josh Uzun, Ricardo Fernandes

Subs: Tyreke Leslie for Byatt (20) Kofi Quartey for Hill (45), Daryl Spiers for Towers (49)

Match Report: Arundel 1-4 Epsom & Ewell, Southern Combination League – Division One

5 May 2022

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Reporter: Richard Lambert, Photos by Gemma Jarman

Report source: eefconline.co.uk

Back in 1979 we made our first ever visit to Mill Road for a competitive fixture, winning an FA Cup tie by a goal to nil. We then visited in 2012 for another FA Cup tie winning 2-1, so Saturday's 4-1 win completed a winning hat trick for our boys and the result was never really in doubt as we took control of the match early and kept our hosts at arm's length for the remainder of the match. There were many similarities between this win and Wednesday's defeat of Hailsham Town as we dominated much of the proceedings and probably should have scored more, particularly in the first half when we took the lead after just 85 seconds but didn't add to the tally until the second half. That goal was a personal triumph for Ricardo Fernandes who completed some fine interplay with Mike Hill – or should that be "Air Force Mike" – to slip the ball past a defender and then stab the ball home at the near post to register his first goal for the club. Further chances followed as a Tyreke Leslie shot was deflected just wide and from the following corner, Brad Peters met the delivery with a decent volley, only for it to go straight at Pa Susso in the Arundel goal.

The remainder of the first half was played mostly in Arundel's half of the field, but without really penetrating too often. Athan Smith-Joseph received a superb crossfield ball from Hill and then cut in onto his preferred right foot, but his shot was also deflected over the bar before Peters sent another volley just over from another corner. At halftime, you felt we were well in control, but until that second goal came, we couldn't relax completely. Well, that second goal came just two and a half minutes after the restart and with Hill pulling the strings again he found Smith-Joseph who turned and struck at goal from an angle. The ball took a faint deflection off a defender towards the goal and the ball then went in off the far post from 12 yards. Was it an own goal? Arguably, but the deflection was so faint I don't believe it would be fair to credit it elsewhere. Luke Miller entered the fray after Leslie received a knock and Josh Uzun also came on soon after for Tre Towers. It has to be said that our bench looked extremely strong this day and whilst Gideon Acheampong and Jamie Byatt were probably not going to take the field in this match, except in emergencies, the five players we had there probably represented the strongest bench we have seen since our 2018 relegation.

Unfortunately, and after looking in complete control we gifted the hosts a goal back after a defensive miscommunication which allowed Ollie Hawkins the chance to roll the ball into the net in the 56th minute. This was our first goal conceded for 416 minutes; our best run since 1988. Steve Springett came on for Tommy Smith on the hour as Byatt rotated and rested, obviously well aware of our upcoming run of matches, and the new man nearly made an instant impact as his volley from Hill's corner was deflected wide for another one. When it came in after some interplay out on the wing, Kofi Quartey was unable to direct his header on target, and would probably have been relieved to see the Assistant's flag go up for offside. We were finishing stronger though and hit the bar twice in quick succession, firstly after Miller met a Smith-Joseph cross with a header and then just three minutes later when Fernandes struck it from twenty yards. However, at 2-1 we were still vulnerable and Sheikh Ceesay was out bravely to make a fine save as the Arundel striker ran in on goal, requiring a bit of treatment before being able to continue. It still seemed a matter of when, not if the third goal would come, but we left it late after Uzun's pass left Smith-Joseph through and he beat his man before scoring his second of the day with a thumping strike from about ten yards in the 89th minute. Seven minutes later we made it 4-1 as Hill robbed a defender thirty yards out and ran in before slotting the ball past Susso from close range.

The 4-1 win was probably about fair, even if two of the goals came late, much as they had at Leatherhead when Arundel pulled back a pair in the closing stages of our 6-2 win. Arundel is a lovely place to play football and it is very sad to see their current plight. Despite finishing in the bottom three places this season, I'm confident they will remain at Step Six for 2022/23, but will we be making the journey here again next season?

