Fortune Not Favouring The Bold

SUTTON & EPSOM 19 OXFORD HARLEQUINS 22 – Sunday 30th October – With the clocks going back in the morning it was the last of the 3pm kick offs before the seasonal variations and Rugby Lane welcomed another new opponent, Oxford Harlequins. At the end of Round 5 the Oxonians were the league leaders having thumped the previously indomitable top dogs of Maidenhead but a duo of defeats in the last two weeks have left them in fourth place. Meanwhile the Black & Whites have attracted the label of 'Close But No Cigar' with a trio of narrow defeats and a draw leaving them in the drop zone. It appeared to be a question of whether the visitors could get their season back on track or whether the hosts could finally see out a close encounter of the frustrating kind. For the home supporters it was unfortunately the former as the visitors hung on to record a 22-19 victory.

It was selectorial swings and roundabouts for S&E as they welcomed back their influential ten, Gareth O'Brien, and gave a debut to Joe Reid but lost impressive centre Archie Fitzgerald to injury. The visitors initiated proceedings on a sunny and mild autumnal afternoon with S&E favoured by the breeze. From the outset the game was played at a furious pace. James Caddy gathered the kick off and countered with Tom Brooker and George Drye to the fore before a booming clearance from Gareth O'Brien sent the opposition scurrying back deep in their 22. The Quins won the ensuing line out and ran the ball hither and thither before being awarded a scrum 30 metres from the Sutton line. Excellent passing and rapid recycling overcame staunch Sutton defence as Andrew Jarvis touched down in the corner despite the tackle of Michael Davies. Ethan Fox failed with the challenging conversion but Oxford Harlequins led 5-0.

Hardly had the Rugby Lane crowd had time to digest another early and unpalatable offering when lightning struck twice and Andrew Jarvis repeated the dose in the far right corner. A scything line break and slick passing saw full back Jack Antoniou marauding towards the line only to be dragged down 5 short by a tremendous tackle by Freddy Bunting. However, support was on hand and with a superb Ethan Fox touchline conversation the visitors were 12 up in ten pulsating minutes. The tenor of the game was then illustrated by two penalties awarded. Firstly, the Oxonians declined a simple kick in front of the posts and then S&E attempted one from near halfway. Neither side garnered points and at this stage it seemed unlikely that OH would rue the gift of three points. In contrast from the Sutton miss Tom Brooker caught the drop out and returned the ball with interest deep into the 22. The ball went right and prop Will Lloyd, standing in at stand off, supplied an exquisite pass for Tom Boaden to power over. Freddy Bunting added the extras as Sutton trailed 7-12.

The Horspath Sports Ground men responded to the effrontery of the Sutton score and returned to the Black & White 22. The hosts conceded a penalty as a defender lay prone by the ruck, the gentlemanly opponents declined the skulduggery of throwing the ball at him as is the fashion in the elite game and spun it wide. Following a few phases it was brought back for the offside any way. A tap-and-go penalty reaped the reward and from the ruck near the line prop George Primett found the perfect line to receive the pass and score under the posts. Ethan Fox chipped conversion made it 19-7 on the half hour. With the approaching interval Sutton had to stem the tide and make an impact on the scoreboard. A bone-shaking tackle by Ben Tame on the influential 15 Jack Antoniou demonstrated Sutton's defensive resolve. Then in the dying embers of the half O'Brien and Brooker combined to put S&E in prime position. However, the opportunity for a morale-boosting score and a shift in momentum was squandered by a technical infringement at the scrummage. The visitors proceeded to clear and Mr Rodwell blew for half time with Oxford Harlequins 19-7 to the good.

