

Top thrashes bottom

13 February 2023



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

Image courtesy Robin Kennedy

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

Wimbledon kicked off on an afternoon unaffected by the elements and most suitable for 15-man rugby. Sadly Sutton and Epsom could not resist the Circean charms of the modern fad of aerial ping-pong that resulted in conceding the opening score. The Dons pounced on an ineffective clearance and ran the ball back past the grandstand crowd with outside centre Paul Hendry scything through the defence for his first try of a personally very productive afternoon. Ed Morgan effortlessly added the extras for a 7-0 lead. Sadly S&E’s starts have often been more pedestrian than express pace this season and the Cape Town centre added his and Wimbledon’s second try moments later. The hosts won a lineout in their 22 and Ross Parsons exploited the blindside but the ravenous visiting pack stole the ball and released their backs and Paul Hendry made the break to saunter home. Ed Morgan did the necessary and the centre was set for the fastest ever league hat trick against the Black & Whites as the hosts trailed 14-0.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

This result has propelled Wimbledon closer to the Promised Land of Promotion. For Sutton and Epsom, nails and coffins spring to mind but one must never give up

hope and their followers should find solace in the story of Gilbert’s poteroo. Next Saturday they travel to Hampshire to take on Havant who currently lie second in the table.

Sutton & Epsom

Ciaran Mohr, Austin Bell, Sam Hurley, Lawrence Elliott, Ollie Baptiste-Wilson, Freddy Bunting, Ross Parsons, Tom Boaden, Alex Mount, Will Lloyd, George Drye ©, Josh Glanville, George London, Rob Hegarty & James Caddy.
Replacements: (all used) Jack Howes, Chris Farrell & Alex Mawdsley.

Wimbledon

Ally Duddell, Ollie Kitto, Paul Hendry, Jack Reville, Max Lufkin, Ed Morgan, Rhys Morgan, Tom Boot, Jake Farnworth, Sam Gratton, Matt Grobler, Jack Cooke ©, Max Freeman, Connor Pearce & Zane Dillinger.
Replacements: (all used) Bradley Ugodulunwa, Mark Scott & Tim Ridler.

10 man away win a turning point?






13 February 2023



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Poor play spoilt by “Cantonesque” antics

13 February 2023



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

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

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

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

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

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

Nick Wilson sent a powerful shot over the bar after Dyer’s pull back to the edge of the area, but in the 23rd minute the visitors took the lead from a completely innocuous free kick way out on their left flank. The ball in looked like it would reach Zain, but Adil Raman nipped in front and poked the ball past our keeper from eight yards. Whose fault was this? It’s hard to know for certain, but the absence of the commanding presence of Peters was instantly noticed as no one took charge of the situation and we paid for it.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

At a time when our club is about to ask for help from its supporter base with reference to its plans for the Hook Road Arena sporting hub, this club cannot afford to have such a situation hanging over it. Supporters at the game genuinely feared for their safety and I have had a number contacting me to express their disgust and explaining how the matter could have been handled better. Rather oddly I have also seen one occasional supporter has commented along the lines that the club

could do no more at this time than to issue what was a vague and poorly written statement. That is their opinion, but I vehemently disagree with it. The Surrey FA will be watching and waiting for an extremely quick response here as charges will surely follow and our club's reputation needs to be protected. We need to be doing something and should have done this already.