Right now, our win has pushed us back up to third place ahead of Dorking Wanderers Reserves who visit us on Monday, and two wins will guarantee our first top-three finish since 2014. Additionally, Midhurst & Easebourne's loss to Shoreham means that they will have to win their final two games to be certain of finishing above us, should we win those two matches. A second-place finish would be our first since 1984. Results this afternoon have now guaranteed us, Shoreham and Seaford Town a playoff position, probably alongside Midhurst with Roffey taking the title. It's a pity that we haven't quite been able to do enough to win the title this season, although as things stand, we are in good form and I believe our players aren't scared by whoever and wherever they have to play. Home advantage in those playoffs would still be nice though.

Epsom & Ewell: Sheikh Ceesay, Louis Chin, Jerry Antwi, Brad Peters (c), Tommy Smith, Tre Towers, Athan Smith-Joseph, Ricardo Fernandes, Kofi Quartey, Mike Hill, Tyreke Leslie

Subs: Luke Miller for Leslie (53) Josh Uzun for Towers (54), Steve Springett for Smith (60)

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Hailsham Town 0-3 Epsom & Ewell, Southern Combination League Divison One Cup Semi-Final

5 May 2022



Report Source: www.eefconline.co.uk

Reporter: Richard Lambert, Photos by Gemma Jarman

Salts cruise into Cup Final

In my forty years as a supporter, this was the seventeenth Semi-Final I have witnessed. Some have been tense, nail-biting and really nervy, but our complete control of this match ensured a completely drama-free evening for our boys as we eased past the Hailsham Town challenge and won by three goals to nil to enter the Division One Cup Final, where we will meet Midhurst & Easebourne.

After an eighteen daybreak, it was to be hoped that many of our injured players would have had time to heal and it was good to see Jamie Byatt able to return to the field of play after a few months of struggling with an injury and he was joined by Steve Springett who had limped out of the Roffey match and started in place of the late-running Tommy Smith who would join later from the bench. However, Gideon Acheampong and Kane Charles were not yet ready to go and Mo Cisse and Josh Uzun were also absent.

Still, we had plenty of talent on the pitch and started well, controlling proceedings in the early stages and took the lead in the tenth minute. Tyreke Leslie had already found himself in dangerous positions but had been unable to convert. However, in the tenth minute, a ball into the left-hand channel from Luke Miller was struck across goal left-footed by Leslie and into the far corner to open the scoring.

Brad Peters headed a free-kick just over the bar before we had our only real scare of the night in the fifteenth minute when a Hailsham defender fell to the ground while battling with Jerry Antwi. The appeal for a penalty was made by quite a few opposition players, but the referee was not interested and the game progressed. Little did Hailsham realise that this would be about as close as they would get all night.

Next to strike at goal was Miller, only to see his low drive palmed away by Jack Lovick and we had another couple of efforts from Miller and Byatt flying wide before the halftime break.

In truth, we had eased off a bit towards the half, although words were had in the dressing room and the players came out in a more determined mood, and as with the first half, we scored ten minutes in when a clever low ball in from the left by Mike Hill was met by Byatt who showed he had lost none of his poacher’s instinct to dispatch the ball past Lovick from close range for our second goal.

Athan Smith-Joseph then took Byatt’s place after an hour and the attacks continued with Hill pulling the strings in midfield again. His strike on goal from twenty yards was turned wide by Lovick as we searched for a third goal. At the other end, Sheikh Ceesay had to venture to the edge of his box to head away a through ball, but he had very little to do on the night and we were soon back on the attack with Leslie flicking a header onto Hill who was just wide with another twenty yarder.

Hailsham couldn’t deal with Hill at all and Harrison Burley picked up a yellow card after dragging him to the floor. Although the opponents struck at goal in the 80th minute, it was well wide and high of the mark and we sealed the match with a third goal in the 81st minute when a ball towards the edge of the box left Lovick and a defender in two minds about whose job it was to clear the danger and Leslie nipped in between them to knock the ball into an empty net. Or so I thought, as before he did this, he chose to hold the ball up first as a defender tried to block on the line before then stroking the ball in from close range.