Freddy Bunting got the action underway once more as the former league leaders looked to replicate the start. Sumptuous back play with sublime offloads brought the visitors within touching distance of glory. Yet it was S&E who turned over the ball and won a relieving penalty. Prop Will Lloyd had been replaced by debutant Joe Reid, 36 years young, who was to be influential from the next scrum onwards. Sutton's advantage at the set-piece now became complete dominance. The decimation of Reid's first scrummage was like a shot of adrenalin in the body of the home XV as confidence coursed through their veins. Soon the crowd were on their feet as Ollie Baptiste-Wilson sprinted down the touchline in front of the Memorial Grandstand, passed inside and Freddy Bunting sauntered home only to be denied by the winger's foot being in touch. S&E bulked up their pack as the Brobdingnagian lock Ewan McTaggart replaced Josh Glanville. As more destructive scrummaging followed the referee offered a cautionary word to the Oxfordshire pack but the inevitable yellow emerged at the next set-piece. The numerical advantage soon saw a second Sutton score. Bunting kicked to the corner, Captain Drye caught the throw and the pack remorselessly advanced over the line for Tom Boaden to score his second try. Freddy Bunting converted to trail 12-19.

In stark contrast to the first period the visitors opted to kick at goal from near halfway from a penalty awarded after the restart. Ethan Fox impressively extended the lead to 22-12. S&E made another change as Ross Parsons replaced Austin Bell at 9. But the significant change occurred when Quins' prop George Primett was injured at the next scrum. The referee explained the intricacies of the laws and briefly uncontested scrums were on the menu. The Black & Whites took full advantage as Ollie Baptiste-Wilson replicated his touchline tightrope tap dance on the opposite flank. To the delight of the crowd he dived into the corner. Freddy Bunting converted magnificently from the touchline as OH led by 22-19. Five minutes later amid great concern from both physios

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Tom Brooker was forced to retire having put in a thunderous performance and Josh Glanville returned to the fray.

The closing stages were utterly compelling as the Oxford Harlequins tried to force Sutton & Epsom back into their half whilst their opponents attempted to manufacture one final chance. The status quo was maintained in the arm wrestle for supremacy until deep into time added on. Finally, Sutton had a foothold in enemy territory and advanced towards the 22 only to be halted by foul means rather than fair. The penalty was eminently kickable to those who know the burgeoning reputation of Bunting's boot. The expectant crowd anticipated seeing the kicking tee being ferried onto the paddock but no. The hosts opted to kick for touch and go for the win. The first hurdle was overcome as they caught the throw. The forwards were now a mass of desperate bodies as the Sutton trundled forward in search of glory. Then a shrill blast of the whistle and despair for S&E and delight for OH as the visitors were awarded a final scrum. With Joe Reid off nursing an injured knee this was a far easier challenge and the ball was dutifully kicked off the park. The jubilant visitors, arms aloft, celebrated a very tough 22-19 win.

For Sutton there was much to admire. Through necessity Alex Mount was pressed into service as hooker and revelled in his new role and the line out was markedly improved. The triumvirate of Brooker, Caddy and Drye were outstanding ball-carriers in the pack. The ace up the sleeve was Joe Reid's appearance off the bench who was a wrecking ball in the set scrum. Meanwhile Ollie Baptiste-Wilson enhanced his reputation as a lethal finisher. However, it was a superb team performance against one of the prominent teams in the league. For the visitors it was a joy to watch the almost faultless handling and creativity of their back division with one-handed offloads commonplace. In an era of ever-increasing size it was a delight to see the rather diminutive centre Toby Haines buzzing around taunting the defence like the most annoying of mosquitoes being a constant pest with jinking runs and telling passes.

Following a trio of new league opponents the Black & Whites face familiar opponents in local rivals Wimbledon next Saturday 5th November. For those of you making the annual pilgrimage to Barham Road please note the kick off will be at 2:30pm.

Sutton & Epsom

Mike Davies, Stefan Cooksammy, Freddie Bunting, Jamie See, Ollie Baptiste-Wilson, Gareth O'Brien, Austin Bell, Alex Mount, Tom Boaden, Will Lloyd, George Drye ©, Josh Glanville, Ben Tame, Tom Brooker & James Caddy.

Replacements (all used): Joe Reid, Ewan McTaggart & Ross Parsons.

Oxford Harlequins

Jack Antoniou, Josaia Ratulaveta, Toby Haines, Adam Field, Andrew Jarvis, Ewan Fox, Harry Burn, George Primett, Josh Archer, Joel Hopkins, Harvey Tricker, Alan Purchase ©, Titus Waldock, Callum Fitzpatrick & Ross Toward.

Replacements: Jorn Voegtli, Paco Estaban, Ralph Jones.

