

Caught hook, line and sinker

28 December 2022



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

Oh no! Not Chessington again! Historically, we have a superior won lost record against our opponents, yet this defeat was our sixth at home in the last eight encounters dating back to our days at Merstham. Indeed the last fifteen matches between these two clubs have produced just ONE home win between them, which I suppose bodes well for our return fixture at Chalky Lane in April! Seriously though, most of our home defeats against them have followed a similar pattern that we seem to struggle with, regardless of our playing personnel or Management; that of a team defending solidly as a unit at the back, working energetically to deny space and pinching their chances when they came.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Report Source: www.eefconline.co.uk

Lost in the fog

28 December 2022



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Report Source: www.eefconline.co.uk

Tennis at 95 is the norm.

28 December 2022



Epsom's own **Norman Healey** celebrates his 95th birthday on December 11th . He is a member of The **Epsom Lawn Tennis Club** where he is admired and respected. His serve is hard to return and some of his forehand shots on the back corner of the court are nearly impossible to retrieve – worst of all is his volley at

the net! He is a role model for many of us members in the club – his sense of fun and sportsmanship is inspirational. He is a ‘midweek’ player and he plays regularly in a Thursday ‘boys group’ of other members. In the past Norman has been the Chairman of the club having joined the Club in the late 1970’s. He was proud to have been the winner of the Men’s doubles in the 1980’s. The club is extremely honoured to have amongst its members such a celebrated and star quality player.

Kinsella Hat trick The Highlight

28 December 2022



Sutton & Epsom RFC Women 39 – Medway Women 7 – Saturday 3rd December – The Sutton & Epsom Women’s XV have enjoyed much success in recent years. The impressive performances have continued this season in Championship South East 2 in the third tier of the rugby pyramid. They started the day in second place in the table snapping at the heels of Battersea Ironsides. The Black & Whites were unbeaten at home whilst their opponents, Medway, in contrast had only recorded two wins this season. The match went according to form with Sutton winning in style by 39-7.

On a cold afternoon under lights at Rugby Lane Medway kicked off with S&E playing towards the Cabbage Page. The hosts went in search of the opening score to stamp their authority on proceedings. Stern defence and S&E errors thwarted the early promising opportunities. After 10 minutes a huge clearance by Jayne Meadows was complimented by a superb kick-chase. Sutton turned over the ball and Jayne Meadows glided threw a gap and sauntered home to open the scoring. Though the experienced fly half failed to convert her own try the hosts were leading 5-0. The next try was a sensational solo score by Aegean Leech that demonstrated all the qualities required for a top class back. With great vision she cut back inside, running with balance and speed she evaded numerous tacklers to score. Jayne Meadows added the extras for a 12-0 lead.

As the first quarter was ending Jayne Meadows sublime cross-field kick had the defence scrambling and the ravenous Sutton chasers forced the turnover. The initial opportunity was wasted but this was just a temporary stay of execution. A burst from Jo Evans broke the line and Rachel Kinsella, left with plenty to do, finished superbly in the corner despite a thunderous covering tackle. The touchline conversion fell short as the Surrey women stretched their lead to 17-0. The visitors stormed back with a surging run from full back Katie Young. Encouraged by this the forwards took over and pressed hard to open the Medway account. Prop Hannah Lee powered her way over from close-range for a well-deserved try. Jemma Thrupp’s sweetly struck conversion bisected the uprights to reduce the deficit to 7-17.

As the interval approached winger Lucy Hoad was only denied a try by a fine cover tackle. The ball was swung back to the opposite side of the pitch and Jo Evans perfect pass put away by Rachel Kinsella for her second try of the afternoon. Jo Evans, taking over the kicking duties, failed to add to the 22-7 score. However, Sutton had suffered a significant loss in personnel as Jayne Meadows was forced to retire with a hamstring injury. The fly half had oozed class all game, orchestrating the attack with prodigious territorial kicking, thoughtful distribution and the opening try. S&E reshuffled the deck as Jo Evans moved up from 15 to 10 and replacement Abby Wynne slotted in at full back. In the dying moments of the first period Lucy Hoad was again thwarted by a tremendous tackle and soon after the referee blew for half time with Sutton & Epsom leading 22-7.

Medway needed to score early in the second period to try to turn the tide. They responded with great spirit and were soon pressing on the Sutton line. The Black & White defence was up to the challenge and having cleared the danger introduced Emily Grainger and Isabelle Keith off the bench to replace Rachel Balcombe and Natalie McCall. The Priestfields outfit were enjoying their best passage of play as they encamped in the host’s half but try as they might they could not add to their score. Indeed it was the Rugby Lane team that were next to cross the whitewash. A dominant scrummage provided the platform to spin it wide. Rachel Kinsella was denied her third score but was able to offload to Aegean Leech for the easiest of tries. Jo Evans added the conversion for a 29-7 lead.

The game entered the final quarter with the team from Rochester determined to add to their solitary try whilst Sutton hoped to exploit any gaps that might appear. The game swung from end to end as a try-saving tackle Abby Wynne denied a deserved score for the visitors. Moments later Rachel Kinsella was again thwarted by Katie Youngs’ tackle.