For those who like a stat, this was our fourth clean sheet in a row and the last time we achieved this was back in 1988 when our keeper was Jason Hopper! Bearing in mind that most of the plaudits this season have been directed at our league-leading scorers, this is quite an achievement. In reality, this was one of the most comfortable matches we have had in a while, and as we reach the business end of the season it is good to report that on this form we look capable of securing the points we need to ensure us of at least a third-place finish and a great chance of success in the playoffs. And now we have a Cup Final to look forward to as well.

Epsom & Ewell: Sheikh Ceesay, Louis Chin, Jerry Antwi, Brad Peters (c), Steve Springett, Tre Towers, Luke Miller, Ricardo Fernandes, Jamie Byatt, Mike Hill, Tyreke Leslie

Subs: Athan Smith-Joseph for Byatt (60), Tommy Smith for Springett (70), Dale Hanson-Byatt for Miller (86)

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Match Report: Epsom & Ewell 4-0 Selsey, Southern Combination League – Division One

5 May 2022



Report Source: www.eefconline.co.uk

Reporter: Richard Lambert, Photos by Gemma Jarman

Epsom & Ewell: Sheikh Ceesay, Louis Chin, Jerry Antwi, Brad Peters (c), Tommy Smith, Mo Cisse, Luke Miller, Tre Towers, Kofi Quartey, Mike Hill, Athan Smith-Joseph

Subs: Josh Uzun for Cisse (HT), Tyreke Leslie for Smith-Joseph (52), Archie De Bono for Towers (67)

A few days ago we drew 0-0 with leaders Roffey, replicating the score from earlier in the season and on Saturday we did it again, only this time it was a 4-0 win that was repeated, as a dispirited and short handed Selsey side held their own for twenty minutes before being swept aside by a blue tide for the remainder of the match. It's also worth noting that this was our third clean sheet in a row, which is the first time we have achieved this all season. This was an extremely dominant performance, and the only criticism that could be levelled at our team was our failure to be more clinical in front of goal, as we could and probably should have scored many more. Indeed, visiting keeper Sid Davies admitted to me at the end that we could have had ten. The win moves us back up into second place for now and was achieved without some players who had featured against Roffey four days previously; Gideon Acheampong was out with a knee injury, while Steve Springett was also unsurprisingly out after limping off near the end of that previous match as was Ricardo Fernandes.

However, Mike Hill was ready to go in midfield and with Athan Smith-Joseph and Luke Miller on the wings again feeding Kofi Quartey, we were always going to create chances. At the back Louis Chin came in for Acheampong, while Sheikh Ceesay retained his place between the posts as Kane Charles continued to rehabilitate with his ankle injury. Selsey named four substitutes on the name board at the ground, but actually only had eleven players present throughout and they weren't the only ones who had trouble getting to the match as one of the Assistants was late arriving, so Chairman Mel Tough's son Jack, a qualified official, ran the line for the opening eighteen minutes!

The match started very quietly. In fact the only item in my notebook was the change of official before we started to gain the upper hand just before the twenty minute mark. A left wing Smith-Joseph cross just grazed the head of a full stretch Quartey before Luke Miller jumped like a salmon against his much taller defender to head a Hill cross just wide. We were ahead in the 25th minute and it was a goal of real simplicity as Miller received a pass on the right and sent in a pinpoint cross for Smith-Joseph to meet with a side footed volley that gave Davies no chance from six yards out. We nearly had a second after a great run down the left from Mo Cisse whose low ball in was just cleared behind by a defender, missing his own posts by a couple of feet. However, we extended our lead in the 32nd minute when Hill sent the ball into the box where Miller flicked it on to Quartey who then struck the ball down into the ground and across Davies into the far corner of the goal from about ten yards away. This was also our 100th goal of the season and we weren't finished yet. We were well on top now and the attacks kept coming. Hill's shot was deflected just over the bar after good work from Tre Towers and Quartey before Hill's corner was met by Brad Peters, who sent his header up but somehow was also the first to reach it as it fell, although his shot was just wide of the post. Hill was directing traffic now, despite playing ninety minutes in trainers, and we had a third goal on the stroke of half time when Miller tried to find Cisse out on the left, only for the ball to deflect and fall kindly into Quartey's path and he showed real composure to wait until Davies had come out before easing the ball over the exposed keeper and into the net from the edge of the six yard box.