The Agony and the Ecstasy

ROYAL WOOTTON BASSETT RFC 31 - SUTTON & EPSOM RFC 29 - 22nd October. This was **Sutton & Epsom**'s first ever match against **Royal Wootton Bassett** RFC. Both clubs were desperately in need of a victory with S&E's solitary victory only just better than their host's winless start to the campaign. In front of a large crowd swelled by Ladies' Day at Ballards Ash, a euphoric home crowd roared on their team to a 31-29 victory in a match of fluctuating fortunes.

Under cloudy skies but spared of any rain Freddy Bunting kicked off the contest for Sutton and Epsom. It has become an unfortunate this season that S&E are slow out of the blocks when on the road. The opening fifteen minutes of this match was sadly no exception. After five minutes not only had RWB lock Josh McCaffertey scored a try from close-range converted by Troy Cusack but also they had been reduced to 14 with a yellow card issued to Number 8 Tom Brooker. In addition prop Alex Mount had departed injured to be replaced by Will Lloyd.

Inspired by the early score the Wiltshire All Blacks pressed hard to make the most of their numerical advantage. The Black & Whites defence was rather too porous as first Number 8 Kyle Lovell and then winger Jone Waqadanidrola made significant breaks. The first Sutton & Epsom attack ended with Kyren Ghumra departing with a torn hamstring and Stefan Cooksammy entering the fray. Approaching the quarter hour mark the hosts won a 5-metre line out and this time the ball was spun wide and full back Sam Williams ran a superb line to scythe through the defence and score under the posts. Troy Cusack made it 14-0 in as many minutes.

S&E finally awoke from their slumber and began to claw back the deficit. The reliable boot of Freddy Bunting immediately got them on the scoreboard with a perfectly struck penalty for 14-3. It was RWB's turn to concede a penalty and be punished with the

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familiar 5-metre line out resulting. The scrappy S&E line out fortunately ended with a knock on providing Sutton with a scrum. A slick set move resulted in Ollie Baptiste-Wilson taking the aerial route to score in the corner. Freddy Bunting converted from the touchline to make it 10-14. Five minutes later the ugby Lane kicker bisected the uprights for another penalty success to reduce the gap to a solitary point, 13-14.

The Malmesbury Road men were starting an unfortunate trend of conceding penalties at the breakdown, a first half trickle that was to turn into a torrent in the second period. Cheered on by the sizeable crowd the home team rallied and were indebted to a sublime 50/20 kick by Troy Cusack as he rolled the ball into the far right corner. The RWB line out, which was possibly their greatest strength in this contest, provided clean ball and centre Daniel Hale supplied the finish. Troy Cusack added the extras to extend the lead to 21-13. There was time for one more Freddy Bunting penalty attempt but it was blown wide and the half concluded with the hosts enjoying an interval advantage of 21-33. Both camps had plenty to reflect upon in a contest that was for from over.

The weather held and Royal Wootton Bassett restarted the game defending their 8-point advantage. From the outset they were on the back foot. It was their turn to be defending a 5-metre line out after a penalty and moments later to be reduced to 14 men. The referee was exceedingly consistent in his punishments. The difference was that unlike the Wiltshire line out which was very secure the Sutton version was totally unreliable. Ten minutes of pressure and numerous opportunities in the left hand corner were squandered.

Finally, tactics turned to Bunting's boot and another three points were added for 16-21. The S&E cause was being aided by an outbreak of penalties that had reached epidemic proportions that was infecting the Ballards Ash XV. After a quarter of an hour in the second period after carries from Boaden and Harwood the backs took over. Archie FitzGerald muscled over the gainline, the ball was recycled and Ollie Baptiste-Wilson finished with aplomb. Though the conversion from the flank failed it was all square 21-21 as the game entered the final quarter.

The one-way traffic was halted when RWB on their next visit to S&E territory won a penalty just outside the 22 adjacent to the posts. Effortlessly Troy Cusack regained the lead with the hosts 24-21 to the good. A minute later the visitors scored their best try as Ollie Baptiste-Wilson completed his hat trick. Tom Brooker burst down the blindside from halfway, sold one dummy and then passed to the speeding winger who did the rest.