Perhaps it was fitting that the best team try of the afternoon concluded with Rachel Kinsella completing her hat trick. A clean line out ball was advanced by the forwards, the ball was released to the backs and a perfect pass by Aegean Leech was gathered by the flying winger who finished with aplomb. Sutton & Epsom missed the conversion but had stretched their lead to 34-7. Perhaps the frustration of being denied the additional score that their efforts warranted led to a bit of frustration in the Medway ranks. The Kent team conceded a penalty and one of their number was deemed too loquacious for the referee’s tastes and they were marched back an additional 10 metres. With five minutes left of the clock the hosts added a seventh and final try. It was the turn of replacement Abby Wynne to demonstrate agile footwork to weave her way to the line to make it 39-7. Though there were no additional scores the visitors showed great spirit in trying to add to their account.

Nobody watching would have begrudged them a try as their second half performance and effort deserved more than they got. The referee blew the final whistle and Sutton & Epsom had maintained the pressure on the Battersea Ironsides who also had an impressive win at Canterbury, 36-15.

The Black & Whites thoroughly deserved their win. It was an excellent performance from all of the squad. The front row triumvirate of Jones, Forsyth and Styan maintained the solid platform from the scrummage. The back five provided a constant stream of quick ball for the back division. Sutton have considerable pace in the three-quarters with Zoe Smith spreading it wide to the creative hub in the centres Olivia Lambe and Aegean Leech. Wingers Rachel Kinsella and Lucy Hoad got the ball with time and space and on this occasion it was the former who took the glory with a tremendous trio of tries. In addition Jo Evans coming into the line from full back is another potent weapon. Medway fought hard to the bitter end and were competitive from the first to the last minute with the pack providing territory and possession but they could not convert pressure into points.

Sutton & Epsom

Jo Evans, Lucy Hoad, Aegean Leech, Olivia Lambe, Rachel Kinsella, Jayne Meadows, Zoe Smith, Tia Jones, Harriet Forsyth, Caroline Styan, Alex Parker, Rachel Balcombe, Alice Clarke, Bernadette Rees & Natalie McCall.

Replacements: (all used) Emily Grainger, Isabelle Keith & Abby Wynne.

Medway

Katie Young, Marisa Gould, Alisha Coulson, Naomi Quinn, Aimee Haslam, Jemma Thrupp, Emily Stalley, Hannah Lee, Zoe Gardiner, Gemma Duncan, Alex Davis, Caroline Jordan, Anna Saunders, Chloe Sedg & Corinna Griffiths.

Replacements

Michelle Darby, Ann Robertson & Ellie Warren.

Sutton and Epsom RFC denied at the death

28 December 2022



BANBURY 12 SUTTON & EPSOM RFC 12 – Saturday 3rd December – saw the start of the reverse fixtures and for both clubs, who are struggling at the bottom of the table, it was a vital encounter. The occasion was shrouded in sadness for Sutton due to the most unexpected and tragic passing of their President during the week. Robert Knight was a magnificent ambassador for the club, an ever-present supporter not only at home but also away and, above all else, a wonderful man and excellent friend to all who knew him. He will be much missed.

The hard fought contest, before a large crowd swelled by the Christmas lunch and the importance of the match, ended honours even, 12-12. S&E gave a debut to Lawrence Elliott at 15 and Brad Meeson had his first outing this campaign since his recent nuptials. On a cold but sunny afternoon on a heavy pitch Jamie See set the game in motion following the minute’s silence. The hosts included in their ranks Soane Tonga’uiha, the 40 year-old former Tongan and Northampton prop, who made a predictable impact in the set scrum. With the Black & White pack shunted into reverse and conceding a penalty the early advantage was with the hosts. Indeed they opened the scoring after 10 minutes with an impressive catch and drive as prop James Leonardi was ushered over the line. Scrum half Ed Phillips missed the conversion but Banbury led 5-0.

Sutton and Epsom’s riposte was immediate as they stormed into the Oxfordshire team’s 22. The ball was spun wide and Angus Findlay passed to Brad Meeson who tried to squeeze in at the corner. The despair was short-lived as the whistle blew and the referee brought it back for an earlier penalty for the visitors. Sadly, Sam Hurley slipped on his approach and the penalty struck the upright. Kyren Ghumra, whose arrival had been hindered by car troubles, was brought onto the wing to replace Angus Findlay. The Black & Whites, with Rob Hegarty and George Drye carrying with great effect, pressed hard to get on the scoreboard.

Another back move concluded with debutant Elliott’s grubber rolling into touch by the try-line flag. Though the Bulls cleared their lines Sutton’s next attack was successful. A line break by George Drye followed by a floated pass found Brad Meeson who scored in the corner. Sam Hurley’s immaculate touchline conversion meant S&E now enjoyed a narrow 7-5 lead. The Bulls went for an immediate response and it came through their sizeable pack and another line out.

As the home crowd urged their pack ever onwards from halfway they were awarded a penalty. The ball went wide and twice Ben Tame’s thunderous tackles stopped the hosts. The half ended with S&E in the ascendancy as Kyren Ghumra was twice close to glory. The first time an inside pass from scrum half Austin Bell was adjudged to be forward as the winger was homing in on a try. The second was the final play of the first period as the ball went down the line the last pass went awry and ended in touch rather than being touched down.