At half time this game was over and certainly some supporters thoughts were turning towards whether we could really boost our already impressive goal difference. We made a substitution at the break when Josh Uzun replaced Cisse and went after more goals. Smith-Joseph produced one of his trademark mazy runs but then sliced his shot from the edge of the penalty area, before Hill's free kick delivery fell perfectly for Uzun who somehow managed to steer the ball wide from only six yards out. Then Tyreke Leslie who had just replaced Smith-Joseph got through on goal, but overrun the ball which ended up in the keeper's arms. Not so for Miller though. He received the ball out on the right from Hill in the 56th minute and drilled the ball powerfully back across Davies into the bottom corner from about twelve yards out to make it 4-0. Now if someone had told me we wouldn't score again at that point, I would have been very surprised, yet there were to be no further goals in this match. It wasn't for lack of trying, and Hill's deflected free kick led to a corner that Leslie headed wide at the far post, although a free kick had been awarded against us for an earlier infringement. Then Miller sent a teasing low ball in to the far post, but Leslie chose to hit it right footed and was inches wide from just a few yards out. Finally, our third substitute Archie De Bono made a great run from the right back slot and found Quartey at the near post who set up Leslie, but the shot was straight at Davies this time. Miller sent another shot just over the bar in the closing moments before we nearly had a lucky fifth goal in injury time after Uzun's free kick took a heavy deflection, but the wrong-footed Davies was just able to recover in time to reach the ball before it crossed the line.

This was a tricky banana skin match. Selsey had been in good form coming into this contest, and whilst they were clearly

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not at full strength, this was still a good performance. I believe that three wins from our remaining three League games will prove to be good enough for second place, but if not, it would at least guarantee third and a home play off on Saturday 30th April. That has to be our target now.

Match Report: Epsom & Ewell 0-0 Roffey, Southern Combination League – Division One

5 May 2022



Report Source: eefconline.co.uk

Reporter: Richard Lambert, Photos by Gemma Jarman

Epsom & Ewell: Sheikh Ceesay, Gideon Acheampong, Steve Springett, Brad Peters (c), Tommy Smith, Mo Cisse, Luke Miller, Ricardo Fernandes, Kofi Quartey, Mike Hill, Athan Smith-Joseph

Subs: Josh Uzun for Hill (71), Jerry Antwi for Springett (85)

For a few weeks now we have been relying on other teams to drop points if we were to catch the top two. However, these permutations also required us to beat both of those clubs when they visited, and whilst we defeated Midhurst and Eastbourne ten days previously, we also needed a win against the leaders Roffey and we were unable to achieve this at Fetcham Grove on Tuesday night; being held to a goalless draw, which now ends anything but bizarre mathematical outcomes in our race for the title. It is ironic that we have had just two goalless draws this season and that both have come against Roffey. Both matches followed a similar pattern with our boys starting brightly, but tailing off and by the end, as with the first match, the visitors could argue that they were the stronger side.

It was a rather strange occasion really. Despite hardly any other matches being on in the area, a rather small audience were present to witness this match between two of the best sides in the league and it even appeared as though the opponents had an extra man. No, hold on, somewhere in amongst the visitors' all black kit was the referee, who I'm sure was quite happy on the field watching two teams battle it out as he knew that he wasn't one of the players, but for spectators it made for a confusing spectacle and when players gathered together it became almost impossible from the side-lines to see where he was! I suppose they say that the best referee is one you don't notice, but we couldn't even see him!