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

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

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

Camberley Bounce Back Against Spirited Sutton

13 February 2023



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

Image courtesy Robin Kennedy

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

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

From another attacking line out the well-oiled machine churned out another try as Dom Sammut powered over. Liam Prescott added the extras for 19-7. If these two scores were functional and efficient the next four were far more thrilling in their execution. As if to prove they were not one trick ponies the next line out ball was spun wide to be to be touched down in the corner by George Owen. Liam Prescott converted from the touchline for 26-7 and the vital bonus point was secured. A clinical finish that was a mere hors d'oeuvres to the sumptuous feast that was to follow. Camberley won a scrum near halfway and went left and Liam Prescott put the runner into space as wonderfully angled running and passes were interchanged to see centre Alex Young score. Liam Prescott bisected the uprights for 33-7. Sutton cause was not aided as they lost Stefan Cooksammy to a dislocated shoulder. The emboldened visitors were in no mood for sympathy and were running the ball from everywhere. A 50-metre burst from their 22 down the left was then recycled and spun to the right as brisk well-timed passes saw try number six. Moments later try number seven was a replica of the previous one for 43-7. The timing of the passes, the pace and the unselfish play were breathtaking as Nick Barry scored and Alex Young collected his second try. The only surprise was that Liam Prescott's conversions had drifted wide. Sutton were dealt another injury blow when winger Kyren Ghumra withdrew injured. The rearranged back division saw Ross Parsons off the bench to 9, Austin Bell retreat to 15 and Lawrence Elliott slot in in the centres. Meanwhile Captain Chris Farrell was press-ganged into the backs. From adversity sprung hope as the half ended with prop Alex Mount crossing the whitewash and Freddy Bunting converting to make the score 43-14 at the break. It had been a half of fabulous rugby but the Rugby Lane crowd must have been a little bit concerned over their interval beverage how their emergency three-quarter unit would cope against the expected second half onslaught.

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

Camberley attempted to reassert their scoreboard superiority but the Rugby Lane team was emboldened by their tries and were now formidable in defence. Ross Parsons and Chris Farrell in quick succession stopped the visitors near the line. S&E withstood a 5-metre catch and drive

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

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

Sutton & Epsom

Lawrence Elliott, Ollie Baptiste-Wilson, Sam Hurley, Stefan Cooksammy, Kyren Ghumra, Freddy Bunting, Austin Bell, Alex Mount, Chris Farrell ©, Will Lloyd, George Drye, Josh Glanville, George London, Rob Hegarty & Tom Brooker.
Replacements: (all used) Joe Reid, Tom French & Ross Parsons.

Camberley

Victor Hardwicke, Max McCarthy, Alex Young, Jaid Wiltshire, George Owen, Liam Prescott, Alistair Walton, Adam Pickett, Michael Clarke, Nicholas Barry, Sam Voight, Dom Sammut, Ed Grosvenor, Chris Bird ©, Alex Hughes.
Replacements: (all used)
George Franzel, Josh Watson & Joseph Wood.

Sutton & Epsom Receive an Oxford Education

13 February 2023



Oxford Harlequins 67 - Sutton & Epsom 20. Saturday 28th January. Our local rugby team travelled to Oxfordshire to play the Oxford Harlequins. In the reverse fixture at Rugby Lane the crowd enjoyed a thrilling game that was in the balance until the final whistle. On that occasion the visiting Harlequins held on to win 22-19. A lot has happened since that afternoon as Sutton & Epsom are now staring relegation in the face whilst their hosts sit comfortably fifth in the table. There were to be no surprises or a much-needed upset for the Black & Whites as the hosts strolled to a 67-20 win.

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

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

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

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

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

The Black & Whites rallied and threw everything at the Harlequins perhaps in the belief that attack was the best form of defence. A quickly taken tap penalty by the returning Caddy and a 5-metre line out created a chance. Drye, Boaden and Hegarty went close before the ball was knocked on in the face of a resolute defence. As the game opened up with both sides eager to run the ball S&E were handicapped by the loss of their quicksilver 10 Jamie Flatley to an ankle injury.

On the hour the hosts replaced Ewan Fox with Oliver Brian. Immediately his half-back partner, scrum half Harry Burn, was crossing the whitewash to give him his first shot at goal. Replacement Brian duly obliged for 48-13.

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

The game ended with Oxford Harlequins ninth and final try. They spun the ball wide and fullback Jonathan Hughes’ arcing run saw him score. Oliver Brian added the conversion to conclude the scoring as the referee signalled the end of the game with the rampant Quins 67-20 victors. The result told the story. Oxford Harlequins were vastly superior on the day. Sutton & Epsom did not help their cause with a combination of weak tackling and errors when close to scoring. The Oxford Harlequins backs had impressed at Rugby Lane without Tom Varndell but with the formidable winger in their ranks they had more than enough firepower to overwhelm S&E. Next Saturday S&E host Camberley in the fixture re-arranged from 10 th December. The visitors will be smarting from a most surprising defeat at Bournemouth that has derailed their title hopes. Way back in September Sutton & Epsom lost at Watchetts Recreation Ground by 43-21. The promotion-chasing visitors will be looking to return to winning ways to keep up the pressure on the leaders, Wimbledon, and the match will kick off at Rugby Lane at 2:30pm.