The referee concluded the first half with the visitors enjoying a slender 7-5 advantage. The game continued with an instant reminder of the powerful pack of the hosts. Driving Sutton off their own put in on the S&E’s 22 they unwisely opted for the boot and did not benefit from the advantageous position. In contrast Sutton threw away three points when under the posts and 5 metres from the Banbury line. The Black & Whites were awarded a penalty that was reversed for an off-the-ball infringement after the whistle.

The Bulls came close to rubbing salt into the wound with an interception but the referee called play back denying an almost certain try. As the heavy home pack tired on the claggy surface space began to appear that S&E looked to exploit. The half back combination of Bell and See both enjoyed a couple of stunning breaks. It was from one of scrum half Bell’s bursts that evergreen Sam Hurley broke into the 22. Will Lloyd exploited the blind side and supplied a perfectly timed pass for James Caddy who finished with style with his expertly angled run to the line. Though the conversion drifted wide Sutton led 12-5 with 15 minutes to play.

The visitors pressed for another score to create a cushion that would mean Banbury would need to score twice. Jamie See’s burst with the supporting James Caddy put the Black & Whites in prime position. But all came to nought after winning their scrum ball and a couple of phases from the forwards they lost control of the ball with the line at their mercy. Then the Bulls were given a lifeline with a penalty near halfway. A superb kick spiralled towards the corner but Lady Luck smiled upon the visitors as it crossed the touchline in the in-goal area resulting in a 22 drop out. However, the Oxfordshire men soon had their hands on the ball once more and forced a line out 20 metres from the try-line.

Another perfect catch and controlled drive saw the Bodicote boys roll relentlessly ever onwards. The forwards were stopped on the line but in an instant James Miller was presented with the ball and he supplied the finishing touches. Ed Phillips held his nerve to add the extras to level the score at 12-12 as the game entered time added on.

There was enough time for a few anxious moments but it ended honours even. A result that neither side wanted but one that favoured the hosts as S&E stayed in the bottom two. Banbury enjoyed a significant advantage at the set scrum for a substantial period of the game and their two tries came from formidable forward work with catch and drives.

On reflection one might have expected them to have carved out more opportunities to have added to their account. Despite struggling for a solid platform to attack, Sutton & Epsom created enough chances to have won the game but faltered at the crucial moments. For the visitors the back row trio of Tame, Hegarty and Caddy were superb. Austin Bell had arguably his best game at 9 whilst Jamie See rolled back the years with his breaks from 10 and with a promising debut from Lawrence Elliott there were many positives for S&E if not enough points taken from this encounter.

The action returns to Rugby Lane next Saturday when Sutton & Epsom host Camberley RFC for the first time since September 2012. When the clubs met in September this year at Watchetts Recreation Ground the hosts won 43-21 with Josua Lewan scoring a first half hat trick. The visitors will be keen for a repeat as they are in second place in the table in hot pursuit of leaders Wimbledon. The match kicks off at 2pm.

Sutton & Epsom: Lawrence Elliott, Angus Findlay, Stefan Cooksammy, Brad Meeson, Sam Hurley, Jamie See, Austin Bell, Tom Boaden, Chris Farrell, Will Lloyd, George Drye, Josh Glanville, Ben Tame, Rob Hegarty & James Caddy. Replacements: (all used) George London, Jack Howes & Kyren Ghumra.:

Banbury: Thomas Gray, Alex Garbett, Quinten Blythe, Matt Goode, Jack Anderson, James Miller, Ed Phillips, James Leonardi, Ian Isham, Soane Tonga’uiha, Louis Tooth, Jacob Turner, James Hibbert, George Ding, Callum Horne. Replacements: (all used) Peter Boulton, Alex Nicholls and Dan Kirwin.

World Cup injury time knocks Epsom and Ewell out of local cup

28 December 2022



Dorking Wanderers B 2-1 Epsom & Ewell FC – Southern Combination League Division One Cup – Second Round – Saturday 3rd December 2022.

A controversial 97th minute winner from Ben Aubrey secured passage through to the Quarter-Final of the Division One Cup for Dorking Wanderers B and denied our boys the chance to repeat their run to the Final from last season.

I’m not sure what it is about these two teams, but they seem to bring out the worst in each other! Although a neutral might well have enjoyed this match; played at speed, full of commitment, heavy challenges and erratic refereeing, this was a frustrating encounter to witness as an Epsom supporter.

To me, it seemed like these teams always cancel each other out and this contest had very few real chances of note within the ninety minutes before the home side scored a late winner, that numerous sources told me was offside in the build up.

It was clear from the starting line up that our Management had chosen to give a few of our regulars some time off for this cup tie. Before this match three players had taken part in all of our previous twenty matches, yet none of them even took the field for this contest. Both Ryan Smith and Zach Powell missed their first starts of the season, with Powell not even on the bench and Brad Peters also sat this one out with the subs. I had posed the question in my preview as to how

important this match was, and the answer was clear, and understandably so. However, it was important for Camrun Zain who finally made his debut in goal after performing well for us in pre-season. He also became the first player in our club history to have a surname beginning with Z!