Regrettably leading scorer Jamie Byatt remained off the field with his injury and it might have been so different had he played as we had two chances in the early stages that you just know he'd have taken. In just the sixth minute a deep Mike Hill corner was sent back into the danger area by Tommy Smith, only for Brad Peters to get a strike on goal from 12 yards, but the contact wasn't the greatest and the Roffey keeper Hughes was able to get down and claim the ball before it crossed the line. Then three minutes later another ball in from Hill reached Peters again who found Athan Smith-Joseph some four yards out, but Hughes was out quickly to block the shot superbly.

The tempo was extremely high from both teams in these early stages and the visitors fired towards the top corner from a free kick, but Sheikh Ceesay was there in time to keep the ball out. Then Ricardo Fernandes had a try against his former club from a narrow angle but found the side netting, and although a corner was awarded we were unable to get a shot on target.This was a highly competitive encounter though and Roffey's Ross Swaine received a lecture from the referee, before our own Gideon Acheampong and Smith-Joseph were also given the third degree as the referee tried to keep the match card free. Smith-Joseph was particularly fortunate to escape further punishment and there were howls of protest from the opposition when Harry Law then picked up the first yellow card of the match five minutes from the break.

Another yellow card followed early in the second half after a visiting striker went down in the penalty area after Ceesay had come out, but our keeper made no contact and the referee deemed the fall quite rightly to be simulation. However, our attacks were becoming less frequent and when Hill broke through before sending a tame shot straight at Hughes, you began to wonder where we were likely to score from. Kofi Quartey was causing issues for their defenders but was rarely given even a half opportunity to shoot and both Smith-Joseph and Luke Miller were unable to get around their back line from where they usually do so much damage. We then had a scare in the 63rd minute when a low ball across from the left was met at the far post by Callum Jardim only to see his shot headed away off the line by the alert Steve Springett, running across to cover his lines. Two minutes later Josh Neathey made a good run to collect a ball over the top of our defence, but blazed his shot high and wide of the advancing Ceesay. Fernandes struck on target in the 68th minute and although Hughes was a little slow going down he palmed the ball away, but the game was becoming a little more attritional and a niggly scuffle broke out a few minutes later which resulted in another yellow card for the visitors; this time to Tiago Andrade, while shortly afterwards I think it was Peters that picked up our first card for kicking the ball out of the ground just after a free kick had been given against us.

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The match ended with Springett being helped away gingerly with an Achilles injury and as he limped off, being replaced by Jerry Antwi, one of our other substitutes Josh Uzun received the ball from a misdirected Hughes clearance and sent it back with interest, but the effort was a yard wide of the far post and in fairness Hughes appeared to have done enough to get back to cover his goal. The match ended soon after and I think a point was a fair result. I would imagine that the visitors were the happier of the two teams with that point as they emerge from what looked like their toughest remaining match on their schedule unbeaten and still clear at the top, while for us, seven points behind and with only four matches left, we just have to aim to finish as high as we can.

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Overall though, and despite the draw keeping us down in fourth place, I think it was a point gained. One of our players commented that we had played well defensively, and that the visitors hardly had a shot on target. This is true, but at the same time we also created little and whenever our wingers got the ball there appeared to be a sea of Roffey players waiting to block their paths to goal. They were quite possibly the fittest team we have played, and despite the score line not suiting us, I was a little relieved to hear the final whistle at the end as they looked the more likely to break the deadlock. Are Roffey the best team we have played this season? I don’t think they were, and personally would have Seaford Town in front of them, but at the same time our league leading scoring attack has failed to score against Roffey in 180 minutes, so they must be doing something right! For our part, second place is still achievable, but with four league matches left, I think we will need to win all of our remaining four matches to reach that position. Failing that, we will be making a playoff trip to deepest Sussex instead of hosting someone at Fetcham Grove; a more difficult, but not insurmountable path.

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