Despite the errant conversion Sutton and Epsom led by 26-24. From the restart Tom Brooker took the catch but fell heavily and was forced to leave the pitch. The Black & Whites continued to press hard to extend their lead and with the frequency of penalties conceded by the hosts it was unsurprising when an opportunity within Freddy Bunting's range arrived. Once more the Rugby Lane kicker's aim was true and the visitors led 29-24 with five minutes left on the clock.

Indiscipline now hit the Surrey team's ranks. Ominously the ball was kicked into the corner from a penalty. Valiant defence was matched by infringements resulting from sustained pressure. Finally, the ball went wide and the space was exploited as the Wiltshire All Blacks' hooker Scott Parry touched down for their fourth try and a bonus point. Troy Cusack was the man of the moment and put the Malmesbury Road team ahead 31-29 with the conversion. Sutton moved ever onward into the host's half. Archie FitzGerald burst into the 22, was tackled and the whistle blew but it was a penalty to the home team against the centre for rolling on the deck. With great relief the ball was kicked to touch, the whistle blew and the celebrations began for Royal Wootton Bassett.

It was a demoralising day for the Black & Whites as, once again, they failed to overcome the significant handicap of a dreadful start. With defeats by 4, 3 and 2 points and a draw in their first seven matches it is a serious case of 'what might have been' as they now join their hosts in the relegation zone. The lethal Ollie Baptiste-Wilson had the unusual feat of scoring a league hat trick for S&E but still ending up on the losing side. For RWB their line out was excellent, the kicking of Troy Cusack superb and the running of Man of the Match Daniel Hale was enough to engineer their first win of the campaign.

Once again Sutton will be breaking new ground in terms of league opposition when they host Oxford Harlequins next Saturday 29 th October. It will be last of the 3pm kick offs at Rugby Lane before switching to the seasonal variations. After reaching the giddy heights of topping the table consecutive defeats to title rivals Wimbledon and Havant has seen the Quins drop to fourth in the league but they will still provide stiff opposition for the Black & Whites.

Sutton & Epsom

Austin Bell, Kyren Ghumra, Archie FitzGerald, Freddie Bunting, Ollie Baptiste-Wilson, Jamie See, Owen Clemett, Alex Mount, Chris Farrell ©, Tom Boaden, Matt Harwood, Josh Glanville, Ben Tame, Rob Hegarty & Tom Brooker.

Replacements: Will Lloyd, George London & Stefan Cooksammy.

Royal Wootton Bassett

Sam Williams, Mark Trowbridge, Daniel Hale, Connor Tomley, Jone Waqadanidrola, Troy Cusack, Rhys Higginson, Harry Daynes, Scott Parry, Jake O'Neill, Epi Druavesi, Joshua McCafferty, Jack Daynes, Gavin Ougan & Kyle Lovell.
Replacements:
Phillip Bardwell, Oliver Craig Baycroft & Iwan Floyd.

Anyone for tennis and computers?

Pupils at Shawley Community Primary Academy **Epsom Downs** will put their racket skills to the test this half-term and take part in an exciting afternoon of tennis coaching and computer-based learning activities, with education charity, **Rackets Cubed**.

The unique initiative combines racket sports with science, technology, engineering and maths (STEM) lessons at the local Sutton Sports Village, rounded off with a well-deserved and nutritious hot meal for the budding athletes and computer whizzes.

Supporting all children to be healthy, happy and ambitious learners is at the heart of Shawley Primary Academy's approach. The school has partnered with Rackets Cubed to help widen access into sports and STEM learning for more children in the borough, empowering each pupil to realise their full academic and sporting potential.

The charity aims to improve the lives of children and young people across the UK and raise aspirations through its integrated programme of sport, education and nutrition learning. As part of the enriching afternoon, pupils in years 5 and 6 will be getting served with:

- Racket sports a structured coaching session with a professional sports coach
- STEM activities one hour of fun and engaging computer-based activities delivered alongside the sports coaching, to complement the core school curriculum
- Nutrition A healthy and hearty meal will be provided at the end of the session to help the children re-energise, whilst learning about the importance of nutrition for classroom and sporting achievement

While tennis fans bid farewell to old legends such as Serena Williams and Roger Federer this year, the future is looking bright with newcomers such as Naomi Osaka and Emma Raducanu. This makes it a perfect time to introduce more local children to the sport and nurture the next generation of diverse tennis talent.