That said, there was still enough quality on the field to win this match. Josh Alder started ahead of Jamie Byatt, while Ben Bauchop, Oliver Thompson and Kevin Moreno-Gomez made their first starts for the club and all contributed well. We then got off to a fine start in the tenth minute when Jaevon Dyer's square ball in from the right was well dummied and Alder ran onto it and smashed the ball low past Joshua Wilson from twelve yards, although there was doubt about the goal for a few seconds as an old issue re-appeared.

Back in December 2018 we scored three goals in four matches where the ball had hit the diagonal stanchion supporting the post and bounced back into play. It had never happened before or since. Until now! At first it wasn't clear that the goal had been spotted by the referee or his Assistant, but thankfully common sense prevailed and the goal was given. Seriously though, who designs goals like this!

Anyway, Alder's goal against his former club had us in control and we continued to hold the balance of play as the half progressed. Bauchop's free kick was blocked before Alder went down in the area, only to then pick up a yellow card for simulation, which, judging by the lack of complaint from the players, appeared to be the right decision.

Alder's shot was saved easily enough by Wilson and Bauchop's next free kick was a couple of feet wide of the post. As we approached the half Alder got a toe to Dyer's ball in, but was at full stretch and was unable to direct it on target. In response the home side showed little except for a couple of long range strikes, one of which Zain had to palm away just before the break.

What we really needed in the second half was to retain a bit more control in the middle of the park, but gradually we found ourselves holding less of the possession and Dorking were level in the 55th minute after a harmless enough looking ball was played in to Mark Soares, who then lobbed the advancing Zain who watched the ball drop down and bounce up into the net for the equaliser.

The home side sent a free kick wide but we were soon back on the attack and just after the hour Alder was put through again. He cut back onto his right foot and sent a curling strike towards the far corner where Wilson made an excellent save at full stretch to tip the ball over. From the corner Dyer shot wide after the original delivery was punched clear and we then brought on Byatt and Athan Smith-Joseph in an attempt to force the win.

In reality though, neither were able to stamp their authority on proceedings and a succession of injuries and niggly fouls ensured that the contest would become broken up and lead to quite a few minutes being added on. And in the seventh minute of injury time with penalties looming, a crossfield ball over to the right wing was squared low into the six yard box where Aubrey was there to knock the delivery past Zain. There were protestations from our boys over the offside claim and the game ended with a lot of heated discussion between players and even Management as some from the home team had run on to the pitch after that late goal.

But it was too late to do anything about it and it is Dorking Wanderers B that now progress to a Quarter-Final at home to Arundel, while we still haven't won a competitive match at the new Meadowbank Stadium in six attempts. We will of course have another chance soon as we return here on 2nd January for a far more important League match.

Epsom & Ewell: Camrun Zain, Gideon Acheampong (c), Johnny "Sonic" Akoto, Nick Wilson, Aaron Bogle, Oliver Thompson, Jaevon Dyer, Ben Bauchop, Josh Alder, Gavin Quintyne, Kevin Moreno-Gomez

Subs: Athan Smith-Joseph for Quintyne (73), Jamie Byatt for Alder (73), Josh Owen for Bauchop (84)

Top teams level at the end

28 December 2022



Epsom & Ewell 1-1 Shoreham Southern Combination League - Division One Saturday 26th November 2022.

Two very late goals after 85 minutes of attritional combat ensured that the best two teams in the League couldn't be separated on Saturday. However, as a spectacle, this match won't live long in the memory, with exception of a deserved 98th minute equaliser from our boys, which may turn out to be an extremely important goal in the grand scheme of things.

Shoreham were the visitors to Fetcham Grove and although they kicked off in third place in the table, they represented the largest threat to our title hopes, sitting six points behind us but with two games and boasting an unbeaten record. They also held a 100% away record in the League.

We made just the one enforced change from our win at Wick as Nick Wilson had to sit this one out after accumulating five bookings; he was replaced in the starting eleven by Gavin Quintyne, and that gap on the bench was filled by Tre Trowers. We made a bright start and had a half chance in the first thirty seconds when Johnny "Sonic" Akoto got down the right wing, but his pull back was skied by Athan Smith-Joseph.

We had another opportunity after Smith-Joseph was fouled around 25 yards out and Ryan Smith's set piece cleared the bar by around a foot, while in response Shoreham also had a couple of free kicks of their own, but without major threat. In reality this was to be a match with a number of half-chances, but very few really good ones.

There was no shortage of fight from both teams as the players knew that this was an extremely pivotal encounter. Neither team were getting very close to goal and we had another Smith free kick that just cleared the bar before Jaevon Dyer's ball in from the right was just ahead of Jamie Byatt. Brad Peters headed a Smith corner goalwards, but the danger was cleared, while at the other end Akoto headed a Shoreham effort on target clear from the goal line. As the match meandered towards half time Dyer tried his luck from twenty-five yards and Lewis Sheppherd in the Shoreham goal just about kept the ball out, while at the other end a misdirected header from Zach Powell was met by a wayward shot from the visitors from just outside the box.