Sutton & Epsom

Lawrence Elliott, Sam Hurley, Freddy Bunting, Alex Mawdsley, Ollie Baptiste-Wilson, Jamie Flatley, Austin Bell, Tom Boaden, Alex Mount, Will Lloyd, George Drye, Ewan McTaggart, Chris Farrell ©, Rob Hegarty & James Caddy.
Replacements: (all used) Dan Jones, George London & Ross Parsons.

Oxford Harlequins

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

Bassetts hound Sutton & Epsom

13 February 2023



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

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

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

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

RWB opened the second period by kicking a penalty to the hosts’ 5-metre line. Sutton stole the line out but an inadequate clearance was returned with menace only for the alert Kyren Ghumra to secure the loose ball. The Black & Whites were struggling to find any sustained pressure as their

opponents continued to search for a third try. The Wiltshire 10 entered flamboyant mode. First Rhys Floyd chipped over the top and re-gathered the ball in the 22 but was enveloped by the cover. Then a cross-field kick was added to his expanding repertoire. With Wiltshire winger favourite to score a cruel bounce denied the visitors.

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

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

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

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

Sutton & Epsom

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

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

Royal Wootton Bassett

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

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

Fine struggle to keep off league floor

13 February 2023



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

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

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

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

London Welsh did not trail for long. Scrum half Adam Nixon darted down the blindside to release Sion Cowdy whose perfectly timed pass put in Jacob Butler to restore the ODP team’s lead as Dafydd Manley added the extras for 15-10. Another Freddy Bunting penalty reduced Sutton’s deficit to 13-15. But minutes later it

was the hosts who were awarded a penalty but they opted to kick it into the corner for the attacking line out. The pack controlled the ball and ushered captain James Buncle over the line for his first try this campaign. Dafydd Manley failed to add to the scoreboard as the Welsh led 20-13. Sutton and Epsom were still very much in the contest and with the prodigious Bunting adding another penalty with half time rapidly approaching the visitors were trailing 16-20.

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

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

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

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

Sutton and Epsom refused to retire meekly in the gathering gloom as the game entered time added on. Tom Brooker returned to the contest and made an instant impact as the Rugby Lane men went in search of a consolation. After pressure from the tireless pack had drawn the Welsh defences to their posts the ball was spun wide and a long ball floated pass reached Tom Brooker on the wing and he scored in the corner. That was the final score in a thoroughly entertaining contest with London Welsh earning a bonus point for a 42-27 victory. London Welsh scrum half Adam Nixon won the Devil's Bridge Rum Man of the Match and he had been at the heart of the action throughout. London Welsh were worthy winners as they created more chances and secured six tries.

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

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

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

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

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

10 mile Epsom Downs run and photos for charity

13 February 2023



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

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

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

See his website [HERE](#)

Epsom race days confirmed next week

13 February 2023



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

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

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

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

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

The full list of dates is below:

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

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

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

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

Sutton & Epsom RFC Hold On For A Vital Victory

13 February 2023



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

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

In the opening quarter it appeared that the Bunting boot was the only Sutton & Epsom currency as they had enjoyed precious little possession. Then a startling break by Jamie Flatley had the crowd on their feet as they enjoyed S&E’s best passage of play. Five minutes later Number 8 Tom Brooker intercepted a wayward pass on halfway, leaving all the chasers in his wake he strode home to score. Freddy Bunting chipped over the conversion and the Rugby Lane team led 10-5. Despite the scoreboard the men from Chapel Gate were enjoying the majority of the territory and possession. They made light of the slippery conditions and spun the ball wide at every opportunity in an effort to replicate their earlier success. The Sutton & Epsom defence was dogged and organised and the visitors were denied any further opportunity to add to their account in the first period. Indeed it was S&E who extended their lead on the half hour via the good offices of Freddy Bunting who added another penalty for 13-5.

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

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

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

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

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

Next Saturday, with sincere apologies to the rest of Sutton & Epsom’s esteemed opponents, is a red-letter day as the club travels to the famous Old Deer Park to play the prestigious London Welsh. It will be the third time Sutton & Epsom have visited the Exiles and this will be the third location enjoyed but the first time in

120 years that they have had the privilege. In October the two teams fought to a standstill beneath a splendid rainbow and it was honours even with a 15-15 draw that was highly entertaining.

Sutton & Epsom

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

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

Bournemouth

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

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