By providing pupils with the opportunity to try extracurricular opportunities that otherwise might not be easily accessible, Shawley and Rackets Cubed are working to help children dream bigger, develop their skills and discover new passions.

Sports Lead at Shawley Community Primary Academy, said:

"We are very excited here at Shawley to begin this partnership with Rackets Cubed and help break down barriers to sports and STEM learning. The positive growth and self-fulfilment of our pupils is central to what we do, so being able to align ourselves with a charity that is also driven by these aims was incredibly important to us. Sports can create an infinite number of opportunities and benefits when it's regularly engaged in, so it wonderful to work with Rackets Cubed and help our pupils access professional coaching and training, which all contributes to their wider success."

For more information about Shawley Community Academy, please visit: https://www.shawleyprimaryacademy.co.uk/

Ducks in a Row put Epsom 4 points on top

Forest Row 0-2 Epsom & Ewell Southern Combination League - Division One Tuesday 18th October 2022

Five weeks ago we visited Forest Row and were heading for a goalless draw in a tame contest before the match was abandoned for a nasty injury to Andy "Woody" Hall. This time we did at least manage to complete the fixture and although we were well worth the win, the supporters couldn't really relax until a late second goal secured the points, which were then dedicated to Woody by the players after the match.

This third visit to Tinsley Lane this season means that we have now played as many League matches here as we have at



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Leatherhead this season. In fact, this eighth away fixture ensures that we have now completed half of our away schedule already!

We took the field in our red kit which might look nice, but is not our traditional colour and really shouldn't ever be used competitively, and we got off to a worrying start when a free kick was squared for a shot at goal that pinged off our crossbar in just the eighth minute, but were soon on the attack and broke through, albeit in fortuitous circumstances in the 14th minute when Ryan "Butch" Smith tried his luck from 25 yards and although the ball took a slight deflection off a defender, Ben Abbott, the Forest Row keeper will have been disappointed as he let the ball slip under him and into the net.

Josh Alder then broke through on goal and poked the ball wide of Abbott who brought our man down, earning a yellow card in the process, but he redeemed himself by saving Smith's penalty in the 19th minute. Then Jaevon Dyer, back again after being indisposed at Montpelier Villa on Saturday, had a good run and shot at goal but Abbott saved comfortably. He was followed by Gideon Acheampong, maybe remembering his left footed strike when he scored at Oakwood in August, and decided to have another go from distance, but this one sailed over the bar.

We had to make an early substitution when Alder was tackled and damaged his leg in the process and Athan Smith-Joseph came on in his place. Smith-Joseph had originally been named in the starting eleven ahead of Alder, before the line-up was switched just before kick off, and the new man's contribution was almost immediate as his ball in from the left was poked into the net ahead of Abbott by Dyer, only for the offside flag to be raised against him.

Brad Peters picked up a yellow card for a foul out wide, but from our next attack Dyer shot from an angle with Abbott doing just enough to divert the ball around the post and from the corner Josh Owen was waiting as the ball was half cleared, and saw his snap shot fly inches wide of the top corner. We nearly got a second in injury time as Smith-Joseph mishit his low left wing cross and it nearly crept in; Abbott keeping the ball out with a desperate lunge with his foot.

The second half opened in a similar fashion to the first half with the home side making a decent opportunity on the right, but the ball in was just in front of the incoming striker. We attacked again and Nick Wilson's shot appeared to hit a hand, but to be fair, the defender it hit was standing in very close proximity and it would have been a very harsh call to give the penalty.

Smith-Joseph was causing a lot of damage on the left wing, but then he was switched with Warren Colman and neither provided quite the same threat. The Row striker sent a decent chance wide of our goal from the edge of the area, but they were restricted to very few efforts on goal and their chances of taking anything from the match reduced substantially after their number 18 saw red for a foul on Athan Smith-Joseph in the 65th minute. It didn't appear to be particularly dangerous from where I was situated, but our players saw it from a different angle, clearly didn't like it and reacted as a group. Maybe this convinced the referee to issue the red card and there was really no way back for the home side from this point. Colman struck over after good interplay with Wilson before Smith's free kick had the power taken out of it by a defensive wall that was no more than six yards away from the ball. We really should ask referees to pace the ten yards out more often.