The second half continued in a similar vein but with arguably even less chances. The game was a little niggly at times and the play was often stopped. We did have a very good chance in the 48th minute after Josh Owen won the ball and found Byatt who sent a great pass over to Smith-Joseph, who then cut back in, beat his man and saw his shot beaten away by Sheppherd, with the loose ball being fired at goal from Byatt but blocked by a defender.

Kane Charles had to punch away an Alex Fairs free kick from wide out and Harry Heath and Danny Jones picked up yellow cards for cynical fouls as the game degenerated. Charles then required treatment after appearing to get another knock that looked like it was also fairly deliberate before Quintyne picked up a yellow of his own and the game looked to be heading towards an uninspiring goalless draw. Until the 88th minute that is, when a visiting player got beyond Akoto who chased him but then brought him down needlessly for a penalty. Jones stepped up for the penalty, but Charles produced a good save, only for Marcus Richmond to nip in and fire the loose ball into the net from close range before our defenders could clear the danger.

This wasn't in the script! With just two minutes of normal time remaining we were in danger of losing our second home match in a row, but responded well. and got the ball forward a bit more frequently as time began to run out. As Shoreham players suddenly started to require treatment for injuries we tried to push them back. However, a Dyer free kick that went over the bar was all we could show for it as the clock ticked deep into injury time. Fortunately redemption was coming and it arrived in the 98th minute, Owen chased a ball into the far corner, retrieving it before delivering a great cross with his left foot. The ball was flicked on by one of our substitutes Ben Bauchop and was met at the far post by the outstretched leg of Smith-Joseph who found the net from about five yards out to secure the equaliser.

The match finally concluded after almost nine minutes of injury time and with the Shoreham bench saying that "this wasn't the World Cup" but looking back, there was quite a bit of injury time required in this half. Smith had required treatment before limping off, while injuries to Charles, Dyer and Smith-Joseph also took a while out of the forty-five, so maybe the extra time was justified in this case, although it did seem a tad generous.

Was it a fair result though? Absolutely! To lose this match would have been extremely harsh on our boys who were at least as good as our opponents. However, it must be said that we were not great and have played far better this season. Of course, the importance of the occasion almost ensured that this would be a tight encounter with neither team wanting to give anything away. It was just a shame that the match wasn't very well advertised by the club who seem to think that one tweet, repeated a few times in the week is sufficient. It clearly isn't, as an attendance of 94 counted by two different sources (inclusive of a few from Shoreham) testifies, although the club advertised it as 107. Maybe they were all inside the club house watching the World Cup instead!

This contest marked the halfway point of our League season and we have now completed both of our matches against Shoreham, failing to win either. However, we have a better looking run in and have nine of our remaining sixteen matches at home. Under the circumstances, I believe this point was better for us than for Shoreham, but only time will tell if that is the case. One thing is for certain in my opinion, which is that these are the best two clubs in the division and the title will go to one of them. However, it wouldn't surprise me if this battle goes all the way to the final day and this late equaliser from an otherwise forgettable match, may prove to be one of the most important we will score all season.

Epsom & Ewell: Kane Charles, Johnny "Sonic" Akoto, Zach Powell, Ryan 'Butch' Smith, Brad Peters (c), Gideon Acheampong, Athan Smith-Joseph, Gavin Quintyne, Jamie Byatt, Josh Owen, Jaevon Dyer

Subs: Ben Bauchop for Smith (63), Josh Alder for Byatt (71) Kevin Moreno-Gomez for Powell (82)

Mighty Maids Run Riot

28 December 2022



MAIDENHEAD 61 - SUTTON & EPSOM 24 - Saturday 26th November. Maidenhead started this season with four extremely impressive wins as they surged to the top of the table by the end of September. That was followed by five defeats before they returned to winning ways in the last round against Bournemouth. In stark contrast S&E have only one win and multiple close defeats in the opening ten encounters. The Berkshire club ran in nine tries in a thumping 61-24 triumph that reaffirmed the league standings of the two clubs.

On a chill and overcast afternoon Maidenhead kicked off. It only took a couple of minutes for the hosts to open their account. Pouncing on a sliced clearance they besieged the Sutton & Epsom line before hooker Dan Hostetler forced his way over the line. Greg Smith added the extras. Hardly had anyone had time to digest the early score when Harry Wells made a surging break from the restart and gifted a try to his centre partner Niall Crosley. Greg Smith added the conversion for 14-0. Sutton's pain in the first five minutes increased as they saw fly half Gareth O'Brien departing with an injured ankle. Jamie See went to 10 and Angus Findlay came off the bench for his league debut.

Maidenhead gave the visitors no time to settle and crossed the whitewash for their third try from Number 8 Will Macaulay. Greg Smith added two more points to his tally for 21-0 after only ten pulsating minutes. Sutton hit back as Seb Priest's sublime grubber into the corner set up a 5-metre line out. The pack ushered Matt Harwood over the line from his preferred distance. Sam Hurley added the conversion and the lead was cut to 21-7.

The second quarter may not have provided as many points but was still full of action. S&E lost hooker Alex Mount to injury on the half hour to be replaced by Jack Howes. Both teams squandered chances to add to their score as the first period entered time added on.

