

Epsom and Ewell FC rise to challenge on penalties

28 February 2026



26th February Horley Town FC The New Defence, Horley - Southern Combination Challenge Cup 2nd Round

Epsom & Ewell progress to the next round of the Southern Combination Challenge Cup after a hard-fought 0-0 draw at Horley Town, eventually winning 4-3 on penalties. Was The Salts' third away game in six days, and with players arriving late by train and several changes to the starting XI, it had all the signs of a difficult evening. New goalkeeper Kit Lawrence-Fletcher made his debut between the posts with first starts for Shabir, Allen and Leo Cunningham.

Despite the disruption, Epsom & Ewell started brightly. They struck the crossbar early on, and skipper Brendan Murphy-McVey thought he had opened the scoring with a superb finish—only for the referee to disallow it and book him, ruling he had re-entered the pitch too soon after treatment. Leo Cunningham was a constant threat, repeatedly troubling the Horley defence and veteran centre-back Aaron Bogle. But despite the pressure, the sides went in level at the break.

The Second Half the tempo dipped after half-time, with both teams pushing but unable to find a breakthrough. Chances were limited, and the match drifted towards the inevitability of a penalty shootout.

Horley took the first kick and blazed over, while Epsom converted to take the lead. The shootout unfolded as follows:

Horley miss, Ali Fofahan scores — 0-1

Horley score, Ore Allen misses after the ball moved just at the end of the run up — 1-1

Kit Lawrence-Fletcher saves Horley's third with a strong hand and the ball just looping over the bar.

Craig Dundas's penalty was saved but retaken due to keeper movement; he buries the second attempt — 1-2

Horley score, KJ scores — 2-3

Horley score — 3-3

Stefan Aiwone steps up and converts the decisive kick — 3-4

A composed and committed team performance saw The Salts through. The Salts now host Step 4 side Bedfont Sports in the next round as they continue their defence of the trophy.

Epsom and Ewell FC Media



Sheerwater 2-2 Epsom & Ewell Home game away from home ends honours even.

28 February 2026

17th February - Combined Counties Premier League: Epsom & Ewell were held to a 2-2 draw at the Eastwood Centre against Sheerwater in what was technically a "home game away", with Chalky Lane unplayable.

Before kick-off, thanks were extended to Trevor and Chris for helping to arrange the fixture at short notice, and to Wendy for her efforts behind the bar, on the gate and helping with catering on the night.

On the pitch, it was a competitive contest in which the Salts were forced to grow into the game after several weeks without regular match action. Return of key players There was a welcome boost with the return of Toby, Ali and Luke to the squad after an extended spell out.

Speaking after the match, the managers said: "We've trained for seven weeks, and we look and feel like ourselves again. Just a little bit more fitness and sharpness and it might have been a different result for us. We're buzzing that they're back — they're very important to what we do."

First-half talking points The opening half included two penalty shouts for Epsom, one involving Oba. The manager felt the defender "just got enough of it to make it not a penalty," adding that in a tight league season you do not always get those decisions — and the side cannot rely on them.

Sheerwater also had a controversial moment from a corner, with appeals that the ball had crossed the line. However, there was no goal given. As the manager put it: "They all celebrated like it was in. I don't think it was. Sami didn't seem

too concerned. A bit of a phantom non-goal.”

The sides went into the latter stages level in a game that was finely balanced. Playing against ten For the fourth successive match, Epsom found themselves facing ten men. On this occasion, the management team felt there was visible progress. “That’s the best we’ve looked against ten. We were cleverer, found the right passes and the right space. We got our two goals and actually looked like scoring.” However, he admitted the team may have become “too excited” at 2-1, continuing to push forward when perhaps game management was required. “We were still trying to score when we probably should have set up.” Sheerwater eventually levelled, meaning the spoils were shared. Looking ahead With four games scheduled next week — Saturday, Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday — squad depth will be tested.

The manager remains confident: “We’ve got a big enough squad to deal with it. The boys prefer playing games to training, so it gives us something to work on.” In the end, it was a point away from home against a strong side — and with key players returning, there are positives to build on as a busy period approaches.

Epsom and Ewell FC Media



Sweet success for Sutton and Epsom Rugby

28 February 2026



Beckenham 14 Sutton & Epsom 22. Saturday 14th February.

Last October a Tom Lennard penalty with the last kick of the game secured a Sutton and Epsom 22-19 win. A Beckenham side hit by injuries, with a George Bunton brace and the traditional Rimarni Richards try, had taken the game to the wire. Not quite as rare as the sighting of a fluffy-backed tit-babbler at Rugby Lane but the Black & Whites crucially won a second half. With the season meandering intermittently to a conclusion both clubs might be considering whether they will be involved in the inaugural play-offs. For the upwardly mobile fourth-placed hosts there is the possibility of embarking on four outings. Pessimists from the off-colour visitors might be fearing the 25th April match to decide who remains in Regional 2 South East. On Saturday, lightning struck twice as, once again, S&E won a second half and secured a vital 22-14 win to steady their nerves.

The Black & Whites were without their German international lock, Ewan McTaggart, as ‘Die Schwarzen Adler’ (‘The Black Eagles’) were in Portugal for the next round of the European Rugby Championship. Such inconveniences are most familiar to Beckenham with their Caribbean connections. For followers of rugby at this level it is a familiar tale of woe that injuries are never spread evenly from 1 to 15. This season for Sutton and Epsom the Number 9 shirt has been a hexed item of clothing and this week Sam Lovatt became the sixth player to don the cursed shroud. However, there was happier news with the return of Josh Pulvirenti to the colours. The Balmoral Avenue Brigade are no stranger to injuries and have done remarkably well this campaign despite regular absences of key personnel and once more they took the field minus stalwart players.

A year ago Beckenham lost their 2nd XV captain Graham Murray in a tragic traffic accident and there was a minute’s applause in his honour before the kick off. Considering the recent weather, that might make a modern Darwin predict webbed feet for humans in the future, Balmoral Avenue was blessed with not only sunshine but a playing surface that was a credit to the hardworking ground staff. Freddy Bunting kicked off for Sutton and Epsom but it was Beckenham who seized the initiative. The home team dominated the opening 15 minutes playing at a high tempo they threatened to run away with the game. An ominous first scrum saw Sutton and Epsom shunted back on their own ball. The combination of desperate defence and inopportune handling near the line saw S&E survive until scrum half Jack Gurney opened the scoring from close range following mounting pressure. Josh Burke added the conversion for a worthy 7-0 lead.

This was not a case of the floodgates opening but, to the contrary, the visitors replied at once. A surging burst from Gareth O’Brien hitting the line at pace from fullback carried him from his own half to near the Beckenham 22. Adam Bibby running the perfect supporting line took the pass and coasted home. Freddy Bunting added the extras for a 7-7 score. Sutton and Epsom had weathered the storm and now began to dominate possession. What was to become the theme of the afternoon was errors undoing invention for both sides. A dropped pass, a penalty kicked dead and turnovers conceded all blighted the Rugby Lane men’s progress. Approaching the 40-minute mark Jack Howes won a terrific turnover penalty and Captain Bunting decided on the 3-point option to put his team ahead 10-7. Despite a lengthy period of time added on the scoring for the first period had concluded and the Surrey men turned around 10-7 up.

With the alarming statistics for the 2025-6 season in terms of second half performances by the Black & Whites no one

from Rugby Lane was counting numbers in the hen house. For the travelling supporters there was the satisfaction that the tide had turned. For the Balmoral Avenue faithful there had been more than enough evidence that they could take the honours as the fascinatingly poised match resumed. It was a fast start from all concerned as both teams sensed the importance of the first score of the second half. Reversing the policy of the season, much to the delight of ageing alickadoos, Freddy Bunting decided on taking a pot at goal after five minutes. Unfortunately for those with Black & White tinged glasses it narrowly missed.

The game became a stop-and-start affair as errors mounted. Though credit must go to the back row brethren on both sides whose industrious efforts thwarted promising openings, won turnovers and were a ubiquitous source of frustration. It was Beckenham, regaining the pomp of their earlier play, who seized the momentum and were rewarded with the next score. Winger Juai Charles carved through the defence to score and Josh Burke added the conversion to put the hosts 14-10 up. A perfectly struck restart from Freddy Bunting forced a restart drop out from the Beckenham line. Sutton and Epsom took advantage of the territorial position and won a penalty. The 3-point option was shunned for the kick to the corner with a dozen minutes of regular time on the clock. Fortune did not favour the brave but S&E only had themselves to blame as they lost the lineout.

Possibly the turning point of the match came with ten minutes left on the clock as Juai Charles saw yellow and Beckenham were reduced to 14 men. A simple three points were declined as Sutton and Epsom took a tap penalty. Lennie went close as the home forwards stood strong. However, as soon it went wide Gareth O'Brien took advantage of the visitors' numerical superiority to score out wide. The conversion failed but Sutton & Epsom had their noses in front by 15-14. It was a reinvigorated Black & Whites rather than the tiring version of recent times who now took the game by the scruff of the neck. The swerving, stepping and deceptively powerful Adam Bibby broke into the 22 to be felled by an excellent cover tackle. S&E maintained possession and replacement Dan Jones carried towards the line. Once more it was released to the backs and Tom Lennard dummied the cover and scored under the posts. Freddy Bunting chipped over the easy conversion for a 22-14 lead.

Two tries in a few minutes had altered the complexion of the contest. With the game within their grasp Sutton and Epsom tackled tenaciously and kicked sensibly to keep Beckenham at arm's length. The match concluded with two moments that were synonymous of the game. Firstly, Beckenham had an attacking lineout that gave them a great opportunity to get back into the match. It was inexplicably overthrown and lost... it was certainly not the first lost lineout during an afternoon punctuated by costly errors by both teams. Secondly, in the dying moments Sutton and Epsom were in a prime position to go for the bonus point try. The ball was secured and Tom Lennard floated the perfect kick to the corner where not one but two colleagues were waiting unguarded to score. Neither laid a hand on the ball and it hit a knee. The Benny Hill theme tune would have fitted perfectly for the ensuing fiasco as the ball went to halfway. Sanity was resumed and the ball was kicked off the field to secure the 22-14 win for Sutton and Epsom.

Once again this fixture provided excitement and tension until the final whistle. Sutton and Epsom prevailed for a win that was much needed after recent disappointments. Beckenham remained in fourth and have the prospect of promotional play-offs in their own hands. At the other end of the table Old Reigatian's 19-14 loss to Canterbury Pilgrims confirmed their relegation but who joins them is a matter for a very congested lower half of the table. As always the hospitality at Balmoral Avenue was exemplary. Amongst the throng of spectators was Dave Weller who had represented both 1st XV's. The erstwhile flanker, motor cycle racer and expert pumpkin carver diplomatically wore his Beckenham tie to the lunch but secreted his Sutton and Epsom version upon his person in case it would be appropriate. For those Beckenham members of a malicious disposition they may be praying for a heat wave in September because Mr Weller has entered the Welsh Iron Man in Tenby.

Another week off and the season resumes on the 28th February when Sutton and Epsom host Battersea Ironsides whilst Beckenham are at home to Gravesend who are snapping at their heels in fifth place.

Sutton & Epsom

O'Brien, Symonds, Bibby, Bunting, Scott, Lennard, Lovatt, Boaden, Howes, Lennie, Duey, Glanville, Pulvirenti, Rea & Hegarty. Reps: Jones & Tame. Unused: Payne.

Beckenham: Bosch, Bennett, Pennacchia, Jebb, Charles, Burke, Gurney, Baker, Aoke-Tiamu, Brown, Prince, Keefe, Moran, Ward & Knowles.

Reps: Richards, Ryan-Coker & L. Caddy.

Epsom scoring a try against Beckenham from a previous fixture. Credit Robin Kennedy.

John Croysdill

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Council didn't stand up Dorking Wanderers

28 February 2026



A new spectator stand that will “support the continued success” of Dorking Wanderers Football Club can stay after the club secured planning permission.

The Mole Valley club had already erected the four-row seating section in the northern corner of its Meadowbank Ground in Dorking, and it has been used since April 2025, giving spectators a better view of games. The planning application was submitted retrospectively and was granted at the February Development Management Committee meeting of Mole Valley District Council.

The tiered 100-seater stand will not increase the club’s overall capacity of 4,121, but will instead upgrade facilities for supporters who had previously been required to stand pitch-side. Objectors raised concerns about the potential for increased noise and disturbance, but planning officers said an October 2025 site visit found that existing sound-damping fencing and newly planted trees would mitigate such issues, and that the stand would not affect maximum attendances.

Mole Valley’s environmental health team said the stand would result in a negligible increase and no material change in terms of noise impacts on match days. Officers told the meeting that the new stand, which can be folded away as required, “would not increase spectator numbers, though the arrangements for spectators would differ to the current arrangement, with the three-tier seating area instead of ground-level standing.”

She added that the stand would enhance facilities at the established community ground and support the continued success of Dorking Wanderers. The application was approved without opposition after councillors were told the stand was already in place and that all objections raised had been addressed.

The approval follows a number of upgrades to the ground in recent years, including a new part-covered terrace at the western end approved in 2022, alongside LED floodlighting, additional turnstiles, TV facilities and an expanded fan zone. The western terrace was constructed after the club’s promotion to the National League in order to meet entry requirements.

Chris Caulfield LDRS

Epsom and Ewell Times puts local clubs in the context of the hierarchy of English football:

Level	League	Club example
1	Premier League	Arsenal, Man City
2	EFL Championship	Norwich City, Watford
3	EFL League One	Portsmouth, Ipswich Town
4	EFL League Two	Sutton United (recently until 2024)
5	National League	Sutton United (now)
6	National League South	Dorking Wanderers
7-8	Isthmian League etc.	Kingstonian, Leatherhead
9-10	Combined Counties	Epsom and Ewell

Photo: Meadowbank Stadium, the home ground of Dorking Wanderers Football Club, with the spire of St Martin’s Church in the background (May 2021, looking south). Credit: Mertbiol. Creative Commons CC0 1.0 Universal Public Domain Dedication.

Sutton & Epsom beaten by Gravesend as yellow card proves decisive

28 February 2026



Sutton and Epsom RFC v Gravesend Saturday 31st January. On an autumnal October afternoon Sutton & Epsom defeated Gravesend 29-12 at the Rectory Field. That victory in Round 6 sent them to the summit of Regional 2 South East. However, the current form of S&E has challenged the Podsnapian assumption of reaching the promotion play-offs. A season that started with great expectations has fallen on hard times.

In Round 16 Sutton slipped to another defeat, 37-26, as Gravesend leapfrogged them in the table to seventh place.

Saturday's fixture gave a debut to Tom Williams in the Number 9 shirt and he became the fifth starting scrum-half of the campaign. The returning Huie joined Duey on the bench but sadly a Louis could not be found. Recently gales, galoshes and gamps have been in vogue but the weather was blessedly more benign. Having been denied league action the previous weekend, the crowd were abuzz with anticipation as Gravesend kicked off the match.

It was an inauspicious start for the hosts as they immediately conceded a penalty and faced a Gravesend line-out five metres from their line with barely a minute on the clock. The initial drive was halted but another penalty followed. Despite stoic defence, the Kent team scored through the forwards with a sense of inevitability. The challenging conversion drifted wide as the visitors led 5-0.

From the restart indecision from Gravesend almost allowed Adam Bibby to gain possession. It was the set scrum that raised the spirits of the Rugby Lane crowd. From the opposition put-in, the home pack sent the Rectory Field forwards into disarray. A quick tap penalty and a kick ahead by Tom Lennard nestled a yard from the line and Adam Bibby dragged the defender over for a five-metre scrum.

Sutton won the ball but fine defence halted Bunting and then Lennie. The visitors had relief of sorts with their put-in under their posts, but the Black & White pack turned them over again. A snipe by Tom Williams was followed by Ewan McTaggart stretching out to score. Freddy Bunting added the easy conversion as S&E took a 7-5 lead after a dozen minutes.

If the Sutton scrum was excellence personified, the line-out was at the other end of the spectrum as the match entered a déjà vu phase. S&E line-out lost, Gravesend kick, and Kyren Ghumra ran it back to great effect. After two episodes of this entertaining drama, conveniently aired on either side of the paddock near halfway, Sutton scored their second try.

Adam Bibby made a stunning break from the middle of the park and entered the opposition 22. With his centre partner Freddy Bunting in support, he supplied a timely pass for his captain to score. Freddy Bunting added the extras to extend the lead to 14-5 at the end of the first quarter.

At last S&E won a line-out and it was worth the wait as the forwards drove at least 20 metres towards the line and were unlucky to concede a penalty. A moment of butterfingers from an unnamed source thwarted the hosts' next promising attack as Sutton dominated the territorial battle.

Gravesend exited their half in sensational fashion. Ben Hope, playing on the wing, collected the ball near touch by his 22 and set off. Breaking tackles, brushing aside defenders and gathering speed, he scored an outstanding try in the corner. The touchline conversion failed as the visitors narrowed the gap to 14-10.

The next significant moment was unfortunately a lengthy delay as the sawbones attended to the injured Samraj Chahal. Gravesend lost their totemic forward, replaced by Chris Brady, the sole representative of the Brady bunch on the afternoon as his brother had just returned from Dubai.

The Kent team responded to adversity by breaking free and going on the rampage into the Sutton half, with hooker Stan Dadson leading the charge. The visitors ended the first half in the ascendancy as they searched for the lead. They had to be content with a penalty, winger Josh Barnes obliging with the three points as the referee concluded the half with Sutton narrowly ahead, 14-13.

An entertaining first period promised a second half rich in tries and tension. Freddy Bunting resumed the action with Gravesend attacking the clubhouse end. S&E made a promising start with Adam Bibby making another superb break but on this occasion there was no support on hand to take the glory.

Referee Hampshire had already ominously called Captain Bunting over for a chat late in the first half, foreshadowing Sutton's walk along the disciplinary tightrope. With nearly ten minutes of the second period played and Gravesend on the Sutton line, the visitors were awarded a penalty. Lock Josh Glanville received a yellow card and the hosts were reduced to 14 men.

The Rectory Field men opted for the three points, Josh Barnes edging Gravesend into a 16-14 lead. The ten-minute yellow-card period proved the turning point. Gravesend exploited their numerical advantage with admirable skill and ruthless pragmatism.

From a scrum 30 metres from the Sutton line, Ben Kite kicked perfectly to Josh Barnes on the wing, who gathered and sauntered in for the try. He added the conversion to stretch the lead to 23-14. A couple of minutes later fellow wing Ben

Hope added his second and Gravesend's bonus-point try. Barnes again converted, extending the lead to 30-14. The yellow card had cost Sutton 17 points by the time Glanville returned.

To their credit, the Black & Whites responded swiftly. The improving line-out secured possession and initiated another relentless catch-and-drive. This time there was no intervention as hooker Sam Lennie forced his way over. Freddy Bunting bisected the uprights to pull it back to 21-30.

Shortly after, the Rugby Lane faithful were left flummoxed by suicidal Sutton play. Nine points adrift with a quarter of an hour to go, a long miss-pass was sent out from their own 22. Fortunately the interception was not run in under the posts, and S&E gained relief through a penalty a few phases later. Sanity restored, the contest returned to an arm-wrestle around halfway.

Gravesend's fifth and final try was initiated by a superb clear-out at the ruck by prop Harry Brooker. A speculative kick ahead found space in the S&E 22 and visiting full-back Ben Stelfox took advantage of inadequate cover to score. Barnes' conversion made it 37-21 and took his personal tally to 17 points.

With six minutes left the contest was over and Sutton hunted the consolation of a bonus point. The Black & Whites struggled to penetrate a robust Gravesend defence, but benefitted from the punitive side of Mr Hampshire's nature as yellow cards were issued in quick succession to Stan Dadson and Les Falefatu in time added on.

Playing against 13 men, Sutton accepted the invitation. From a tap penalty Eric Duey powered over for the bonus-point try. At the final whistle, contrasting emotions were clear as Gravesend's players, fuelled by victory, recovered quickly, while Sutton's men laboured under the lactic acid of defeat. Gravesend had deservedly won 37-26.

In retrospect, the yellow card that Gravesend exploited so ruthlessly put paid to Sutton's hopes. The balance between devil-may-care ambition and league pragmatism remains elusive. Sutton's scrum was magnificent, the line-out frustratingly sporadic and the defence too porous. Gravesend's organisation and physicality blunted Sutton's width, while Ben Hope stood at the forefront of an impressive attacking display.

Supporters and players mingled in traditional fashion in the clubhouse, certainly not a bleak house, as the Kent side were buoyed by a sizeable travelling support rewarded with a fine victory.

With a deferential tug to Boz from a formerly tousled forelock, one might exclaim "what the Dickens" on noting yet another gap in the league calendar next Saturday. The season resumes on Valentine's Day as Sutton venture to Balmoral Avenue to face Beckenham, whom they narrowly defeated 22-19 earlier in the season at Rugby Lane.

Sutton & Epsom:

Ghumra, Symonds, Bibby, Bunting ©, Scott, Lennard, Williams, Johnson, Lennie, Boaden, McTaggart, Glanville, Tame, Jones & Hegarty.

Reps: Howes, Duey & Huie.

Gravesend:

Stelfox, Barnes, Filmer, Sims, Hope, Kite, Warren, Brooker, Dadson, Shorter, Bird, Falefatu, Bailey, Chahal © & Money.

Reps: Alderson, Brady & Harris.

John Croysdill

Rugby action Epsom against Gravesend credit Robin Kennedy -from a previous fixture

Epsom and Ewell's MP in the running for ... running

28 February 2026



A hardy team of **Epsom & Ewell Harriers** women braved freezing conditions for the third fixture of the **Surrey Cross Country League** season at **Oxshott Woods** on 10th January, hosted by Elmbridge Road Runners. The demanding woodland course, featuring slippery roots, undulating ground and the infamous hill, tested runners throughout.

Epsom & Ewell fielded two full women's teams and enjoyed an outstanding day in Division Two. The A team produced a commanding performance to take first place, finishing 35 points clear of Reigate Priory, while the B team secured an excellent second place, just behind Wimbledon Windmilers.

Individually, Sophie Glencross (U20) led the Harriers home with a superb third-place finish overall, drawing on her recent Varsity Cross Country experience to handle the tough conditions with confidence. Close behind, Sophie Lomas continued her strong winter form by finishing fourth, following her eighth-place result at the Surrey Cross Country Championships the previous weekend.

Completing the A team scoring positions were Annie Snowball (U20) in 19th, Nicky Stevenson (V45) in 21st and Lily Brown (U20) in 28th. Stevenson also recorded a notable age-group performance, finishing fifth in the V45-54 category with a time of 34:40.

Further strong runs came from Lauren Johnson in 32nd, Amber Brough-Nuesink in 43rd and **Helen Maguire in 44th place – the Liberal Democrat MP for Epsom and Ewell** – competing alongside her local club on a challenging winter course. Also finishing were Sandra Newbury in 86th and Julie Houghton in 98th.

After three of the four league fixtures, Epsom & Ewell sit third in Division Two, with Annie Snowball currently leading the U20 individual standings. With Reigate Priory and Vets AC contesting the top positions and E&E holding a narrow advantage over both Clapham Pioneers and Wimbledon Windmilers for the final promotion place, the concluding fixture at Lloyd Park promises to be keenly fought.

Selected results:

3rd - Sophie Glencross 30:01
4th - Sophie Lomas 30:43
19th - Annie Snowball 34:11
21st - Nicky Stevenson 34:40
28th - Lily Brown 35:22
32nd - Lauren Johnson 35:49
43rd - Amber Brough-Nuesink 36:37
44th - **Helen Maguire** 36:43
86th - Sandra Newbury 40:14
98th - Julie Houghton 42:18

Sam Jones - Reporter



Photo: Courtesy Epsom and Ewell Harriers

Sutton & Epsom v Sidcup - Rugby match report

28 February 2026



Sutton and Epsom 12 Sidcup 28. Saturday 17th January.

Sidcup arrived at Rugby Lane buoyed by the wheels wobbling on the Brighton bandwagon. Back-to-back defeats either side of the festive break by their south-coast rivals had left the Crescent Farm side just one point off the top. For Sutton and Epsom, their top-five position - equating to entry into the play-off rounds - was under threat.

Before kick-off, the Black and Whites had to digest the unpalatable news that Old Colfeians had won 22-19 at Beckenham under the lights on Friday night, pushing Sutton and Epsom down to sixth place. In a keenly contested encounter at Rugby Lane, Sidcup came from behind to win 28-12 and, crucially, scored their fourth try on the final play to secure a bonus point that lifted them into pole position by virtue of a vastly superior points difference.

The recent number-nine hiatus for Sutton and Epsom was resolved with Euan Findlay making his league debut. There was also a welcome return for "the prodigal son" Josh Glanville, pulling on the colours for his first outing of the campaign. On the bench, crowd favourite Richard Madadangoma made his first appearance of the season. All Sutton and Epsom's comings and goings paled into insignificance, however, alongside Sidcup prop Sam Carmen, who was making his 300th league appearance.

Before kick-off there was a tribute to Ben Searle, a member of the Sutton and Epsom physio team who tragically passed away following a battle with cancer. After the applause, Freddy Bunting set the game in motion with Sutton and Epsom attacking the clubhouse end.

Sutton and Epsom were hoping to reprise the outstanding performance that defeated Sidcup at Crescent Farm last season. The secret then was a fast start built on high-tempo rugby, rapid recycling and effective use of width. To their credit, the hosts put that plan into effect, dominating territory and possession in the opening exchanges.

Never has the old chestnut of taking penalty points reverberated louder around the stand. Four kickable penalties in front of the posts were declined in the first half. This was particularly notable given Sidcup possess the league's best defensive record, conceding only 16 points per game. Yet this approach has been consistent all season, with Sutton and Epsom having converted only three penalty kicks despite amassing 460 points.

After a scoreless first quarter in which the Sidcup defence repeatedly repelled attacks that came agonisingly close, Sutton and Epsom finally broke through in the 25th minute. A sweeping move from halfway saw Tom Lennard break free on an inside line, Josh Rea time his support perfectly, and debutant Findlay finish with aplomb. Freddy Bunting's conversion struck the upright, but the hosts led 5-0.

Ten minutes later Sidcup entered the Sutton and Epsom 22 for the first time and immediately made it count. A penalty kicked to the corner set up an attacking line-out and, after initial resistance, hooker Harry Large forced his way over. Josh Twyford converted impressively from the touchline to give the visitors a 7-5 lead.

Sutton and Epsom responded superbly and regained the lead before the interval. Sam Lennie made a trademark bulldozing break through midfield, Josh Rea again played a pivotal role, and Michael Bennion arrived at pace to sprint in from outside the 22 and score under the posts. Bunting added the extras to make it 12-7.

As first-half stoppage time approached, Sidcup produced their best passage of play, pressing hard for a second score. After excellent continuity, it appeared a try had been scored in the corner, but the ball was lost just short of the line. The half ended with the visitors in the ascendancy, though Sutton and Epsom had played some of their best rugby for a long while. Only time would tell whether they would rue not turning that dominance into more points.

Alex Lambe's whistle began a finely balanced second half. Sidcup opened with a couple of uncharacteristic errors, but these proved brief. Five minutes in, Ben Stokes cut through the Sutton and Epsom defence, only to be denied by a timely intervention from Findlay. Shortly afterwards the visitors struck again. A perfectly timed pass on halfway released winger Seb Ellison, who kicked ahead, chased and gathered just ahead of the cover. Twyford converted from wide to put Sidcup 14-12 ahead.

Momentum now belonged to the men from Crescent Farm. Sidcup dominated possession, and Sutton and Epsom's defensive resolve was tested relentlessly. That resistance held until the final quarter, when sustained pressure told. Captain Louis Keeley exploited the blindside, burst down the touchline and cut inside to score. Twyford's conversion stretched the lead to 21-12.

As Sidcup turned the screw, Sutton and Epsom were further hampered by the injury-enforced departure of Josh Rea, who had produced an outstanding performance. The visitors hunted the bonus point, but the Rugby Lane men stood firm, holding Sidcup up over the line with ten minutes remaining.

With five minutes to play, Sutton and Epsom survived a stunning break, scrambling heroically before winning a relieving penalty. The match seemed set to conclude without bonus points. In the dying moments, however, an arm interfered with a Sutton and Epsom line-out jumper and a penalty was awarded. The Black and Whites opted for a long-range kick from near the touchline. Success would have earned a deserved bonus point. The kick drifted wide.

Sidcup counter-attacked from deep, moving the ball fluently before a long kick and eager chase forced a turnover. Hooker Harry Large, again in excellent support, gathered and ran in under the posts. Twyford added the conversion to complete a 28-12 victory and send Sidcup top of the league.

Sidcup's second-half defence proved rather more durable than the Maginot Line, and Sutton and Epsom were unable to find a way through. Yet the hosts made their opponents work until the final seconds, and the first-half performance in particular should be the benchmark for the remainder of the season.

The league programme now pauses, with hostilities resuming on 31 January when Sutton and Epsom welcome Gravesend to Rugby Lane, having beaten them 29-12 away in October. High-flying Sidcup host local rivals Beckenham as they continue their push for promotion.

John Croysdill

Sutton and Epsom:

Bennion, Scott, Bibby, Bunting ©, Symonds, Lennard, O'Brien, Johnson, Lennie, Boaden, McTaggart, Duey, Rea, Jones, Hegarty.

Replacements: Howes, Glanville, Madadangoma.

Sidcup:

Twyford, Ellison, Stokes, Smith, Keeley ©, Ubee, Ibrahim, Conlon, Large, Carmen, Stock, Romp, Koung, Healey, Caple.

Replacements: Watson, Knock, McMahon.

Photo - from previous fixture. Robin Kennedy

Ashtead Tennis Club gets set to expand

28 February 2026



Sport in Mole Valley is set to get a boost after plans for a new clubhouse, that will allow Ashtead Tennis Club to offer more to the community, was approved. The new larger facility will replace the existing block and will include accessible toilets, changing facilities and a larger social area.

The club plans to build its new Ashtead Recreation Ground headquarters with matching materials as its current block.

Officers at Mole Valley District Council's January 7 development committee said it would not harm the or overly impact the neighbourhood. The plans were widely praised as being good for Ashtead with the only real objections being three windows that faced a neighbouring property. The committee, however, heard these would be masked by fencing and trees

Councillor Chris Hunt: (Independent: Ashtead Lanes & Common) said: " The tennis club have obviously put an awful lot of work into this application. This is positive." He added: "Use of this new proposed clubhouse is an improvement to their current structure and most people will be looking towards the tennis courts rather than to the fence.

Cllr Phil Hammond (Liberal Democrat: Fetcham) said "Ashtead is a lovely place...so I'm sure the neighbours can resolve their issues. We give a lot of support to football, bowls, cricket and tennis clubs. We do a lot through our neighbourhood CIL. Updating their facilities is a challenge, getting accessible toilets and changing.

"The demographic of sports, the involvement of young people, women's sport; It's always changing and evolving and I think it's good that this council can support that. It's a good place, it's a busy place and I've seen what they do in terms of developing the sport but they also extend the sport with things like pickleball or easier forms of tennis. It's the sort of thing we need in our community."

Chris Caulfield LDRS

Ashtead Tennis Club (image Google)

Seven-try storm sinks Epsom and Sutton

28 February 2026



Old Colfeians 44 Sutton & Epsom RFC 22. Saturday 10th January.

The fourth-placed Black & Whites opened their 2026 account at Horn Park against Old Colfeians, who sat one place below them in the league table. Sutton's season has been one of feast or famine — the ecstasy of winning their first four fixtures giving way to the agony of a five-match losing streak — although bonus points in defeat have kept them competitive. Whatever New Year resolutions were made, they did not translate into success on the pitch as Old Colfeians ran in seven tries in a 44-22 victory.

After a week of wild weather, conditions were benign, despite a temporary water cut in the area which thankfully was resolved in time for the teams to shower. There was an early sign of trouble when Sutton were pushed back at the first scrum, although this proved to be a rare moment of dominance by the home pack. Old Colfeians opened the scoring with a penalty from Ollie Burkett. Sutton responded five minutes later when Freddy Bunting kicked to the corner, Ewan McTaggart secured possession and after multiple phases Tom Lennard found winger Kyren Ghumra, who crossed for the opening try. The conversion struck the upright, but Sutton led 5-3.

The hosts soon hit back as centre Louis Baker broke through from 25 metres for the first of his two tries, regaining the lead at 8-5. Sutton replied immediately with what many present judged their try of the season — slick passing down the right wing released Ghumra for his second, nudging the visitors back in front at 10-8. The lead did not last long. A flowing counter-attack, started by full-back Chris Harris, ended with Mylo Mutongwizo finishing in the corner. Another missed conversion left Old Colfeians ahead 13-10.

Sutton pressed again but a sharp interception from Burkett turned defence into attack, leading to a try finished by prop Tom Rameaux. Burkett added the conversion for a 20-10 half-time lead in a fast-paced and entertaining contest.

Sutton were dealt a blow when scrum-half Gareth O'Brien was forced off with concussion, with Tom Lennard taking over his duties. The visitors made a strong start to the second half and were rewarded when McTaggart forced his way over from close range after another line-out move. Once again the conversion was missed, leaving Sutton trailing 20-15 with half an hour to play.

Although Sutton enjoyed spells of possession, Old Colfeians' defence was resolute. When the hosts regained territory, Harris kicked to the corner and the resulting catch-and-drive saw hooker Freddie Holland-Oliver score the bonus-point try. Burkett converted for 27-15 and the home forwards, led by captain Andy O'Malley, began to dominate. O'Malley powered over soon after, stretching the lead to 34-15.

Adam Bibby briefly reignited Sutton hopes with a strong run, but Baker then ran in from 40 metres for his second try to make it 39-15. Sutton did at least secure a valuable bonus point when Tom Lennard took a quick tap from a penalty near the line and Eric Duey emerged from the pile to score. Bunting converted to bring the score to 39-22.

Old Colfeians had the final word when O'Malley crossed again following another forward surge. Burkett missed the conversion but the hosts completed a convincing 44-22 win.

Sutton were very much in contention in the first half, but as the game wore on they were increasingly overpowered by a dominant Colfeians pack that laid the platform for victory. Both sides then enjoyed generous hospitality in the clubhouse, where Horn Park remains a favourite destination for travelling supporters.

Next Saturday Sutton return to Rugby Lane to face Sidcup, who won the reverse fixture 22-12 earlier in the season.

Sutton & Epsom

Bennion, Scott, Bibby, Bunting ©, Ghumra, Lennard, O'Brien, Johnson, Lennie, Boaden, McTaggart, Finney, Rea, Jones & Hegarty.

Reps: Howes, Duey & Symonds.

Old Colfeians

Harris, Mutongwizo, Baker, Napper, Spaczil, Burkett, Wylie, Rameaux, Holland-Oliver, Agorioge, O'Malley ©, Collins-Oberman, Enskat, Walker & Amor.

Reps: Correa, Ramdhan & Storey.

John Croysdill

Image courtesy Robin Kennedy from a previous fixture.

Dan Jones Hat Trick Brings Christmas Cheer For Sutton & Epsom Rugby

28 February 2026



Sutton & Epsom RFC 61 Old Reigatian 17. Saturday 20th December.

On Saturday 6 January 2024 Old Reigatian had secured a hard-fought 28-26 victory over Old Colfeians to go top of Regional 2 South East. Since then, however, their form has faltered and they arrived at Rugby Lane still searching for a first league win of the campaign. Despite that, there was a degree of optimism for the visitors, with Sutton and Epsom themselves enduring a run of five straight defeats, albeit tempered by a remarkable ability to collect bonus points along the way. That run came to an emphatic end as the Black & Whites produced a dominant display, scoring nine tries in a 61-17 victory and leaving Old Reigatian rooted to the foot of the table over the Christmas period.

Kyren Ghumra and Kieran Finney returned to the Sutton and Epsom starting XV and, on a mild winter afternoon at Rugby Lane, Billy Egleton's whistle set the game in motion. Sutton and Epsom needed only three minutes to open the scoring. From a line-out, Rob Hegarty and Josh Rea carried into the 22 and Dan Jones was rewarded for his support play with the first of his three tries. Freddy Bunting converted. Five minutes later a charged-down clearance led to another Sutton and Epsom line-out on the 22, the forwards drove on before the backs were released and a set move created space for Ghumra to stroll in at the corner. Bunting's conversion from the touchline made it 14-0.

Old Reigatian briefly threatened a response after earning a line-out deep in the Sutton and Epsom 22, but a wayward pass squandered a rare opportunity. Sutton and Epsom immediately made them pay. Following a long clearance and penalty, a line-out 30 metres out saw Dan Johnson, Gareth O'Brien and Boaden carry strongly before Ghumra claimed his second try.

Bunting added the extras for 21-0.

The first quarter ended with Sutton and Epsom claiming the bonus point. Adam Bibby countered deep into Reigatian territory, supported by Tom Lennard, and sustained pressure eventually saw lock Kieran Finney force his way over. Bunting converted for 28-0. On the half hour Hegarty made a trademark break from turnover ball and once again Jones was in perfect support, accelerating away to score from outside the 22. The conversion made it 35-0.

Old Reigatian were rewarded for their persistence just before the break. Playing their best rugby of the half, they earned successive penalties five metres out and lock Dan Grant eventually powered over. The conversion missed, making it 35-5. Sutton and Epsom responded immediately. Hegarty broke again and passed to Josh Rea, whose well-timed angle cut the defence before offloading to Sam Lennie. Hauled down short, the ball was recycled and Gareth O'Brien stepped through to score Sutton and Epsom's sixth. Bunting converted to give Sutton and Epsom a commanding 42-5 lead at half-time.

Any fears of a second-half collapse were quickly dispelled. Although Reigatian defended stoutly for the opening ten minutes, Sutton and Epsom's seventh try arrived from a five-metre line-out when Ewan McTaggart fed Dan Jones for his hat trick. Bunting converted for 49-5. The game opened up, and while Sutton and Epsom occasionally kicked possession away, they continued to dominate. Late in the third quarter, after Steve Munford gathered a loose ball following an ambitious Reigatian chip, sustained pressure ended with Tom Lennard scoring. The conversion was missed, leaving the score at 54-5.

With ten minutes remaining Sutton and Epsom added their ninth try. Sam Lennie, outstanding throughout, emerged from a mass of forwards to touch down, with Bunting converting for 61-5. Old Reigatian, however, showed commendable spirit. A loose pass on halfway was seized upon by scrum-half Jack Nicol, who ran in untouched, and although the conversion was missed it sparked renewed confidence. Moments later, slick handling saw Jonny Bridges score in the corner, with Conor Woods converting to make it 61-17.

A late yellow card for Ewan McTaggart gave the visitors a numerical advantage in their search for a bonus point, but no further scores followed. The final whistle confirmed a comprehensive Sutton and Epsom victory, capping an impressive all-round performance from the Black & Whites as they closed the year on a high. Sutton and Epsom will now hope to replicate last season's strong finish, with added incentive from a complex play-off system, while Old Reigatian continue their search for a first win.

The league now pauses for the Christmas break. Sutton and Epsom will reflect on an excellent early-season run before injuries and form intervened, and league action resumes on 10 January at Horn Park against Old Colfeians.

Sutton and Epsom: O'Brien, Scott, Bibby, Bunting (c), Ghumra, Lennard, Munford, Johnson, Lennie, Boaden, McTaggart, Finney, Rea, Jones, Hegarty. Replacements: Howes, Duey, Symonds.

Old Reigatian: Allen (c), Coyle, M. Nicol, Holder, Bridges, Woods, J. Nicol, Garrec, Nestor, Marshall, Grant, Franklin-Talbot, Pease, Bye, Mendoza. Replacements: Monk, Burton, Blake.

John Croysdill

Photo credit: Robin Kennedy

A Nice Xmas Double for Epsom & Ewell FC

28 February 2026



Epsom & Ewell FC v Balham FC 20th December - Combined Counties Premier League. Away At Imperial Fields, Bishopfield Road. Morden.

We played Balham FC at their adopted home, Imperial Fields, and recorded our first double of the season after beating them 3-1 way back in early August at our then temporary home, the Reg Madgwick Stadium in Cobham. This was a far more attritional game, which we emerged from as winners thanks to a second-half strike to secure a 1-0 victory.

We welcomed Che Bell back into our defensive formation and he made a great comeback. Teddy Ralph played at left wing-back in a very unfamiliar position for him and acquitted himself very well. We also welcomed Prince Aderogba to the football club, who impressed on his debut. Antonios Nazareth took a place on the bench after recovering from flu earlier in the week.

One of our players, Connor McShane, was injured in the warm-up, so Ryley Merrett was called up and arrived by taxi to take his place on the substitutes' bench. Last but not least, our 44-year-old assistant manager, Craig Dundas, played up front alongside Tyler Robinson. This demonstrated just how many players we are missing. Craig, by the way, played very

well during the 58 minutes he was on the pitch and was a constant threat to the Balham defence.

First Half

The game was mostly played in the Balham half, although they did come back into it during the five minutes before half-time. The referee “set his stall out” early by booking Luis Oliveira in the 8th minute. A further three yellow cards were brandished, making it 2-2 in the book at half-time.

We did have a good shot from Tyler Robinson saved, but this was about the only real goalmouth action of the first half.

Half-time: 0-0

In the 50th minute, Karl Bailey replaced the injured Jason Bloor, and in the 58th minute Obasanjo Akinniranye replaced Craig Dundas. We were still very much on top at this stage.

In the 63rd minute, we got the goal we richly deserved as Tyler Robinson broke down the right flank and crossed for substitute Akinniranye, who calmly slotted the ball between two defenders to give us the lead.

Balham immediately began making substitutions, and we followed suit when Callum O’Keeffe replaced Teddy Ralph in the 74th minute.

Unfortunately, we lost Tyler Robinson in the 87th minute to an alleged elbow on a Balham defender. He was shown a straight red card after the referee consulted with his assistant. Was the red card harsh? Yes, it was. Tyler was convinced after the match that this was the case, and this view was supported by the Balham player involved, who expressed his surprise at the decision.

Could we hold out, with what appeared to be plenty of injury time still to play? The answer was **YES**. A very good three points were secured, moving us on to 28 points, although with no change in our league position.

What’s Next?

We have a big match against Corinthian Casuals at Chalky Lane, Chessington, next Saturday, 27th December, with a 3pm kick-off. As a large crowd is expected, it would be advisable to arrive in good time if travelling by car to secure a parking space.

Epsom and Ewell FC Media



Derby Prize Money to Rise to £2m as Epsom Seeks to Reassert Its Place at the Top of British Racing

28 February 2026



The Derby at Epsom is set to regain its position at the very summit of British flat racing after The Jockey Club confirmed that prize money for the 2026 renewal will rise to £2 million, making it the joint-richest race in the UK.

The £500,000 uplift takes the Derby’s total prize fund to £2 million, with £1 million awarded to the winner, placing the race on a par with Ascot’s King George VI and Queen Elizabeth Stakes, long regarded as Britain’s most valuable middle-distance contest.

The announcement comes after a six-month review by Epsom Downs Racecourse and The Jockey Club, prompted by a notable fall in attendance at this year’s Derby meeting. Official figures show the Derby crowd dropped by more than 4,500, from over 26,800 in 2024 to 22,312 in 2025, raising concerns about the long-term appeal of Britain’s most famous Classic.

A race whose prestige once eclipsed prize money

Historically, the Derby’s importance has never rested on prize money alone. For much of its 245-year history, victory at Epsom carried unparalleled breeding and reputational value, dwarfing the cash rewards on offer.

Well into the late twentieth century, the Derby paid significantly less than major jumps races such as the Grand National or Cheltenham Gold Cup, yet remained the race every owner, trainer and breeder wanted to win. A Derby victory could transform a colt's value overnight, securing a lucrative stud career that far exceeded any prize cheque.

In recent decades, however, that imbalance has begun to shift. With global investment in racing concentrated increasingly in prize money-led jurisdictions such as Ireland, France, Australia and the Middle East, British racing has faced mounting pressure to compete financially as well as historically.

How the Derby now compares

At £2 million, the Derby will now sit at the top tier of UK racing alongside:

- **King George VI and Queen Elizabeth Stakes (Ascot)** - £2 million
- **The Derby (Epsom)** - £2 million from 2026

By comparison:

- **Cheltenham Gold Cup** currently offers prize money in the region of £625,000
- **The Grand National**, Britain's most famous jumps race, has a total prize fund of £1 million
- **The Oaks**, run on the Friday of the Derby meeting, remains below the Derby but continues to hold major Classic status

The uplift therefore restores a sense of hierarchy at the very top of British flat racing, ensuring that the Derby once again leads from the front rather than trailing its peers.

Wider changes to the Derby meeting

Prize money is not the only area where change is planned. In an effort to attract a younger and more diverse audience, under-18s will be given free entry to both days of the Derby meeting in 2026. Racecourse officials hope this will help introduce a new generation to Epsom Downs and to racing more generally.

There are also significant changes to the structure of the meeting itself. The **Coronation Cup** will move from Friday to Saturday, where it will be run alongside the Derby. Its prize money has more than doubled, rising from £450,000 to £1 million following new sponsorship from leading racehorse breeders Coolmore.

Across the two-day meeting as a whole, total prize money will increase by £1.375 million, while the **Oaks** will remain the feature race on the Friday.

A response to changing times

The changes follow a 2025 Derby won by **Lambourn**, trained by Aidan O'Brien, who recorded a record-extending 11th victory in the Classic. While the quality of racing on the track remains undiminished, the attendance figures suggest Epsom is grappling with wider challenges facing British racing: competition from other sports, rising costs for racegoers, and shifting leisure habits.

By restoring the Derby's financial standing, restructuring the meeting, and lowering barriers to entry for younger fans, Epsom Downs is clearly attempting to balance tradition with modern realities.

Whether higher prize money alone can reverse attendance trends remains to be seen. But with the Derby once again sitting at the very top of the British racing prize-money tree, Epsom is making a clear statement of intent: that the world's greatest flat race should also be one of its most valuable.

Sam Jones - Reporter



Horses racing Image: Credit Paul. CC BY 2.0

Cobham Cruise Past Epsom & Ewell in 4-0 Chalky Lane Defeat

28 February 2026



Epsom and Ewell FC 0 - 4 Cobham Combined Counties League Premier South. Venue Chalky Lane Chessington.

The Salts succumbed to their worst home defeat of the season, losing 0-4 to Cobham. The fact that Cobham are running away with the league (13 points clear with 2 games in hand on 2nd place) meant it would be a difficult game, but unfortunately a poor performance made it easy for them, and they didn't have to get out of second gear in order to claim the 3 points in front of 101 fans.

Injuries and suspensions meant we had to move players around again, although, after the fact, the suspensions were probably best today rather than Tuesday evening, with a more winnable game v Badshot Lea.

Sami Nabbad returned in goal, Shane Dunne came into midfield as Adam Green went to centre-back in place of the suspended Antonios Nazareth, Callum O'Keefe returned in place of Jason Bloor, Filip Ksaidz replaced Andrew Herring, and finally Karl Bailey came in for Ali Fofahan.

There was a little bit of hope in the early stages as Luis Oliveira managed to get to the goal line in the 2nd minute, but he was forced out by three defenders and unable to get the cross in, and the ball ricocheted off him, not even getting the corner. Cobham had the first chance of the afternoon when No. 9 Marklew had a shot across the goal after a good move down their left. Fortunately, there was no one coming in on the far post — something that was to change shortly. Nabbad was forced to make a couple of diving stops to prevent the ball going across the goal. He then had a poor kick-out and his ball went straight to a Cobham player who tried to play in No. 10 Hayford, but fortunately there was a bit too much on the pass and it ran out for a goal kick.

We then lost Shane Dunne to a knee injury after 15 minutes which would cause us problems as he holds the midfield together, and with Adam Green in defence, we were in for a difficult time. After 17 minutes Cobham got their reward for their control of the game. Again it came down their left with No. 11 Rule playing a nice ball across the goal, with Marklew running in unopposed and passing the ball into the net.

Epsom & Ewell 0-1 Cobham.

Cobham were now in control and on 31 minutes a nice ball was played into Marklew, and he found himself 1-on-1 with Nabbad, who had moved quickly off his line. Marklew attempted to lift the ball over the onrushing keeper and fortunately put a bit too much on it and it went over the bar too. Shortly after, we managed to put a nice move together and the ball was played to Oliveira who burst towards the box only to be brought down just outside. McVey, who normally takes the kick, stepped aside for No. 9 Robinson to have a go, but his shot hit the bottom of the wall and rebounded easily back to the keeper. On 36 minutes we gave away a free kick outside the box, which earned Nelson-Roberts a yellow card, in a similar position to our previous kick. Cobham No. 7 decided to go under the wall as well. He also managed to hit the bottom and it rolled easily back to Nabbad. Unfortunately, Sami managed to let the ball go through his hands and legs and it rolled into the goal. I don't even think it managed to hit the back of the net.

Cobham continued to create more and keep us pinned in our half and they had a couple more chances that didn't really trouble Nabbad, but a header in the box from Marklew appeared to strike an Epsom & Ewell arm. There was a big shout from Cobham players but the referee waved it away. Difficult to see from where we were standing but we went in 0-2 down.

HT Epsom & Ewell 0-2 Cobham.

There needed to be a big talk from the management to get the players focused for the second half. 2-0 down still means we are in the game, but our performance in the first half was poor and lacked any real energy. Hopefully, we would give it a go in the second. Alas, it was not to be and despite the fact we were playing down the hill in the second half, Cobham continued to exert pressure. Again they had a couple of chances and a third goal looked on the cards rather than us getting back into the game, and on 62 minutes we gave them a third goal. Trying to play out from the back, Nabbad played the ball to Green who attempted to play the ball across goal to Aiwone. He tried to let the ball run across his body whilst facing the goal, but No. 11 Rule anticipated the move and took the ball off Aiwone and slotted the ball into an empty net.

In the meantime, Oba Akinniranye had replaced Karl Bailey and, as always, he started to cause trouble on our right; however, he managed to get himself booked after a little bit of trouble with Cobham No. 4, and both ended up in the book. Oba did manage to provide an assist for our first real shot on goal and good movement found Ryley Merritt (who had replaced Dunne in the 1st half). He had a good shot, but it went across the goal. As the keeper scrambled across it must have been close. Cobham seemed to think *we have to stop this* and on the 85th minute another move down the Cobham right had the ball played across goal and No. 14 Simpson had another easy finish at the far post.

We managed to create a couple of chances towards the end and finally their keeper had to make a save, after Oba again created problems and his shot was stopped just short of the goal. Jack Torbett, returning after another lay-off, hit the bar from a cross/shot. There was nothing really after that, and Cobham continued their march to the title.

After a great mid-week performance v Step 4 Bedfont Sports in a friendly, today's performance was disappointing and with only one shot on goal for the whole game it is probably the worst since we lost to Sutton Common Rovers. Losing to

Cobham is also not the worst result either, but we need to gather ourselves for Tuesday night v Badshot Lea at Chalky Lane. KO 7.45, as some of the teams below us are putting in good results and we don't wish to be drawn into another relegation battle.

We look forward to seeing you there.

Team:

Nabbad, Oliveira, Nelson-Roberts, C. Green, Dunne, Aiwone, O'Keeffe, Murphy-McVey, Robinson, Ksaidz, Bailey — Subs: Gilfillian-Waul, Dundas, Akinniranye, Merrett, Torbett.

Epsom and Ewell FC Media



Late Penalty Breaks Epsom Hearts in 34-33 Thriller

28 February 2026



Dartfordians 34 Sutton & Epsom RFC 33 Saturday 13th December.

The midpoint of the campaign has been reached and the return journey has begun in Regional 2 South East. In Round 2 back in September, the Black & Whites hosted Dartfordians and snuck home by 33-29, with Rob Hegarty scoring a hat-trick. Sutton & Epsom had led 33-17 with five minutes to go and were no doubt grateful that there were not five more minutes to play. While the hosts then sat just a solitary place above winless Old Reigatian and the visitors were nestled in fourth spot, S&E arrived in Bexley on a run of four successive defeats. Added to this were the usual seasonal effects of wear and tear, and few were anticipating a comfortable afternoon. So it came to pass that Dartfordians won 34-33 with the final kick of the game.

Sutton & Epsom fielded 11 players from their September squad. Niall McCormack made his debut from the bench and Angus Nelson, having his first outing of the season, kept him company, while Matt Symonds made his first appearance of the campaign on the wing. Dartfordians were marginally more settled, with 12 of the 18 who appeared at Rugby Lane also taking part, though Jarlath Hetherington was once again a notable absentee. Traffic accidents and congestion delayed the kick-off until 2.15pm, and disaster struck Sutton early when an interception allowed centre Harvey Whyte to run in from his own half. The conversion was missed but Dartfordians led 5-0, playing up the slope.

The early setback was compounded when S&E flanker Dan Jones' return from injury lasted less than ten minutes. Undeterred, Sutton took the lead when Tom Lennard made the initial break and the Black & Whites exploited an overlap for Matt Symonds to score with his first touch. Freddy Bunting converted to edge Sutton ahead at 7-5. It was the start of a topsy-turvy encounter, with the lead changing hands repeatedly. On the half-hour mark, Dartfordians regained the advantage after sustained pressure forced Sutton onto the back foot. Despite strong defence, with Lennard prominent, a poor clearance led to a catch-and-drive from which prop Louis Chapman scored. Tom Gubby converted for a 12-7 lead.

Within five minutes Sutton were back in front. A superb break from Bunting, well supported by Gareth O'Brien, took S&E to within five metres, and from the ensuing penalty the forwards took charge. Despite valiant resistance, prop Tom Boaden forced his way over, with Bunting again converting to make it 14-12. From the restart, winger Jack Bunce was rewarded for his kick chase as Bunting lost possession in the tackle. After heroic defence denied full-back Joe Scott, it was captain Kieran Clarke who eventually scored from a five-metre scrum. Gubby converted to restore Dartfordians' lead at 19-14.

There was still time for one more score before the break, and it went Sutton's way. O'Brien initiated a counter-attack from inside the Sutton half and the Black & Whites produced their best attacking rugby of the half, advancing through multiple phases to reach five metres out. A retreating Dartfordians defence conceded a penalty, which O'Brien took quickly, weaving his way to the line with pace and skill. Bunting added the extras and Sutton led 21-19 at the interval. After a breathless, see-sawing first half, it would have taken a brave soul to predict the final outcome.

The visitors broke the pattern ten minutes into the second half. A superb break by Adam Bibby almost brought a try, but excellent cover defence denied him. Hegarty and Sam Lennie continued the move and S&E appeared to have scored, only for the referee to rule the final pass forward. That disappointment was short-lived, as play was brought back for a Sutton

penalty. Slick back play then provided Symonds with his second try of the afternoon, and Bunting's magnificent touchline conversion extended the lead to 28-19.

Five minutes later Dartfordians responded. A series of penalties forced Sutton deep into their own 22 and, after multiple phases of determined forward play, centre Harvey Whyte powered his way over. Gubby converted to reduce the deficit to 28-26. Both sides had now secured their try bonus point as the game entered its final quarter, with everything still to play for.

A pivotal moment followed when Bibby was yellow-carded for a high tackle as he chased down a long clearance. In such a tightly contested match, ten minutes with a numerical advantage proved crucial. Sutton dug deep, monopolising possession and running down the clock, but Dartfordians eventually forced their way back into the S&E 22. Another penalty piled on the pressure, and from a catch-and-drive the ball was released for flanker James Garvey to squeeze over in the corner. The difficult conversion was missed, but Dartfordians were back in front at 31-28.

With some irony, the referee then reduced the home side to 14 just as Sutton returned to a full complement. It appeared the Black & Whites had missed their chance when a harsh pass to Symonds resulted in a knock-on, but they were rescued by a colossal scrum effort that earned a penalty. Sutton camped on the line as Dartfordians' defence held firm, twice denying Lennie within inches of the line. From the drop-out, Sutton surged back again and were awarded a penalty in front of the posts. Declining the draw, they kicked to the corner, and from the line-out the pack ushered Lennie over. Bunting's kicking had been immaculate all afternoon, so it was a surprise when the conversion drifted narrowly wide, but Sutton led 33-31.

There was still time for the restart. As so often, Sutton proved most vulnerable immediately after scoring. Almost inevitably, Dartfordians were awarded a penalty. In a moment of intense drama, Tom Gubby held his nerve and landed the decisive kick. It was agony for the men from Rugby Lane and pure ecstasy for the Kent crowd. With no time remaining, Dartfordians had won 34-33.

The lower reaches of the table are tightly congested and, after several near misses, Dartfordians finally emerged on the right side of the scoreline. Aside from the interception, their four tries came from excellent forward ball-carrying, with a physical and committed pack posing a constant threat from attacking line-outs. With Old Reigatian now 25 points adrift at the bottom, Dartfordians will look upwards with optimism, as the next three teams are within two points.

This was a painful defeat for Sutton & Epsom. They regained the lead on four occasions, scored five tries and have accumulated the most bonus points in the league with 14. Errors, whether missed kicks to touch or costly penalties, handed Dartfordians valuable territory and attacking platforms. To snatch the lead in the dying moments only to concede a penalty from the restart made this the hardest defeat of the season to bear.

Next Saturday at 2pm, Sutton & Epsom host Old Reigatian in their final league fixture of 2025. The visitors are enduring a tough campaign, one that Rugby Lane supporters of a 2011-12 vintage will recall with empathy. The Black & Whites will hope their Christmas charity does not extend to gifting the Old Boys their first win of the season. Such is the cyclical nature of rugby that the side from Geoffrey Knight Fields topped Regional 2 South East as recently as 6 January 2024.

Sutton & Epsom:

O'Brien, Symonds, Bibby, Bunting (c), Scott, Lennard, Munford, Johnson, Lennie, Boaden, McTaggart, Duey, Rea, Jones, Hegarty.

Replacements: Howes, Nelson, McCormack.

Dartfordians:

Scott, Kpaka, J Taylor, Whyte, Bunce, Gubby, M Taylor, Garrett, Hooban, Chapman, Adams, Chandler, Garvey, Clarke (c), Wright.

Replacements: Clayton, Rackley, Chappell.

John Croysdill

Image - action from a previous fixture - Robin Kennedy

Million-pound FIFA-standard football pitch opens at Glyn School in Ewell

28 February 2026



A new state-of-the-art FIFA-standard 3G football pitch and pavilion has been officially opened at Glyn School in Ewell after more than £1 million of investment from national and local partners.

The Premier League, The FA and the Government's Football Foundation contributed just over half of the total cost, with further funding from Epsom & Ewell Borough Council, Your Fund Surrey (Surrey County Council) and the Epsom & Ewell Colts. The new pitch will be used by Glyn School, other GLF Schools, Epsom & Ewell Colts FC and the wider community.

Epsom & Ewell Borough Council's Playing Pitch Strategy and Corporate Plan identified the need for high-quality sports provision to promote healthy lifestyles, widen participation and meet the needs of a growing population. With more than 1,800 students at Glyn and around 5,000 across other GLF Schools, the facilities are expected to make a significant daily impact on school and community sport.

A partnership with Epsom & Ewell Colts FC means the pitch will become a major hub for grassroots football, supporting over 1,200 players across 82 teams, including 30 girls' and women's teams. The GLF Schools Foundation will help expand access for disadvantaged groups, disabled players and young people historically underrepresented in sport, aligning with both borough and national priorities for community wellbeing.

The official opening took place on Wednesday (Dec 10), with GLF Schools Interim CEO James Nicholson addressing guests and the Mayor of Epsom & Ewell, **Cllr Robert Leach**, cutting the ribbon. Also present were Liz Pill from the Football Foundation and Rosanne Fine from Surrey Football Association. Visitors toured the pitch and pavilion after watching players take to the new surface.

Jo Garrod, Headteacher at Glyn School, said: "This new pitch and pavilion are a fantastic addition to the sports facilities at our school and will be a huge benefit to all our students. We're extremely grateful to the Football Foundation for the funding and investment and delighted that they have made such a significant contribution to improve the quality of sports facilities for everyone in the community."

James Nicholson, Interim CEO of GLF Schools, said: "The range of sports and activities we offer at GLF Schools is central to the educational experience for all students. Having the latest modern facilities is key to giving every student the best opportunities to reach their full potential and enjoy their time with us. I'd like to thank The Football Foundation, whose major grant made this development possible, Epsom & Ewell Council, Your Fund Surrey (Surrey County Council), and the Epsom & Ewell Colts, who also supported this project with substantial financial contributions. As well as Surrey FA for their strategic guidance and endorsement, and all the consultants in design, fundraising, planning, and project management who worked so hard to build such an impressive pitch and pavilion."

Robert Sullivan, Chief Executive of the Football Foundation, said: "The Football Foundation is working closely with our partners, the Premier League, The FA and Government, to transform the quality of grassroots facilities in England by delivering projects like this across the country. Good quality playing facilities have a transformative impact on physical and mental health and play an important role in bringing people together and strengthening local communities. We're delighted that the local community in Epsom and Ewell will now be able to enjoy all these benefits thanks to the new facilities at Glyn School."

Epsom & Ewell MP Helen Maguire said: "The opening of this new pitch and pavilion at Glyn School is a real milestone for Ewell and the wider borough. It gives young people and local clubs a first-class space to train, play, and grow - and it strengthens the role that sport can play in building confidence and aspiration, as well as the improvements it can bring to both physical and mental health. I'm delighted to see this project completed and look forward to visiting soon."

Many local clubs, organisations and community groups provided letters of support, including NESOT, Chelsea FC Foundation, Fetcham United FC, Active Surrey, Surrey Schools FA, Surrey Cricket Foundation and Tidy Keepers.

A 3G (Third Generation) astro pitch is an advanced artificial turf surface combining synthetic grass, sand and rubber infill to mimic natural turf, offering all-weather durability and consistent performance.

About the Football Foundation

The Football Foundation is the Premier League, The FA and the Government's charity dedicated to delivering outstanding grassroots facilities. Since 2000 it has raised £1.3 billion to improve facilities nationwide, including 1,300 3G pitches, 15,000 grass pitches and 1,700 changing rooms, attracting an additional £1.5 billion in partnership funding. It works with local authorities, County FAs and community partners to create Local Football Facility Plans for every area of England. More information at footballfoundation.org.uk.

About GLF Schools

GLF Schools is a multi-academy trust of 43 schools serving more than 17,000 pupils aged 2 to 19 across Oxfordshire, Berkshire, Hampshire, Surrey, West Sussex and parts of London. The Trust includes eight secondary schools and 35 primary settings, each serving its own community while sharing a commitment to excellent educational outcomes.

Sam Jones - Reporter



New Pitch at Glyn School x 2. Credit: GLF Schools