Eldi Baze came on for Colman and Smith-Joseph reverted over to the left wing. However, the game was starting to get a bit niggly and Dyer made a great run before his shot was blocked for a corner and while on the ground he was stepped on by a defender, which understandably led to a reaction. The referee decided to call both Captains over to tell them to calm down and to be fair this seemed to do the trick. From the subsequent corner, Smith-Joseph saw his goal bound shot blocked on the line by a defender and the danger was cleared.

We were then finally able to clinch the points in the 86th minute. Baze chased a ball on the right and just managed to keep his footing as he rode a challenge. He then cut in from the right before drilling the ball into the net from twelve yards with his left foot; the ball just flicking off both Abbott and a defender on its way in. It was his first goal for our club and one that could prove to be quite crucial in the grand scheme of things. Another substitute Johnny "Sonic" Akoto then made a good run and set up Baze for another shot, but this time a defender got in the way.

In the fourth minute of injury time we had one final chance when a loose defensive pass enabled Smith-Joseph to break through on goal, although he was unlucky to see his low shot cannon back off the post from twelve yards and the danger was cleared.

The final whistle went soon after and we now lead the table by four points and have dropped less points than any other club in the division. However, this match and the one before it have not seen us at our most clinical, bearing in mind that the matches were against the two teams at the foot of the table, and I believe we will need to step things up if we are to claim the points on Saturday when we are visited by Seaford Town. However, if that sounds a little critical, it should also be pointed out that this was our third straight clean sheet, which is a definite defensive improvement from our September results.

Epsom & Ewell: Kane Charles, Gideon Acheampong, Zach Powell, Ryan 'Butch' Smith, Brad Peters (c), Aaron Bogle, Josh Alder, Nick Wilson, Jaevon Dyer, Josh Owen, Warren Colman

Subs: Athan Smith-Joseph for Alder (28), Eldi Baze for Colman (74), Steve Springett for Wilson (88), Johnny "Sonic" Akoto for Dyer (88)

Report Source: www.eefconline.co.uk

Chelsea supports footie expansion next-door

Cobham Football Club will get major upgrades to attract more women into football after councillors gave the green light following support from Premier League giant **Chelsea**. Several other organisations showed support for plans, which include a new spectator stand and new floodlights, saying the club helps support those with disabilities and could help in bringing more women and girls to the game.

Councillors said the football club was an asset to the community in an area where a lot of facilities were privately owned, voting for the changes with only the meeting chair abstaining. A meeting of **Elmbridge Borough Council**'s planning committee approved the application from the club, which was brought to the meeting on Tuesday (October 18) for a decision because the land is owned by the authority.

Support for the new 3G artificial pitch came from **Chelsea FC**, in a letter which highlighted the Premier League club having worked in the area for many years and said it would like "first refusal" on possible future community projects. These were listed as possibly including supporting the growth of women's football and running a development centre for 7- to 15-year-old girls as well as supporting grass roots clubs looking to get girls into competitive football.

Chelsea's Cobham Training Centre is in nearby Stoke d'Abernon and many former players including Frank Lampard, John Terry, Petr Cech, and Eden Hazard have lived in the area.

As well as this there was support for the application from **Surrey FA**, **Surrey Soccer Schools**, **Cobham Lin**k, a day service for adults with learning disabilities and autism, and **Leatherhead Primary Care Network**, representing a group of GP practices in the area.

Councillor **Alistair Mann** (Conservative, Cobham and Downside) said he hoped the committee would get behind the application because the club was there to promote "sport for all, football for all". He said: "The outstanding feature of Cobham Football Club is its community basis. It's there for the community."