The Braywick Park team reasserted their authority with two more tries. Firstly, good carries by the pack culminated in a deft pass from a prop that found winger Scott Prince in space to finish it off. Not to be upstaged fellow winger Alex Turton scored a wonderful solo score from 60 metres to make it five tries. The metronomic Greg Smith bisected the uprights on both occasions as the first half concluded with Maidenhead comfortably placed at 25-7.

The second period began with a brutal reminder of who was in charge. A strong carry by flanker Ed Atkins set up Niall Crosley for a stunning break deep into the Sutton & Epsom half before setting up fullback Jamie Maddern for the try. Greg Smith chipped over the conversion for 42-7. Then Harry Wells was given a yellow card for a breakdown infringement. Sutton & Epsom certainly made their numerical advantage pay as they quickly scored from another disciplined effort from the pack from a 5-metre line out with captain Chris Farrell taking the plaudits. The conversion went awry as S&E trailed 12-42. The Black & Whites were the next to touch down courtesy of a remarkable line out that rumbled 40 metres down the paddock. The ball was finally released and Austin Bell put Seb Priest in at the corner. Sam Hurley converted from the flank for 19-42.

Restored to their full compliment the Berkshire team regained their scoring mojo as a dummy from James Maddern flummoxed the Surrey defences and flanker Jack Norris finished off with a 20-metre burst to the line. Greg Smith perfect afternoon with the boot ended with his only missed conversion with Maidenhead 47-19 to the good. A couple of minutes later it was more stunning play from the brilliant Berkshire backs as replacement Charlie Scott delayed his pass to perfection to put in the returning Harry Wells. Normal service resumed from the boot of Greg Smith to extend the lead to 54-19. Scott Prince raced in for his second and Maidenhead's ninth, and final, try. Greg Smith was on target again to record his sixteenth point as he stretched the lead to 61-19.

The Rugby Lane men gained some small consolation on a chastening afternoon when they secured a bonus point when they scored a fourth try. Once more it was the forwards, and again a catch and drive from a line out. On this occasion it was replacement Rob Hegarty burrowing his way to glory. Maidenhead's Charlie Scott became the latest victim of the harsh sentence meted out to anyone found guilty of knocking on an attempted interception. With Maidenhead reduced to 14 and Sutton already with the bonus point the game petered out in the last ten minutes in stark contrast to the seismic opening exchanges. The Magenta men celebrated their well-deserved victory as the final whistle blew to conclude proceedings.

The host's victory was based on the power, pace and precision of their first class back division. Having gained the initiative with three early strikes Maidenhead never looked likely to be overhauled. The Sutton cause was not helped by key early injuries to not only their fly half but also their hooker. The home pack had a much harder afternoon. Indeed, the Black & Whites were entirely indebted to their forwards for their bonus point with four tries of similar style based around their improving line out.

The homeward stretch of the league season starts next Saturday, 3rd December, with the first of the reverse fixtures against Banbury. Back in September Sutton were forced to play at the neutral venue of Cobham RFC and the Oxfordshire club narrowly won a hard fought encounter by 26-22. If S&E felt downcast on Saturday when the referee brought the game to a close one can only imagine the emotions in the Banbury dressing room as they were thrashed 102-22 by league leaders Wimbledon. Both sides will be keen for redemption when they meet at Bodicote Park as Sutton & Epsom visit another new league venue this campaign.

Sutton & Epsom

Michael Davies, Sam Hurley, Freddie Bunting, Jamie See, Sebastian Priest, Gareth O'Brien, Austin Bell, Tom Boaden, Alex Mount, Will Lloyd, Josh Glanville, Matt Harwood, Ben Tame, Chris Farrell © & James Caddy.

Replacements (all used): Jack Howes, Rob Hegarty & Angus Findlay.

Maidenhead

Jamie Maddern, Scott Prince, Harry Wells, Niall Crossley, Alex Turton, Greg Smith, Archie Dunnill, Elio Mandozzi, Dan Hostetler, Elliott Beattie, Phillip Wells, Brook Harvey-Smith, Ed Atkins, Jack Norris & Will Macaulay.

Replacements: Mike Guida, Levi Meek and Charlie Scott.

Wick burned at both ends

28 December 2022



Wick FC 0-2 Epsom & Ewell FC. Saturday 19th November. Southern Combination League – Division One.

A goal towards the end of each half was sufficient for our boys to see off the challenge from second placed Wick at Crabtree Park on Saturday; a result which extends our lead at the top of the table to five points.

However, this result was more than just the win. Last Saturday we threw in an awful performance against Worthing United. So poor in fact that our football club chose to hide away from even releasing a report, although obviously there was still one on this site, as supporters will always be kept informed of what is going on here. In that report I wrote that if we were able to defeat Wick and Shoreham in our upcoming matches that we would be able to write off last week's aberration as a freak result, and we are now half way towards being able to do just that.

Despite the substantial amount of rain in midweek, the pitch passed the inspection and looked in fairly good condition from pitch side. We took the field with two changes from the starting eleven against the Mavericks seven days previously; Johnny "Sonic" Akoto came in at right back with Gideon Acheampong moving across to cover the absent Aaron Bogle, who had only played 45 minutes of that Worthing United match before being replaced. Further forward Jaevon Dyer came in for Gavin Quintyne, but found himself out on the wing with Jamie Byatt playing down the middle. Additionally, we would have three new Salts in this match as Kevin Moreno-Gomez (Horley Town, Burgess Hill), Ben Bauchop (Farnham Town) and Oliver Thompson (Colliers Wood United) would all see action off the bench.

The opening exchanges were fairly even, with a slight ascendancy in favour of the home team, although as the match progressed we began to hold a greater share of possession. Athan Smith-Joseph was giving a lot of trouble to the two defenders that were covering him, although the end product never found a team mate on this occasion. Balls in to the near post were cleared away by defenders, while deeper crosses just always seemed to elude Byatt in the middle.

Dyer was slightly quieter in the opening half, but actually appeared to carry more of a threat to goal when he had the ball. He was upended after quarter of an hour just outside the penalty area, and Ryan "Butch" Smith's shot was well saved low to his right by Keelan Belcher. Byatt put Josh Owen through on goal with a clever ball, but the defender did well and forced him away from goal. Then Smith-Joseph sent a shot just over the bar after he cut in from the left. Just after the half hour a Wick clearance hit a team mate and rebounded kindly for Byatt, but he chose to pass instead of shooting and probably instantly regretted it as his ball was too far ahead of Owen.

However, it was apparent that we were the ones pushing more and more for the opening goal and it came in the only minute of first half injury time. Akoto got away down the right wing and he pulled the ball back to Dyer, standing around fifteen yards out. His shot went across Belcher but was blocked by a defender on the goal line, although Byatt was alert as ever and nipped in to force the loose ball into the net from around half a yard out before the defender could reach it.

This was a fair half time score and heading towards the evocatively named Condemned Tree end in the second half we continued to push. Dyer was brought down, leading to a bit of a scuffle, although nothing came of it. The home side sent a looping header wide of our goal from a deep free kick, but we were back on the attack soon after and Dyer beat a number of men as he ran across the edge of the Wick penalty area before striking a shot back across Belcher, which went just beyond the far post with Byatt steaming in and unable to reach it. The only thing that ended up in the net was the covering defender!

The game took a serious turn in the 62nd minute when Tommy Farr made a good run on the right for Wick, only to stumble over just outside the box. It looked comical when it happened, but it was soon apparent that he was in a lot of pain and the game stopped for ten minutes while Farr received treatment for an injured knee before being stretchered off. The home team advised after the match that it didn't appear too serious, which was a relief to all.

The game restarted and was followed by the best chance of the match for the home team. They held some good possession down the right and as the ball came in, Aaron Tester appeared to almost flick at the ball with the outside of his foot from just inside the box and it cleared Kane Charles' bar by inches.

Our first substitute Josh Alder replaced Byatt with ten minutes of official normal time to play, although due to the earlier injury it would become almost twenty-five. The match then saw a solid challenge from Brad Peters that Johan Van Driel reacted to and he got up and pushed Peters over from behind. However, the ball was up at the other end of the field by then and none of the officials saw it conclusively. The referee chose to award just the yellow card, which was probably the correct decision, although we have certainly seen red cards issued before for similar infringements.

A few minutes later Wick tried a long range dipping shot that cleared our crossbar by inches, rippling the net as it landed and convincing a few excited supporters that their team had equalised. In response Alder broke through on the left but his shot was well kept out by Belcher's leg. However, he would get a second opportunity in the 96th minute as Wick pushed up and Zach Powell's long clearance cleared the defenders on the half way line and Alder was through again. This time he ran in and finished clinically with a low shot across Belcher which just clipped a glove, but still nestled in the far corner for our second goal.

Both teams had a final chance as the time ticked down. Dyer was denied in the act of shooting by a superb block challenge from Harry Williams, while at the other end Dave Crouch tried his luck from distance, but Charles was able to tip the ball onto the post and away for a corner that ultimately came to nothing. Finally, after around fifteen minutes of injury time the whistle blew to confirm that all three points were Epsom bound.

Overall, this was a vastly improved performance on the previous one. Instead of a porous defence that looked like it might concede to Worthing United at regular intervals, we kept Wick at arm's length for much of the match and restricted them mostly to long range efforts. Up front we created more opportunities, while in midfield we took charge of the match, which was something we had struggled to do in our previous contest. The only black mark on the day was a rather harsh booking for Nick Wilson who will now miss the important Shoreham match on Saturday through suspension. I'm not sure why the club chose to put this information in the public domain, but if we play as well next week as we did in this match, it shouldn't make any difference as we have decent strength in depth across the squad.

Epsom & Ewell: Kane Charles, Johnny "Sonic" Akoto, Zach Powell, Ryan 'Butch' Smith, Brad Peters (c), Gideon Acheampong, Athan Smith-Joseph, Nick Wilson, Jamie Byatt, Josh Owen, Jaevon Dyer

Subs: Josh Alder for Byatt (80), Kevin Moreno-Gomez for Smith-Joseph (91), Gavin Quintyne for Wilson (97), Ben Bauchop for Owen (100), Oliver Thompson for Powell (102)

Report Source: www.eefconline.co.uk

Maverick win over the Salts?

28 December 2022



Epsom & Ewell FC **1 - 3** Worthing United FC. Saturday 12th November 2022. Who said lightning doesn't strike twice in the same place? Last season we hosted Worthing United with the knowledge that we had won easily away from home and on the back of an eleven game home winning run, only to lose that day by the only goal. Eight months on and with another 3-0 away win in our pocket from this season's trip, we witnessed the end of our twelve match unbeaten run this time as the Mavericks travelled home from Fetcham Grove with a 3-1 victory. This was also our first loss at home on this day since 1949!

It would be very easy to look at the recent departures of our Joint Manager Liam Giles along with some of our players as a reason for this loss, but I don't believe this was the case. Quite simply, this was just a very poor performance with all three goals coming as a result of defensive miscommunications and in a way it was

very similar to the one we suffered on the opening day of the season at Shoreham.

The starting line up contained three changes from our win over Billingshurst. Aaron Bogle came in for Steve Springett at the back, while in midfield Nick Wilson returned and Jamie Byatt made his first start since re-joining the club, while Jubril Adamson had left for Croydon and Jaevon Dyer was sitting on the bench.

For the first quarter of an hour possession was mainly in favour of our boys, although there were hints of problems ahead as the visitors missed two good chances to open up their account when our defence parted rather easily. Then we took the lead in the 15th minute. I wrote in my preview of this match about how Byatt would fit in to the line up and the answer was easy to see as Athan Smith-Joseph got down the left and sent a low ball in for our striker to poach his first of the season and 32nd for the club on just his 30th appearance with a typical close range finish inside the six yard box.

We continued to press as we exerted more control over our opponents, but then in the 22nd minute the wheels fell off and we never truly got them on again. The visitors pumped a hopeful ball forward and Dan Hills just got a toe to it ahead of Kane Charles. The ball fell a little ahead of him though and it looked like Bogle would make the routine clearance, only for Hills to stick out a leg and block the attempt back into the net. I recall Matt Ferdinand doing something similar for us to win a match against Spelthorne Sports a few years back and I gave him credit for his innovation, and so I must also praise the scorer equally here. However, I couldn't help but think that this was a completely avoidable goal to concede and it appeared to hit us very badly.

Worthing United nearly scored again a few minutes later as they broke through once again, but Charles stood his ground well and the shot was dragged across the goal. The remainder of the half contained little to write home about apart from a thirty yard strike from Ryan Smith which only just cleared the bar, but the period was mostly broken up by injuries and poor passing, although only two minutes of injury time were played, which was somewhat surprising.

Whilst it wasn't clear whether it was tactical or injury related, Bogle did not reappear for the second half with Johnny "Sonic" Akoto coming on and Gideon Acheampong moving into the centre of defence, but the general pattern of play continued. We held possession for large periods but appeared extremely vulnerable to the counter attack. One of these resulted in a powerful shot just wide of our goal in the 48th minute, but eight minutes later a delivery in from the right was poked past his own keeper by Brad Peters and the visitors were ahead.

Jaevon Dyer entered the contest for Gavin Quintyne who had covered an enormous amount of ground and he created one chance on the right that Byatt poked at with his left foot and sent over the bar. Further changes followed as Josh Alder and Warren Colman came on, but with the clock showing the 74th minute we conceded again in similar comedic circumstances as Charles flapped at the ball and half knocked a cross away, but then chased after the loose ball and lunged in, appearing to bring a striker down. However, as we appeared to freeze, maybe expecting a penalty against us, Kiko neatly chipped the ball back over everyone into an empty net from twenty yards.

This was serious. We hadn't created much of a threat throughout the second half and were now two goals down. Bad became worse after Springett came on but lasted only a few minutes before being sent off after kicking out. Whilst it probably wouldn't have made any difference by this stage whether we had kept eleven men on the field or not, this was our fourth red card of the competitive season, together with three sin-bins, and this indiscipline needs to improve before it costs us further points. I'd be surprised if we aren't right at the foot of the merit tables right now.

There was still time for Hadleigh de Vall to pick up a second yellow card for our opponents, but all we were able to produce was a decent Wilson free kick from an angle that was tipped away for a corner, while in the eighth minute of injury time Peters did well to get to a Zach Powell ball into the box, but he was at full stretch and couldn't keep the header down.

The good news is that if we are able to pick up wins at Wick next week and at home to Shoreham seven days later, then this result will be able to be consigned to the history books as just a bad day at the office. I'd like to think that we are good enough to make that happen, but we will have to produce a vastly improved performance in those matches if that is to be the case, as this one was awful!

Southern Combination League - Division One

Epsom & Ewell: Kane Charles, Gideon Acheampong, Zach Powell, Ryan 'Butch' Smith, Brad Peters (c), Aaron Bogle, Athan Smith-Joseph, Nick Wilson, Jamie Byatt, Gavin Quintyne, Josh Owen

Subs: Johnny "Sonic" Akoto for Bogle (HT), Jaevon Dyer for Quintyne (62), Josh Alder for Byatt (73), Warren Colman for Owen (73), Steve Springett for Smith-Joseph (80)

Report Source: www.eefconline.co.uk