

# Epsom top the hill 4 - 1

25 September 2024

Epsom and Ewell 4-1 Hilltop. Combined Counties League Cup - First Round. Tuesday 24th September 2024.

Two goals, two assists and a position on the Hall of Fame for being one of our fifty top goal scorers in club history! Not a bad day's work for Luke Miller, who scored his thirty-fifth and thirty-sixth goals for the Salts, whilst also providing the deliveries for our first two goals, scored by Ethan Nelson-Roberts as we swept aside the challenge from Hilltop FC by four goals to one in the First Round of the Combined Counties League Cup at the KGF on Tuesday night. Hilltop are a club of mostly Somalian origin and currently play in the North Division of our League where they, like us had registered exactly a point per game, so a close contest was expected.

The scoreline might indicate that this was a comfortable win, but it was a slightly flattering one as possession was fairly even over the ninety minutes, although we were far more dangerous in front of goal where the visitors looked a little wobbly, and we appeared far more solid at the back. In fact, we are starting to look like quite a good team right now and even the early loss of Carl Oblitey to a hamstring injury didn't derail our attacking threat in this match.

We made three changes to our starting line-up following our mostly comfortable victory over Seaford Town on Saturday with Reece Tierney replacing the injured Stefan Aiwone and getting his first start since suffering a head injury against Jersey Bulls, whilst Luke Taylor also came in further forward for Fabian Nunes who is still working his way back from injury and was on the bench. Also watching from the sidelines was Dan O'Donovan as Faebian Witter was given a rare outing between the posts.

The visitors started brightly and passed the ball around nicely. Early indications were that this might be a long night, especially when Oblitey limped off, although he was replaced mostly as a precaution, with a more important League fixture coming up on Saturday. We conceded one of many free kicks around the edge of the area, but Witter was alert to reach the strike from Abukar Mohammed on the 15 minute mark.

And a minute later we were ahead. A pass out to Miller resulted in a dangerous low delivery that just eluded two of our players coming in, but was met just beyond the far post by Nelson-Roberts, who was too strong for his full back and slotted the ball past Hansel Coelho at his near post from about four yards out. Witter made another low save but we extended our lead in the 31st minute when Miller provided another deep delivery and Nelson-Roberts got ahead of his man to head the ball downwards and up into the net, just inside the post from around five yards out.

Tierney was alert to block a shot from the visitors but in the 35th minute we conceded in rather odd circumstances. It was hard to see exactly what happened, but it looked as though Witter came out wide to clear a ball and struck it against a team mate, leaving the easiest of finishes for Tahir Showkat to roll the loose ball into the empty net.

We responded well to the goal though. Substitute Sean Anderson made a good run, forcing Coelho into a save from a narrow angle, and although the ball fell nicely for Adam Green, his shot from eighteen yards went across the goal and out for a goal kick. However, in the 45th minute Green was largely responsible for our third goal as he put Coelho under severe pressure and his clearance went straight to Miller on the edge of the penalty area, and he guided the ball straight back past the keeper into the far corner of the goal to give us a 3-1 lead at the interval.

This goal placed Miller into the club Hall of Fame. For those who are unaware of this at: [www.eefconline.co.uk](http://www.eefconline.co.uk) it shows the top fifty players in club history in terms of appearances, goals and clean sheets. Miller thus joined a pair of players on 35 goals in our former Player/Coach Sid Faggetter who scored his goals in just forty matches in the 1950/51 season and former Captain and appearance record holder Graham Morris who scored them over 658 appearances from 1990-2004!

Seven minutes into the second half he had surpassed both of these players with his second of the night and again Green was the provider as he robbed a defender and set Miller up in stride, from where he ran in and clipped the ball across Coelho into the bottom corner.

With almost half of the match remaining, it might come as a surprise that this goal was the last of the match, although there were more chances for both sides. Nunes had been on the field for seconds when he had a shot blocked by a defender, while Witter was able to pick a shot out that was heading for the top corner. Another free kick from Mohammed forced Witter into his best save of the night, getting down low to push the ball away and then being ready to make a second save from an angle as the ball came back in. Our keeper needed a little help from a defender after failing to hold the next free kick from Benet Hashani, before a left wing cross from the visitors bounced off the top of our crossbar and away.

We then wasted a corner, which led to a rapid counter from Hilltop, but Witter was able to make another good low save to keep the score at 4-1. At the other end Coelho nearly dropped a shot from Nunes over the goal line after parrying it up in the air, but was able to recover without serious alarm and the only other concern came when substitute Niall Stillwell sent a header forward on the left where Coelho got to the ball to clear just ahead of Nelson-Roberts, who felt the full force of his challenge and limped off in the 88th minute. Electing not to put O'Donovan into the outfield, we had used our other four substitutes and so finished the remainder of the match with ten men.

The visitors, as you might expect with the player advantage, held the balance of the possession in those final minutes and another substitute Anthony Nazareth had to head the ball off the goal line after Witter had punched the ball against an opponent which had then looped up, while Ethan Brazier picked up a late yellow card for two fouls in quick succession. Nunes had the final word with a swerving strike from thirty yards, but Coelho kept the ball out and the final whistle confirmed our progress to the last 32 of the competition, which is scheduled to take place around the middle of October.

This was our fifth win in six matches and it was just a shame that only 40 spectators were in attendance; our smallest home crowd since February 2020 when we were playing our home matches at the remote High Road ground in Chipstead.

I was provided with various excuses for the small number, ranging from Sky TV (when isn't there a match on Sky?) and that they had been refused permission by the League to reduce the entry cost, but I don't buy this at all. The League has a minimum entry rule, but we already charge well over that amount and could easily have reduced it at any time without requiring permission.

Quite simply, there is always an excuse or something being "spun" at our club, and there remains no sincere attempt by anyone in an official position to get more of our own supporters in. There are a number of things they could do, and engaging with the ones they currently have would be a start; something they have failed to do over the last three years. A few random pictures of player huddles on Instagram might get a few "likes", while a few Colts coming along on a few Saturdays might boost the numbers artificially, but neither help our short term plight. Three long-serving supporters were present at this match, who have in recent years all been on the Club Committee and were keen to help, yet were forced off because they held some different opinions to those who do not want to hear them. This remains a huge mistake by those currently running the club, who seem to think that they are not answerable to supporters. Whilst a new ground, if it ever occurred, would undoubtedly bring in new support for a while, you have to ask how the club would retain them for more than a few months once the novelty has worn off.

We host Horley Town on Saturday in an important League match; a club that have engaged with their local community in recent months and had two attendances well over 500 at the end of last season because they visited and invited all their local school children in with their parents. Whilst it is slightly more difficult for our club to do this as we can't recoup anything for the bar and catering, a crowd of this number would make a huge difference. Horley's attendances have been similar to ours in recent seasons, so there is no reason why we couldn't adopt a similar idea, and right now they would see a good team in decent form, which always helps!

Epsom & Ewell: Faebian Witter, Ethan Brazier, Kionte Gillfillian-Waul, Adam Green (c), Reece Tierney, Toby Young, