



Penalty shoot out won by Epsom and Ewell FC

9 January 2025

Epsom and Ewell 0-0 Berks County. Combined Counties League Cup - Second Round. Tuesday 7th January 2025.
Epsom and Ewell FC won 5-4 on penalties

On a very chilly Tuesday evening at the KGF our boys progressed to the last 16 of the Combined Counties League Cup and earned a first ever trip to Wallingford & Crowmarsh with a penalty win over Berks County, following a goalless draw after 90 minutes. This was the thirteenth penalty shoot out in our history, and it was our sixth win.

The Swords had of course visited us once already this season when we defeated them 3-1 in the F.A. Vase and their friendly keeper Harvey Rackley-Hayes advised that he thought the match would be called off; such was the weather forecast, added to last Saturday's postponement of our landlords' League match. The uncertainty certainly would have put many floating spectators off the idea of making the journey, seeing as the match wasn't confirmed publicly as being on until 5.30pm. As a result, only 55 were present at the ground to witness an attritional battle, but they would be rewarded for their attendance with an exciting ending and a penalty masterclass.

The playing line up was a positive one. Although a couple of regulars were missing, Anthony Nazareth and Carl Oblitey were back amongst the substitutes after injuries with the latter coming on in the second half, while Stefan Aiwone played the full match alongside Callum Wilson who had not been in the line up at Jersey Bulls. Also providing a further attacking threat was Ali Fofahan who had been abroad for a while. From our trip to Jersey Nicolas Bostan moved to the bench, while Tobi Falodi was absent and new signing Nathan Best was cup tied.

The match would follow a similar pattern to the first meeting between the clubs, with our boys looking slightly more dangerous than the visitors, but with possession being only slightly in our favour. We had an early chance, that looking back may have been the best of the night when Kionte Gillfillian-Waul found Will Kendall with a cross field pass, only for our striker to see his shot from twelve yards expertly turned around the post by Rackley-Hayes. It was a good strike and was definitely going just inside the keeper's left hand post and maybe it would have been an easier evening for us had it gone in.

Instead, the match contained a succession of half-chances, mostly for us. Jason Bloor set up Fofahan who twisted and turned, but fired just a yard away from the top corner, while a good piece of interplay between Gillfillian-Waul and Bloor resulted in a chance for Adam Green, but his low shot was wide of the mark.

We thought we had taken the lead in the 30th minute when a good ball over the top from Niall Stillwell was guided beyond Rackley-Hayes into the far corner by Sean-Michael Anderson but the offside flag was raised against him. At the other end Kevin Kardel was a lot less busy than in his Jersey debut and dealt well with the few chances that came his way, most notably after the visitors had got down the right wing and pulled the ball up for a strike in goal, but it didn't have the power or direction to cause much concern.

Kendall saw his shot deflect wide off a defender for a corner before Green was brought down on the edge of the area out on the right wing, but the free kick was blocked. Finally a Kendall looping header from a corner was claimed comfortably by Rackley-Hayes and we went in for the break goalless.

Nothing appeared to change in the second half. Gillfillian-Waul was getting forward quite frequently in this match and he latched on to a Fofahan pass, although his shot was well blocked for a corner. Anderson limped off after a foul on him that earned Lawson Jones a yellow card and Ethan Nelson-Roberts took his place; interestingly playing out on the right wing for the remainder of the match for the first time as far as I can recall. Kardel made another comfortable save and we looked like we were the only team that would be scoring, but as time ticked down everyone knew that one error either way could decide it. We continued to make the better chances and Fofahan saw another shot deflected wide before Kendall then struck a shot against a defender on the ground from just ten yards and was maybe surprised to see the ball come back to him as he then skied the second chance.

in the closing minute Green was not far away with a strike from distance, while Wilson also saw his shot on target gathered by Rackley-Hayes before their keeper dropped the ball under pressure from Kendall, but we were unable to reach the loose ball and after four minutes added time we went to penalties.

We first faced a penalty shoot-out at the start of the 1983/84 season, yet it wasn't until our fourth spot kick lottery in 2010 that we would win one! Since then our record has been fairly even. However, this would be only the third time in our history that we scored all of our penalties. As most normal people would expect, I'm not going to give away much detail about our penalties while we remain in three cup competitions, but Green, Wilson, Craig Dundas, Kendall and then Fofahan stepped up bravely and netted emphatically in that order. To be fair, the visitors did exactly the same with their first four penalties, but the fifth from the Captain Dan Money came at a good height and Kardel guessed right to parry the ball to safety and ensure a 5-4 win!

In summary the conditions and playing surface were better than I thought they would be, but they were certainly not perfect and two teams at the wrong end of the table who are used to having to compete, battled each other almost to a standstill. We were the better team and did deserve the win, but apart from the penalties which were superb, it was just one of those matches where you chalk up the victory and move on. To our credit, that's what we did!

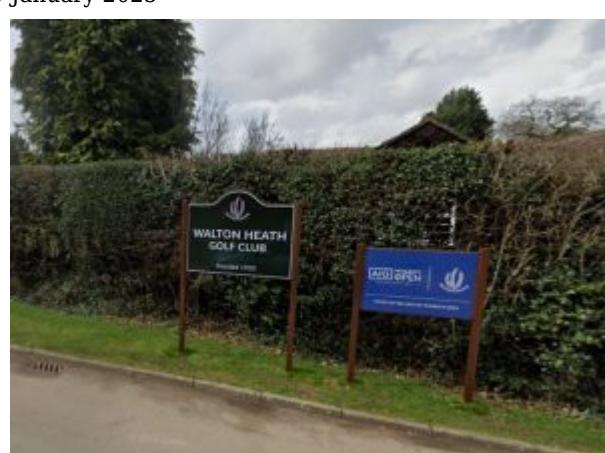
Epsom & Ewell: Kevin Kardel, Niall Stillwell, Kionte Gillfillian-Waul, Adam Green (c), Stefan Aiwone, Callum Wilson, Sean-Michael Anderson, Craig Dundas, Will Kendall, Jason Bloor, Ali Fofahan

Subs: Ethan Nelson-Roberts for Anderson (63), Carl Oblitey for Bloor (70)

Report Source: www.eefconline.co.uk

Walton Golf Club's dismissal of one-in-hole unfair

9 January 2025



A greenkeeper who had worked at a Surrey golf course for almost 40 years has won a case for "unreasonable" dismissal after he was sacked when his digger fell into a hole. An employment tribunal found the disciplinary action taken against the 58-year-old had "snowballed" before alternative options were considered.

Michael Hayne's digger had to be hauled from a ditch at Walton Heath Golf Club, in Tadworth, after the machine had tumbled into a hole, cab-side down while the driver was not wearing a seatbelt. The deputy course manager initially dismissed the accident as minor because no harm was done, and so did not formally report it in an accident log book.

But his bosses at the golf club viewed it as a significant incident and Mr Haynes was later dismissed for gross misconduct. The managers argued it was a "serious breach" of health and safety rules that the accident was not reported, and could cause more incidents.

Mr Haynes argued that he was sure he told Mr Mann about the accident at the time and considered he did not need to write up the event in the health and safety book.

The report, published December 23, 2024, detailed that the golf course had two diggers weighing 7.5 tons and 2.5 tons. Mr Haynes had been externally trained on how to use the diggers since around 2005, and his certification was updated every five years- although his current renewal had been overdue.

During a staff training session in November 2021, the instructor reportedly told course manager at the time, Michael Mann, that Mr Haynes was "very lucky with his accident that he hadn't been seriously hurt or worse". But Mr Mann said he did not know about the digger incident.

After some initial investigation, the Surrey club launched a disciplinary hearing against Mr Haynes, accusing him of "gross misconduct" for failing to comply with health and safety standards.



In a letter before the disciplinary hearing in November 2021, Mr Haynes wrote: "I have been a faithful employee of this Club for nearly 40 years. I love this Club and have spent my life in its service. I have a clean disciplinary record."

"If I were to be dismissed, not only would I lose my livelihood but also my wife and I would lose our home. I can assure this meeting that I have learned a lesson and will never fail to report any incident again. I would welcome any additional training that is felt necessary."

Mr Haynes was dismissed without notice, and escorted off the site. The Chief Executive, Mr Woodward, had decided his explanation was "unacceptable" and the "trust and confidence placed" in him had been "completely undermined". He added further dangerous incidents could have been avoided if Mr Haynes had reported the initial accident.

In desperation, Mr Haynes appealed the dismissal twice and provided photographic and video evidence of incidents not reported by other members of staff. However, this appeal was rejected both times.

However, the employment tribunal has now found Mr Haynes' dismissal was "procedurally unfair". It said there was no real evidence that any of the decision-makers weighed up the possibility of an alternative sanction for the Claimant.

The report stated there were "flaws" with the golf club's investigation process such as "exaggerating and maximising the seriousness of the incident". For instance, inconsistencies in describing the final position of the digger as "tipping over" and "almost horizontal".

The tribunal still found Mr Haynes "culpable" for failing to report the digger incident in the accident book as he was involved. Employment Judge Leith said: "His failure to [report it] was rendered considerably starker because of his [senior] role [...] he should have known better."

Concluding the case, the tribunal ruled that Mr Haynes' compensation will be reduced by 50 per cent because of his failure to log the accident. The report did not disclose the amount.

Walton Heath Golf Club has been contacted for comment.

New Year less cheerful for Epsom and Ewell football

9 January 2025



Jersey Bulls 5-1 Epsom and Ewell FC. Combined Counties League - Premier Division South. Saturday 4th January 2025.

A trip to the Channel Islands for a meeting with the Jersey Bulls is never an easy fixture, and so it proved once again as we lost our third straight match there by a score of 5-1, although at least we broke our scoring duck this time!

This week our club referred to "A big away day to Jersey" as if it was an exciting fixture to look forward to, which, in fairness, it should be, but nobody seemed very keen to make the journey, as we were very poorly represented, apart from a few Committee and, yes, two regular supporters!

We also had new signing Nathan Best, who joined from Colliers Wood United where their very informative website advised he had scored thirteen goals in twenty-five appearances for the midtable Step Six team. Kardel really received a baptism of fire, while Best looked like a younger Jaevon Dyer by way of appearance and if he can be as good then he will prove to be a fine addition. Unfortunately his touch let him down a couple of times, never a good look when wearing sky blue boots!

We kicked off towards the St Helier end of the ground, or, if you've sat in the stand there before, we played from right to left, and started breezily enough, as was maybe appropriate when considering the bitter wind chill and freezing rain that was unpleasant enough for us, let alone the home crowd who were even less used to this sort of weather. We earned an early pair of Adam Green corners and it was also Green who provided the first shot of the day following a good run from Kionte Gillfillian-Waul, although it was wide of the mark.

Kardel was called into action with a low save from an angled shot by Rai Dos Santos before the ball in from the subsequent corner was sent over the bar from close range. It was a lucky escape but the hosts went ahead in the 23rd minute when a corner from Dos Santos was met a couple of yards ahead of our near post with a flick on by Toby Ritzema which eluded everyone and nestled in the far corner of the net.

The hosts were monopolising possession by this stage and we were struggling to get out of our half, although Will Kendall was challenging for everything, while Jason Bloor looked dangerous with the ball at his feet, but he was often a long way out from goal and we were just unable to get the numbers forward to help. Bloor picked up a yellow card for a clumsy challenge on Luke Watson and not long after that we had a small flash point that resulted in bookings for Green and Jersey's Luke Campbell.

However, from the Jersey free kick, the ball to the far post was knocked in first time where Dos Santos was waiting to head the ball in off Kardel from close range in the 39th minute. Kardel kept the score at 2-0 with a good low save but we were definitely second best at the break, with the two goal lead being a fair one.

We seemed to have a little more ambition in the second half and Green saw his shot on target easily gathered by Euan van der Vliet, although this shot on target was our first one in Jersey after we had even failed to do that on our two previous visits. We continued to press and a Niall Stillwell free kick to the back post was headed across goal by Kendall at which point there was a collision which resulted in four players hitting the deck, but no penalty was awarded and probably rightly so.

A deep cross was volleyed wide by the hosts but then things got interesting as we pulled a goal back. Green sent a clever pass down the right for Best to cut in and his pass resulted in a low shot from Anderson which was not held and a corner was conceded. From the 63rd minute Green corner, it was Stillwell who was able to time his run perfectly to head the ball in from close range. The hosts felt there was a foul on their keeper and they might have had a case, but Stillwell's first goal for our club, and of course, our first on either of the Channel Islands, threatened to make things interesting.

For just three minutes, as it turned out, as a ball across goal was met with a superb strike from Ritzema that gave Kardel no chance from around the edge of the penalty area. His first goal could have been questioned as to whether he meant it, but there was no doubt about this one!

We tried to fight back but with no real success. Watson picked up a yellow card for a foul after he stumbled before making a challenge on Best. Some of the Jersey players were saying it wasn't even a foul, but it was reckless and whilst accidental, left our new guy on the deck for a while, although he would recover to complete the ninety minutes.

Jack Torbett came on for the tiring Bloor while it was also good to see Stefan Aiwone back on the field as he replaced Tobi Falodi, but in between those replacements we conceded twice; in the 77th minute when a right wing cross was headed in unmarked by Karl Hinds and three minutes later when a simple straight pass caught us out and Dos Santos cleverly guided the ball underneath the advancing Kardel to make it 5-1. If it hadn't been all over at 3-1, it was now!

Aiwone made a superb block to keep the hosts out and after four extra minutes the final whistle blew to signify our fifth loss in a row to the Bulls. It wasn't pretty, but the guys who were present tried their best and if there is fault to be apportioned from this match, it should be aimed at the absentees.

Hopefully we'll have many more players available for our two upcoming big Cup matches, starting on Tuesday, weather permitting, when we are due to welcome Berks County in a League Cup tie.

In summary, and as the only Salts supporter to have attended all four of our matches in the Channel Islands, it's fair to say that a trip over can be both a blessing and a curse. The islands are lovely and the welcome from the locals is great, but it is a bit of a slog with the early start and the cost involved, not to mention the risk of the whole thing being postponed at short notice due to weather conditions, as was the case when we were first due to visit Guernsey back in 2012/13, eventually getting over at the third attempt. Based on this match, it may well be that we've had our last trip to Jersey for a while, as we've met all the top teams now, many of them twice, and I make the still unbeaten islanders clear favourites right now to finally reach the Isthmian League this season after a few near misses.



Epsom & Ewell: Kevin Kardel, Tobi Falodi, Kionte Gillfillian-Waul, Adam Green (c), Nicolas Bostan, Niall Stillwell, Sean Anderson, Craig Dundas, Will Kendall, Jason Bloor, Nathan Best

Subs: Jack Torbett for Bloor (77), Stefan Aiwone for Falodi (80)

New Year Cheer For Sutton and Epsom Rugby

9 January 2025



Sutton & Epsom RFC 21 Battersea Ironsides 20. Saturday 4th January.

The September fixtures had concluded with a rousing encounter at Garratt Green when these two fine sides could not be separated and fought to a standstill for an engrossing 19-19 draw. It was the first indication in this campaign that Sutton had transformed their rather porous defence of recent times into a far more formidable outfit. The Ironsides still remain the benchmark for this league and another fiercely competitive contest was expected. Rugby Lane had witnessed five home victories on the bounce but every one of them by a miserly margin. This match maintained that sequence as Sutton edged out Battersea by a solitary point to win 21-20.

With winter arriving in the week there were concerns the pitch might be under threat from the elements. Rugby Lane was spared and a small but knowledgeable crowd gathered in gelid amiability. Freddy Bunting initiated proceedings as Sutton attacked the clubhouse end. The hosts were in top gear at once with multiple phases and commendable continuity they advanced steadily into the visiting 22 but concluded by conceding a penalty. The defences held sway as they thwarted the best endeavours of both teams. However, S&E put themselves under unnecessary pressure with errant kicking from hand that has been an unwelcome feature in recent weeks. The first instance came on ten minutes when a simple touch kick failed to cross the whitewash. It was returned with interest, led to a penalty and suddenly the Black & Whites were defending a lineout near their line. The pack were held short of glory before the ball was transferred to Charles Jacobs on the wing who could empathise with Buridan's ass as he pondered whether to go outside or cut back and the brief hesitation enabled Adam Bibby to hold him up over the line.

Shortly afterwards from the first scrum Sutton failed to find touch and Charles Stuart executed a perfect 50/22 to put the hosts under the cosh once more. The 2024-5 Sutton vintage is far more robust than recent predecessors and the defence forced a handling error. From the scrum Rob Hegarty made his first penetrative carry from Number 8 on an afternoon that was to garner impressive yardage for a man celebrating his 50th cap. At the third time of asking S&E cleared with the boot. Back in the opposition half the fluent movement looked to have broken down disastrously. Charles Stuart intercepted and was sauntering off for a certain score when the referee, Matt Blackett, brought play back for a penalty for the home team. Bunting stepped up to the oche and slotted over a 45-yard penalty for the 3-0 lead.

Both teams were showing admirable attacking intent that was neutered by well-organised defences with ferocious tackling. The Ironsides were also hindered by ambisimistrous handling with the mitigation being the cold weather. On the half hour another Sutton attack floundered in the Battersea 22 but Mr Blackett brought play back for an infringement near halfway. Once again Freddy Bunting impressively bisected the uprights for 6-0. From the restart the Greens soon won a penalty of their own and kicked to the 22. The lineout drive shifted the play laterally before the attack drove towards the corner. The ball was recycled and spun to the opposite side and a mismatch in the centres was expertly exploited and Charles Jacobs ran in untouched for the try. Charles Stuart put Battersea 7-6 ahead with a perfectly struck conversion.

The hosts were soon offered the chance to restore their lead but on this occasion the penalty was just beyond the range of the Bunting boot. This was the start of a period of intense pressure from Sutton as they sought the lead before the break. A penalty was kicked into the corner and from the attacking lineout the ball was sent towards the wing only to be intercepted. Again Sir brought play back for a penalty. From the tapped penalty Rob Hegarty went close before hooker Sam Lennie forced his way over for his first Sutton try. Freddy Bunting converted and the whistle blew for the interval with S&E leading 13-7.

It was the type of afternoon where the pinquid offerings of a burger van are enjoyed more for the warmth given to the hands than their culinary delights. One local resident was seen to take pity on two elderly spectators on a bench. Having popped home he returned with cups of tea and added brandy much to the appreciation of the lucky supporters. The game was living up to expectations and the score reflected an even contest that was in the balance. No one doubted that the second half would be more of the same with no quarter being given by two excellent defences.

From the restart Battersea Ironsides set out to dominate the rest of the proceedings playing at a higher tempo and with great intensity they subjected Sutton to intense pressure. The hosts were up for the challenge and weathered the early storm. Aided by a knock on by Cameron Baker, resplendent in white tights, the hosts gained a foothold in Battersea territory. Soon the familiar and reassuring sight of Freddy Bunting lining up a penalty was followed by cheers as the captain extended the lead to 16-7. Minutes later Charles Stewart replied in kind to reduce the deficit to a single score as Battersea Ironsides trailed 10-16.

The game entered the final quarter with the visitors' best efforts being undone by handling errors in the face of the relentless pressure from the home defence. Sutton's counters were promising rather than significant as the balance of play was in Battersea's favour with their glabrous Number 9 Ed Carr urging his team ever onwards. Finally, the pressure paid dividends as the Ironsides forwards were denied near the line the ball was spun wide. It was the turn of the men in green to benefit from Mr Blackett bringing the play back for a penalty. Charles Stuart accepted the easy 3-point option as the scoreboard eventually registered Sutton 16 Battersea 13 with ten minutes of regular time left on the clock.

For regulars at Rugby Lane this season this was familiar territory. Following the opening day thrashing of Old Colfeians every home game since has gone down to the wire.

Sutton & Epsom:

O'Brien, Huie, Bibby, Bunting ©, Findlay, Lennard, Munford, Johnson, Lennie, Boaden, Glanville, McTaggart, Tame, Jones & Hegarty.
Replacements: Gibson, Mount & Rea.

Battersea Ironsides:

Baker, Diamond, Magee, Banton, Jacobs, Stuart, Carr, Martin, Lewis, Chetwynd, Trickett, Wharton, Macpherson, Chitan & Dollard.
Replacements: Borup, Plater & Hiron.

Image courtesy Robin Kennedy

After 12 wins in a run Sutton & Epsom fall at the thirteenth

9 January 2025



Old Reigatian 21 Sutton & Epsom RFC 15. Saturday 21st December.

Midweek illnesses, at one stage, threatened to derail Sutton selection for the last league game in 2024. Ultimately the usual array of injuries, concussion protocols and Saturnalian celebrations led to only four changes from the squad that tamed Beckenham. In September the two sides thrilled Rugby Lane with Old Reigatian holding on to win 48-43. Since that day OR have only enjoyed two more wins and even more remarkably S&E have not indulged in the frippery of a solitary further bonus point. Entering Round 13 after six wins on the spin would it be 'Seventh Heaven' or 'A Game Too Far' for the Black & Whites? In another enthralling and entertaining encounter the hosts triumphed 21-15 completing the season double over Sutton.

Despite the recent meteorological travails the pitch was in pristine condition and full credit to all those people who work tirelessly to make Geoffrey Knight Fields such an excellent venue. Though pleasantly moist under foot, rather than muddy, there was a strong diagonal wind and the ominous prospect of impending rain. Almost at once the wind, favouring the hosts, demonstrated its venomous teeth by sweeping a Reigatian kick comfortably beyond the playing parameters and play resumed with a Sutton scrum in the hosts' half. Sutton opened their account after five minutes. A powerful scrum on halfway was followed by a Bibby break and a Rea run. Fleet-footed fly-half Freddy Bunting looped around and received the ball to dash into the corner. The captain, making light of the elements, added the conversion to his try for a 7-0 advantage.

From the restart the visitors were on the attack again with Ben Tame carrying out of the 22 to link with Josh Rea who fed Dan Jones who kicked ahead. Sutton stole the line out and were awarded a penalty. Freddy Bunting opted for the three points and extended the lead to 10-0. Perhaps Old Reigatian feeling the pressure of having the wind started to run from everywhere rather than exploiting the conditions with the boot. Errors mounted and Sutton were in the ascendancy and pressing for another try. Gareth O'Brien's angled run was met by a fabulous try-saving tackle on the quarter hour. At the end of the first quarter the fluent play from the Rugby Lane team was rewarded. The referee played advantage and the ball was flung out to the right touchline. Angus Findlay did well to take the high pass and then excelled himself with a perfect inside pass to Rob Hegarty who dived into the corner. Their followed a moment or three of confusion. Freddy Bunting's effort from the extremities split the jury if not the uprights. One flag was raised, the other remained disinterested and the scoreboard indicated 15-0. Then it became 17-0 before finally resting with 15 points to Sutton & Epsom.

Sutton's play in the first quarter bore all the hallmarks of a side buoyed by their winning streak and confident in their method. The visitors then gave the hosts a foothold in the match. S&E overthrew their lineout ball 10 metres from their line. Jude McRobbie accepted the festive offering and had the awareness to exploit the situation and strode home for the try. Tom Baldwin navigated the wind with aplomb to see the home XV trail 7-15. This was followed by a frenetic period of play. The reinvigorated Reigatian team launched an ominous attack only to be undone by an Adam Bibby interception. The centre was hauled down 35 metres out and the ball was run back with an impressive counter until it was turned over and returned with interest. It was breathless stuff for players and spectators alike. Despite the best endeavours of all concerned the half ended with no further additions, or reductions, to the scoreboard. Sutton, who had dominated the early exchanges, led 15-7 but Reigatian were right back in the contest as the sides retired to the warmth of the dressing rooms to contemplate their strategy for the second period.

Old Reigatian began the second half in splendid fashion creating two chances in as many minutes. The first was thwarted by an errant pass and the second by an interception. Sutton threatened to score with a wonderful 60-metre burst by Adam Bibby but he failed to connect with the lone support of Matt Symonds. OR stepped up the pressure and were aided by a flurry of S&E indiscretions that did not go unmissed by Mr Stewart. Following considerable pressure and multiple advantages Old Reigatian deservedly scored. With the addition of the Baldwin conversion the Black & Whites lead had shrunk to a single point as they held a 15-14 advantage. In addition to his exemplary place-kicking Tom Baldwin was becoming increasingly influential with ball in hand as he exploited the extra time and space he was finding with numerous jinking breaks that had Sutton scrambling in retreat.

Driving drizzle descended for the last half hour as conditions for players and spectators deteriorated rapidly. Scrum-half Ali Webb made a fine break as the hosts started to dominate proceedings. As the game entered the final quarter Sutton & Epsom received an additional burden when Mr Stewart correctly issued a yellow card to Dan Jones to reduce the visitors to 14 men when the flanker failed to avoid the airborne catcher. At once slick handling and ruthless efficiency saw winger Jonny Bridges cross the whitewash for his side's third try. Baldwin maintained his 100% record and the Geoffrey Knight Fields' fans rose as one to celebrate the 21-15 lead. The fifteen-point deficit was now a distant memory.

However, this was familiar territory for the Black & Whites who have become remarkably proficient in coming out on top in close encounters of the rugby kind. They looked poised to score through their pack as they advanced to the line only to concede a penalty. In the blink of an eye the visitors were back in their 22 and grateful that skipper Reilly Franklin-Talbot dropped the ball so denying his side the chance to increase their lead. Sutton's scrambling defence was being tested to the limits. As usual Steve Munford was to the fore but perhaps the best tackle came from Angus Findlay swooping off his wing to thwart another opportunity. With five minutes left the visiting forwards looked like they were going to add a third try. Once more they were denied by the whistle. This time the Rugby Lane team could not edge out their opponent at the death. Old Reigatian held on for a 21-15 victory. It was a well-deserved success as Old Reigatian had created more opportunities and played the more eye-catching rugby in the second half.

Sutton & Epsom

O'Brien, Symonds, Rea, Bibby, Findlay, Bunting ©, Munford, Johnson, Lennie, Boaden, Glanville, McTaggart, Tame, Jones & Hegarty.

Replacements: Mount, Davies & Hilton.

Old Reigatian:

Woodford, Briggs, Allen, Baldwin, Parker, Holder, Webb, Marshall, Nestor, Lee, Grant, Franklin-Talbot ©, McRobbie, Goodwin & Travers.

Replacements: Garrec, Cox & Overtoom.

Photo credit Robin Kennedy

Epsom and Ewell FC get marching orders from Sandhurst

9 January 2025



Epsom and Ewell FC 1-2 Sandhurst Town. Combined Counties League - Premier Division South. Tuesday 17th December 2024.

Following our defeat at Chipstead in November I advised that we regularly seemed to struggle to produce a good performance against any of the teams below us in the League. Although that trend was bucked with a good win at Alton, we were back to our old ways as a starting eleven that was unchanged from our Vase victory over Burnham failed to keep their intensity up and slipped away in the second half to a 2-1 defeat at home to Sandhurst Town, allowing them to claim a League double over us and leapfrog us in the table too.

We were a little slow out of the blocks and Mark Holley produced a good early run that ended with a shot that was sliced wide. However, we began to get back into the match and Conrad Essilfie-Condouah sent a header over the bar from an Adam Green free kick, although our man was offside in any case. Our next chance



came from a great crossfield pass from Will Kendall that was perfect for Sean-Michael Anderson, but his strike on target was closed down immediately by a defender.

We started to push our visitors back a little more from this point and took the lead in the 19th minute, when a Green corner was missed by the Sandhurst keeper Harry White and then appeared to strike the thigh of Elliott Miles, rebounding into the net from a couple of yards out. It was at first suspected that our defender Anthony Nazareth had got a touch, and he certainly celebrated as though he had done, but it was later confirmed by a couple of sources that this would go down as our fifth own goal of the season, which was a shame really, as a goal just before Christmas from Nazareth would certainly have been appropriate!

Ethan Nelson-Roberts was next to try his luck from 18 yards, but his powerful strike was just over the bar. Then suddenly, it nearly all went pear shaped as a pinpoint crossfield pass from our opponents put Shane Qolori through on goal, only for Dan O'Donovan to make a superb save with an outstretched leg to keep them out. They also struck another warning shot just over our crossbar in injury time after a good move. We went in with a lead, but by no means a secure one.

And so it proved early in the second half. With Sandhurst kicking towards the Tolworth end, Qolori had an opportunity. It looked at first as though his team mate had got in the way, but he retained the ball, and then drew a couple of defenders before drilling the ball low into O'Donovan's left hand corner from fairly close range in the 52nd minute to level the scores.

We had a brief shout for a penalty when Kionte Gillfillian-Waul just reached the ball ahead of a defender and nodded the ball past him before going to ground, but in all honesty, I felt that there wasn't quite enough there to award the spot kick and the referee felt the same way.

The match began to meander and we were no longer as dominant as we had been in the first half. Then we started to make errors. Firstly, Nazareth miskicked a clearance just a matter of yards out and the visiting striker saw his shot well blocked by O'Donovan with Nazareth himself able to recover to make a block from the next shot. Our defender was then clattered into by one of the opposition and although he recovered a little after treatment, he limped off a few minutes later and was replaced by Callum Wilson.

We then picked up another injury after Niall Stillwell was caught by a high foot that earned Morgan Elliot a yellow card, and again, he would limp off a few minutes later for debutant Tobi Falodi from Guildford City to take his place. We then had our best chance of the half after Gillfillian-Waul sent in a long throw that was flicked on by Craig Dundas for Green to strike, although White did well to parry the strike away to safety. Another opportunity followed after Green had split the defence with a pass to Kendall, but although he was through on goal, the defender chasing him probably did enough to force him into an earlier shot than he would have liked and he put the ball wide from only twelve yards out.

The visitors could have been 3-1 down in that time, but they weren't, and began to grow in confidence as the game reached its closing stages. They had a great chance in the 88th minute when a ball through on goal looked harmless enough until O'Donovan sliced his clearance on the bobbly surface, leaving Frazier Osunkaya with a good opportunity from an angle, but the contact wasn't the greatest and our keeper was able to reach the ball just before it crossed the line. We failed to heed the fairly large warning though and just a minute later Holley finished the game in a similar way to how he started it; with a good run from left to right, although this time he produced a much more accurate strike that O'Donovan could only palm into the goal from twelve yards.

Ultimately, this proved to be the winning goal and although I don't believe we deserved to lose over the ninety minutes, we hadn't really worked hard enough to win it either and if I'm honest, we probably should have done from the position we were in. It would be easy to say that this wasn't a very important League match, and it's true that we've had many more pivotal fixtures this season. However, this was another flat performance, particularly in the second half and will become a concern if repeated too often.

Epsom & Ewell: Dan O'Donovan, Niall Stillwell, Kionte Gillfillian-Waul, Adam Green (c), Nicolas Bostan, Anthony Nazareth, Ali Fofahan, Conrad Essilfie-Conduah, Will Kendall, Jason Bloor, Ethan Nelson-Roberts

Subs: Callum Wilson for Nazareth (65), Luke Miller for Anderson (68), Tobi Falodi for Stillwell (83)

Report Source: www.eefconline.co.uk

Sutton & Epsom topple league leaders

9 January 2025



Sutton & Epsom RFC 20 Beckenham 19. Saturday 14th December.

For the final league match at Rugby Lane in 2024 the crowd were treated to the visit of the league leaders Beckenham. Twice previously this campaign have proud pole position players descended upon Cheam. Firstly, Sidcup were dispatched and then Medway had their colours lowered by the Black & Whites. Could Rugby Lane prove again to be a graveyard for the aspirations of the high-flying? This is the first of the reverse fixtures this season and the visitors' hopes were bolstered by their September success at Balmoral Avenue by 29-14. However, it was Sutton who triumphed 20-19 to collect, arguably, their most valuable scalp of the season.

After one week away Jordan Huie and Jac Davies returned for Sutton. The Black & Whites may have the Kiwi trio of Bibby, Lennie and Rea but Beckenham included Jamaican internationals Lamar Sinclair & Rimani Richards, Barbadian Sevens caps with the Caddy brothers in the centres as well as Messrs Aoake-Tiamu, Badger, Boyce & Kakoulidis from Australia added to the mix. Freddy Bunting set the game in motion on a dismally gray afternoon, thankfully free from rain, with a crosswind in his face. It was high tempo rugby from the outset as probing attacks were battered back by formidable defences. Rob Hegarty, who is enjoying an impressive season for S&E, made the first significant break to the 22 but his side failed to capitalise. Sadly, Beckenham lost their influential 15 Bradley Bateup to an horrific dislocated knee in the opening ten minutes.

The next S&E opportunity was snuffed out as the ball was stripped in contact. It was to be a feature of the first period that Sutton ball carriers became isolated and were consumed by Beckenham's predatory pack who were excellent at the breakdown. In addition, the league leaders, from the first whistle, showed a propensity to run the ball from defence. The abrasive and robust carrying of Liam Caddy was perfectly complemented by deft offloads of his brother Jake as they tried to utilise the power and pace of Jordan Gabriel and Zane Kakaloudis on the wings. The Black & White defence had to be on their mettle and they were equal to every challenge.

After a quarter of an hour the deadlock was finally broken. A Beckenham player strayed offside and Freddy Bunting calmly from 40 metres put his side 3-0 up. Having gathered the restart the hosts did not escape the pernicious of Mr Spencer Pearce who reciprocated with a kickable penalty for the visitors. The Balmoral Avenue side were not content with levelling the score but went in search of the lead as they kicked into the corner. The league leaders illustrated their promotion credentials by scoring in the corner despite resolute defence. After several phases Tom Ward, like all good 7s, was on hand to cross the whitewash. The touchline conversion failed but the Kent team led 5-3 at the end of the first quarter.

Poor passing by the Sutton & Epsom side on halfway led to a lightning counter by Beckenham. A stunning score was nipped in the bud by a trademark covering tackle by the ageless Steve Munford. Sutton rallied with a superb scrummage winning the ball against the head that initiated their best passage of play. The game was developing into a highly entertaining spectacle as dangerous attacks were neutered by extremely efficient defences. Unfortunately, just after the half hour the away side suffered a second significant departure as loose-head prop David Aoake-Tiamu hobbled off the park.

Half time was rapidly approaching but with two significant breaks for injuries there would be a healthy amount of afters to consume. Beckenham were holding Sutton in check until a stunning break by Tom Lennard saw him advance deep into the 22 and as he was enveloped by the defensive cover flanker Dan Jones was on hand to take the well timed pass under the posts. Captain Bunting chipped over the conversion for a 10-5 lead. The Black & Whites went in search of further glory and moment later Freddy Bunting was lining up a pop at the posts. The expectant crowd, so accustomed to the excellence of their kicker, were surprised to see the ball drift wide as Bunting missed kicks are as rare as Ben Duckett leaving a ball in a test match. The final opportunity fell to the visitors but their 5-metre lineout was bundled into touch to conclude the first half with the scoreboard reading Sutton & Epsom 10 Beckenham 5.

The hosts made a rapid start to the second period. Learning from the first half the forwards advanced was ably supported and Steve Munford enjoyed a stream of



fast ball on the front foot. A stunning break by Gareth O'Brien propelled him into open space in the 22 but he selflessly passed to Rob Hegarty who ran in under the posts. Freddy Bunting completed the formalities for 17-5. This was a healthy lead though when returning prop Alex Mount vociferously declared: "They cannot live with us" it was met with ribald laughter from players on both sides. Everyone at Rugby Lane knew this game was far from over. It soon came to pass, five minutes later, that Beckenham were alive but not kicking as they declined the three-point option. Then another penalty meant the hosts were defending a 5-metre line out. Geordie Boyce secured the ball and hooker Lamar Sinclair muscled his way over despite the efforts of his opposite number Sam Lennie. Lewis Bunton added a sweetly struck conversion to reduce the deficit to 12-17.

The visitors pressed hard but Sutton held on. In the dying minutes, after a relentless forty-phase attack, a blocked drop-goal attempt from Lewis Bunton secured Sutton's 20-19 victory.

Sutton & Epsom

O'Brien, Huie, Bibby, Bunting ©, Findlay, Lennard, Munford, Johnson, Lennie, Boaden, Tame, McTaggart, Rea, Jones & Hegarty.

Replacements: Boaden, Davies & Hilton.

Beckenham

Bateup, Kakoulidis, Caddy J, Caddy L, Jordan, Bunton, Curtis, Aoake-Tiamu, Sinclair, Badger, Moran, Keefe ©, Boyce, Ward & Knowles.

Replacements: Richards, Latouche & Lovell.

Photo credit: Robin Kennedy

Rugby result reads well for Sutton & Epsom

9 January 2025



Sutton & Epsom RFC 17 - Reeds Weybridge 11. Saturday 7th December 2024.

The arrival of Reeds Weybridge at Rugby Lane signalled the culmination of the first half of the season having played the other ten teams in the league in the previous rounds. The Whiteley Village outfit lay third in the table. It was an identical position to the same stage as last season but they enjoyed an improved record of eight wins and 40 points compared to seven wins and 32 points. In comparison, Sutton & Epsom are one win, two places and six points better off than the 2023-4 statistics. On the last occasion these teams met it was for the denouement of the season and S&E won by 12-10 with a late Rob Hegarty try. It was again a thrilling affair with Sutton triumphing 17-11 for their fifth win on the spin.

Storm Darragh had put paid to the game at Priestfields but that was the only postponement as Reeds kicked off with the clubhouse and a strong wind behind them. S&E had brought in Matt Symonds and Josh Rea to replace Jordan Huie and Jac Davies. Sam Lennie was elevated from the bench to make his first start as hooker with Dan Jones switching to the flank. The Black & Whites incurred an early injury when Callum Gibson was replaced by Tom Boaden within the opening ten minutes. The visitors enjoyed more of the possession and territory in the first quarter but the conditions and ferocious defence by all concerned limited opportunities. Reeds progress was additional hampered by frustrating penalties. On the half hour excellent Sutton defence turned over the ball in their 22 and Dan Jones broke the shackles with a stunning burst to halfway. RW responded in kind and won a penalty which they decided to kick for points. The reliable Jack Jesty opened their account for a 3-0 advantage.

From the restart Sutton were gifted the chance to level the scores but as is their wont they kicked to the corner in search of greater rewards. The gamble was justified as the forwards completed their primary task of securing possession. The war of attrition was declined in favour of spinning the ball wide. The ball was transferred adroitly to Angus Findlay who again demonstrated his increasing aptitude for scoring in the corner. Even for the prodigious Freddy Bunting a touchline conversion against the wind was beyond his scope but his side led 5-3. Reeds Weybridge sought to take advantage of the wind and kicked into the home 22 where a scrambling Gareth O'Brien escorted it to touch. Another chip ahead appeared to harmlessly roll dead but the referee brought play back for S&E pulling down the lineout. Jack Jesty stepped up to regain the lead at 6-5 in time added on. A feature of the match was the numerous injury breaks throughout and it meant Sutton had plenty of time to reply.

Having secured the restart Sam Lennie twice carried powerfully in the 22. It was the host's who now had a penalty that gained no advantage. Usually when the ball is brought back for an indiscretion the defence can reset whilst the offence carefully considers its options. On this occasion the RW team had overpopulated their left flank leaving their right as weak as the Ardennes in 1940. Gareth O'Brien was alert to the possibilities and took advantage of Sam Lennie as his decoy as he glided through the remnants of the defence to celebrate his 50th cap in style. Fredding Bunting accepted the extras after the minor inconvenience of replacing the ball on the tee. The Black & Whites led 12-6. There was still four more minutes of the additional eleven to go. The final Reeds attack was snuffed out by excellent smothering defence by Adam Bibby and Mr Carter finally ended the half with Sutton ahead by 12-6.

The second half began to recall striking parallels with the final fixture of last season. Formidable attacking waves crashing against adamantine defences. The hosts besieged the visitor's 22. The game was set on an endless loop with Sisyphus and Tantalus starring for Sutton and Horatio playing the lead for Reeds. The Black & Whites seemed bereft of the traditional timber equine solution. Recent clinical efficiency in their opponent's 22 was replaced by frustration against an impenetrable defence. The elements added a slightly comical note as the wind hampered clearance kicks of sufficient distance. However, the Reeds solution of running a penalty 5 metres from their line and kicking to their wing was hardly a prosaic solution. It might require some training ground practice or only play that card on a still afternoon. The ball ended up being caught by Sutton as it descended near the Reeds' line in the corner.

Meanwhile for the Rugby Lane crowd the habit of declining the kickable three points was being questioned in the grandstand. As the game progressed the penalties became increasingly adjacent to the uprights. Fuelled by their libations the crowd implored, beseeched and vociferously heckled for a 9-point lead. The captain was impervious to the obsecrations of the mob. In gathering gloom with normal time evaporating the Sutton pack delivered at the eleventh hour. Tom Boaden forced his way over for the try to break the magnificent defence of the opposition. The Bunting conversion missed by inches as S&E held a 17-6 lead entering time added on. For the second half the crowd would enjoy 14 additional minutes.

It would have been easy for the Reeds Weybridge team to have been downcast after their Herculean defensive efforts had been thwarted so late in the game but they demonstrated tremendous team spirit to switch to the attacking mode. They were given a quick boost when Josh Rea received a yellow card for a high contact reducing Sutton to 14. Finally, they managed to create space and fullback Marcus Clark set off like a giraffe being released from captivity. He outpaced the initial cover and then stepped out of the covering tackle to complete a wonderful try from halfway. If Freddy Bunting's miss was unlucky then Jack Jesty's appeared to be cursed as it was blown narrowly astray at the last instant.

Trailing 11-17 Reeds threw everything at Sutton who did not help themselves by conceding numerous penalties. As inevitably as a game of amateur darts finishes with multiple efforts at double one this match was to conclude 5 metres from the Black & White line. Reeds resorted to their most powerful ball carriers to smash their way over. Sutton were equal to the task with a collective will and tremendous tackling. Finally, the defence employed the 'Irish Kiss' and prevented the Reeds man getting to the deck. Mr Carter awarded S&E the scrum and blew the final whistle to end a titanic struggle with Sutton & Epsom worthy winners by 17-11.

For the hosts the centre combination of Bunting and Bibby neutralised the potent opposition backs. Sam Lennie was mightily impressive with his throwing on a blustery afternoon and his penetrative carries. The pack to a man tackled ferociously and demonstrated admirable control in difficult conditions. Against a less resolute defence Sutton could have been out of sight. Once again the team impressed in the final moments with their heroic resistance by preventing a decisive score. Reeds failed to capitalise in the first period when they had the elements but the second half showed that a favourable wind does not guarantee points. In adversity Reeds Weybridge showed great character and no little skill first to survive and then to threaten to win the match.

Next Saturday Rugby Lane supporters can enjoy back-to-back home fixture with the 2pm game against Beckenham. The Kent team are enjoying another fine start to the season and are in pole position in the table. The visitors will be keen to repeat their 29-14 success at Blamoral Avenue in September. However, Sutton will



be wanting to add another top of the league scalp to those of Sidcup and Medway whose colours have been downed at Rugby Lane already this campaign. Finally, hearty congratulations to Jo Evans who on Sunday in the match against Battersea Ironsides became the first Sutton woman to play 100 league matches. Jo has been a stalwart of this remarkably successful squad that has risen through the leagues to the exalted status of playing in the Women's Championship South 1 rubbing shoulders with the likes of Richmond, Bath and London Irish.

Sutton & Epsom

O'Brien, Symonds, Bibby, Bunting ©, Findlay, Lennard, Munford, Johnson, Lennie, Gibson, Glanville, McTaggart, Tame, Jones & Hegarty.

Replacements: Boaden, Rea & Hilton.

Reeds Weybridge

Clark M, Brown, Maitland, Clark J, Endeley, Jesty, Palmer, Day L, Day R, Beavis, Goodwin, Finn ©, Ewington, Wasko & Wastie.

Replacements: Howe, Tyndale & Homfrey.

Epsom rugby scrape a point lead over Gravesend

9 January 2025



Gravesend 22 Sutton & Epsom RFC 23. Saturday 30th November.

Sutton and Epsom RFC visited Gravesend RFC in October last season at the height of the high tackle hysteria. In a match not so much punctuated by penalties as strangled by draconian enforcement Freddy Bunting collected five penalties. However, the hosts won 36-29 outscoring the visitors 6-2 in tries with a brace of penalty tries and a double from the totemic Samraj Chahal. The Black & Whites returned to the delightful Rectory Field facility that rather contrasted the unflattering portrayal of Gravesend in Andrea Arnold's recent film "Bird". One hopes the council were well compensated for the depiction of their town that raises the question: Is all publicity good publicity? S&E absquatulated again with the points sneaking home 23-22.

Sutton fielded the same starting XV that had snuck past Thurrock in the previous round, apart from an esoteric switch for the wingers. Tom Boaden returned to the bench and was joined by debutant Sam Lennie, the last arrival of the Christchurch triumvirate, who had flown in from New Zealand and not Dorset. An accident in the environs of Clackett Lane delayed the Sutton arrival but their blushes were spared as Mr Goksaran's tardiness that meant the kick off was delayed until 3:15pm. Finally, Freddy Bunting kicked off to the petanque end. Gravesend, belying their lowly league status, dominated the early exchanges. However, they struggled to cross the gain line owing to S&E's resolute defence. They squandered two opportunities in the opening ten minutes. Firstly, losing an attacking line out deep in the 22 and secondly knocking on with the line in sight.

Captain Bunting settled the visitors' nerves with an immaculate 45-metre strike for 3-0. His side now impressed with excellent continuity as rapid recycling aided forwards and backs alike. Gravesend, under severe pressure, conceded a penalty 10 metres out. The ball was prodded to the corner. The perfectly executed catch and drive ushered hooker Dan Jones over the whitewash for the opening try. Freddy Bunting's pin point accuracy made it 10-0. Five minutes later the Kent side found themselves in similar travails when they were not only turned over in their 22 but compounded the error by conceding a penalty. Another kick to the corner, another line out, another catch and drive ... another outcome. The home pack halted their adversaries so it was spun wide to winger Angus Findlay whose sublime footwork left the defender grasping thin air as the second try was scored. The metronomic Bunting converted for 17-0.

The Gs looked for a rapid response and the inspirational Samraj Chahal went blind from a scrum. Rhys Betts then chipped ahead and a try was only thwarted by magnificent cover by Tom Lennard. Moments later Sutton provided the opposition with some degree of consolation when they conceded a penalty under the posts. Rhys Betts accepted the gift and the hosts trailed 3-17. The first half concluded shortly afterwards with no further addition to the scoreboard.

The second period started inauspiciously for the hosts when they kicked the restart out on the full. This was to be a rare blemish as they proceeded to besiege the Sutton 22. Following ten minutes of intense pressure it was centre Zac Filmer's perfectly angled run that opened the second half scoring with a try by the posts. Rhys Betts added the simple conversion and the home team trailed 10-17. Within five minutes a raucous Rectory Field sensed an equalising score but their team conceded a penalty one yard from glory. Undeterred by that misfortune the revitalised hosts continued to press for points. Finally, on the hour mark they levelled the scores. Sutton debutant Sam Lennie received a yellow card for a high tackle. The 3-point easy option was declined. They were rewarded when the redoubtable Samraj Chahal forced his way over. With Rhys Betts converting the scores were level 17-17 as Gravesend had scored 17 unanswered points. With S&E reduced to 14 the pendulum had swung dramatically in the favour of the Kent side.

Despite the numerical inferiority Sutton were the next to score. With Mr Goksaran hovering like Azrael the visitors were awarded a penalty and Freddy Bunting recaptured the lead at 20-17. A minute later following excellent work from Jordan Huie S&E had another penalty for a late tackle. A simple 3 points for a 23-17 lead, meaning Gravesend would need a goal to regain the lead, was declined and the penalty was run instead. The forwards approached the line and thought they had scored via Rob Hegarty. The referee adjudicated that he had been held up over the line. A relieved home XV cleared long.

Sutton were returned to their full complement but only momentarily. Ben Tame cleared out a ruck and was issued a yellow for high contact. Sensing blood Gravesend also declined an easy kick and went for glory. From the ensuing penalty their bravery was rewarded as replacement Nathan Fouche powered over. To add salt to the wounds of the Sutton Society For Kicking All Penalties Rhys Betts conversion drifted wide and Gravesend led 22-20. However, a couple of minutes later Freddy Bunting was given a long-range attempt from the sidelines to recapture the lead. Demonstrating as few nerves as a false tooth he bisected the uprights for 23-22 as the game entered time added on.

Gravesend immediately had a chance following a fabulous 50-22 kick that nestled in an ideal spot for an attacking line out. Sutton set themselves for the catch and drive and did not contest the ball. Remarkably the throw was not straight. The hosts cleared to halfway but then they conceded a penalty which saw them retreating back to the corner to defend another close-range line out. This time, roared on by the Rectory Field faithful, the Gs pack secured the ball. Numerous phases saw the hosts crab their way under the posts. The heroic Sutton defence refused to be breached and turned over the ball. From the scrum they secured the ball and dismissed it from the paddock for a very hard earned 23-22 victory.

Sutton played some of their most effective rugby of this campaign in the first half. Their defence was miserly, they were quick to capitalise on errors and impressed with ball in hand. They were clinical in the opposition 22 when scoring two tries. The second half transformation said more for the attributes of Gravesend than Sutton's deficiencies. Rob Hegarty's dynamism was a focal point throughout, Jordan Huie's running out of defence was exhilarating and Tom Lennard's all around game won plaudits. Close games come down to small margins and in Freddy Bunting S&E held all the aces in all the decks.

For Gravesend this was an unwanted hat trick being their third loss in a row by a solitary point to add to a single point defeat on the opening day to Old Reigatian, not to mention a 2-point deficit to Reeds. Such a run would make Jonah feel fortunate by comparison. The hosts defended aggressively denying Sutton time and space. They varied their game with forwards, backs and some astute kicking. They were undone by missed opportunities as more than one vital line out was lost and overlaps in the 22 were not perceived. In addition, they were up against a formidable kicker who missed nothing as he made the challenging look elementary.

Next Saturday December kicks off at 2pm with a visit from Reeds Weybridge who are proudly perched third in the league. The equivalent fixture last season culminated the campaign with Sutton winning with a Rob Hegarty try on the final play for a 12-7 success.

Sutton & Epsom

O'Brien, Huie, Bibby, Bunting ©, Findlay, Lennard, Munford, Johnson, Jones, Gibson, Glanville, McTaggart, Tame, Davies & Hegarty.

Replacements: Boaden, Lennie & Hilton.

Gravesend

White, Huckle, Cooke, Filmer, Bruce M, Bruce G, Betts, Alderson, Dadson, Brooker, Bird, Brett, Stener, Chahal & Hewitt.

Replacements: Fouche, Hampshire & Fisher.



Worcester Park's path to a healthier and safer life

9 January 2025



Hapkido: Master Sung's Dojang in Worcester Park and New Malden - More Than Martial Arts, It's a Path to a Healthier, Safer Life.

The quest for personal safety has become more pressing in an era of rising crime rates and uncertainty, especially around South London, including Epsom. That's what led me, in my forties, to take up Hapkido at Master Sung's dojang in Worcester Park—a decision that has since transformed my life. Though initially driven by self-defence concerns, I quickly discovered that Hapkido is much more than a means to protect oneself. With the recent opening of Master Sung's new dojang in New Malden, even more people can benefit from this remarkable martial art.

Starting Hapkido at my age wasn't without its challenges. Learning new physical skills in your forties has its hurdles, and progress can feel painstakingly slow. But in Master Sung's dojang, the sense of community runs deep. Here, we celebrate every achievement—whether it's a beginner mastering their first stance or a long-time student advancing in rank. Each step forward is shared with classmates who cheer each other on, making the journey one of friendship and mutual encouragement rather than solitary struggle.

Hapkido combines martial arts' physicality with a philosophy emphasising calmness, discipline, and respect. In my classes with Master Sung, we focus as much on learning techniques for self-defence as we do on building resilience and mental strength. This is invaluable for adults and children, women, and anyone wanting to gain confidence and self-control.

Originating in Korea, Hapkido blends various elements: striking, joint locks, throws, and weapons training. But its focus on defensive tactics makes it particularly effective—and safe. Practitioners learn to redirect an opponent's energy rather than relying on sheer strength. This makes it ideal for everyone, regardless of size, age, or physical condition.

Master Sung's classes emphasise practical, real-world applications, making Hapkido especially appealing to women and parents of young children. While the latest crime rates have driven many adults like me to seek some form of self-defence, parents are increasingly looking for ways to teach their children the skills and confidence needed to navigate life safely.

Hapkido is not just about learning to defend yourself; it's a complete lifestyle that brings countless physical and mental benefits. Since joining Master Sung's class, I've felt more agile, fit, and mentally balanced. The physical routines in Hapkido work the entire body, improving cardiovascular health, flexibility, and strength. These are intense sessions, but each movement also demands focus and discipline—qualities that seep into everyday life.

And beyond the physical, Hapkido has been a boon to my mental well-being. Master Sung incorporates meditation and breathing exercises that help reduce stress, making each class feel like a journey toward inner peace.

One of the most unexpected rewards of my Hapkido journey has been becoming part of a community united by shared goals and mutual respect. Master Sung has built an inclusive environment where people of all ages and skill levels come together. His teaching style is patient and personalised, ensuring that everyone feels comfortable while still being pushed to their limits. With the new location in New Malden, this sense of community is only growing, reaching more people and making Hapkido accessible to even more Londoners.

Joining Hapkido has been a profound experience that has armed me with skills for self-protection and taught me the deeper values of discipline and balance. This art may be rooted in ancient Korean tradition, but its relevance and benefits are as essential today as ever.

If you're considering taking up martial arts, or even if you're just looking for a positive way to challenge yourself, Master Sung's dojang in Worcester Park or New Malden is the perfect place to start. After all, the journey of a thousand miles—or perhaps just the journey toward personal growth—can begin with a single step onto the mat.

Find out more about Hapkido: <https://self-defence-classes.online/master-sung/>

Live Classes for new students: SKMA Hapkido & Kummooyeh New Malden, 16 Malden Rd, New Malden KT3 6DD, Tel: 07771 886319