Concerns raised around the application included the loss of Cypress trees at the club's eastern edge, to be replaced with holly hedges, as well as the noise impact on neighbours of the facility. Councillor **Laurence Wells** (Liberal Democrat, Cobham and Downside) said the installation of an artificial pitch would mean more playing time available, important in making sure sport was accessible to all and particularly in an area with a lot of private facilities. He said he thought conditions on the application regarding light and noise would deal with issues as best as they could but added: "Whether a noise management plan can effectively deal with swearing at 10 o'clock at night, we will wait and see but I think it's covered off as best as possible." He called for the pitch to be recycled at the end of its ten-year lifespan, saying it was equivalent to 1.5million plastic bags. ENDS

Joust in Lancing drawn

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Report Source: www.eefconline.co.uk

Epsom's Rugby Lane draws a crowd

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





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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Sutton & Epsom

Robbie Martey, Kyren Ghumra, Archie Fitzgerald, Freddie Bunting, Ollie Baptiste-Wilson, Jamie See, Ross Parsons, Alex Mount, James Craig, Tom Boaden, Matt Harwood, George Drye ©, Tom Brooker, Rob Hegarty, James Caddy. Replacements: Will Lloyd & Chris Farrell. Austin Bell (not used)

London Welsh

Dylan Casella, Elliot Hopkin, Tololima Savaiinaea, Dafydd Manley, Jonathan Ilori, Osian McAvoy, Hywel Williams, Andrew Black, Jack Burnett, James Buncle, James Downing, Charlie Bramble, Ben Davies, Rhydian George & Tom Williams. Replacements

Max Brewer, Rohan Pixley & Adam Nixon.

Epsom and Ewell FC Top the Table

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

It was back to League action on Saturday following our midweek League Cup defeat, as Hailsham Town made the visit to Fetcham Grove for what was only our third home league match of the season and were defeated 2-0. Just like the two previous encounters at the Grove, the match was fairly comfortable for much of the time and extended our perfect league record there for

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Report Source: www.eefconline.co.uk

Epsom and Ewell pressed-on to Victory

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

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

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

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

Southern Combination Football League

On a sunny day with a little shower now and then, we kicked off heading towards the remaining trees at the clubhouse end. When I had visited on a ground hop back in 2001 I thought there were more trees, but a club official pointed out that many had to be removed during the summer, which left the ground a lot more open to the sunlight, but lacking a little in character as a result. I hope they are able to replace them.

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

Sutton and Epsom Rugby Just Fall Short

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

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

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

https://www.englandrugby.com/home

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

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

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

The question on the lips of the crowd was whether a 20-point cushion was enough to counter the wind in the second period. Obviously the Black & Whites needed an improvement in quality and an early score. Having hardly made a mistake in the first half Bournemouth knocked on Ross Parsons clearance kick on halfway. An emboldened S&E spun the ball out to Kyren Ghumra who punished a weak tackle and ran in to score from

distance. Freddy Bunting added the conversion and Sutton grasped the lifeline to now trail 12-25 and were back in the contest. The Lions looked for an immediate reply but the Sutton defence held firm before a penalty enabled them to clear. From a perfect catch and drive George Drye secured the ball and the pack marched to the line and Alex Mount added the finishing touches. Freddy Bunting did the necessary for 19-25 and the match was now very much in the balance with 25 minutes still to play.

The Surrey men were playing with confidence and in their next sortie Owen Clemett broke into the 22 but the scrambling home



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

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

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

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

Rugby Lane and it might be wise to arrive in good time as a sizeable crowd is anticipated.

Sutton & Epsom

Ciaran Mohr, Robbie Martey, Archie Fitzgerald, Freddy Bunting, Kyren Ghumra, Owen Clemett, Ross Parsons, Tom Boaden, James Craig, Will Lloyd, Matt Harwood, Josh Glanville, Dan Jones, Rob Hegarty, George Drye ©.

Replacements: (all used)

Alex Mount, Luke Halford & Sam Hurley

Bournemouth

Antony Fitch, Jordie Wayman, Brad Law, Grant Hancox, Josh Wickens, Mike Pope, Harry Warr, Tom Napier, Conrad Carkreet, Alan Manning ©, Matt Warwick, Joe Desmond, Ben Kimber, Ciaran Smyth, Jake Guildford.

Replacements

Luca Firetto, Connor McCaffery & Jack Young.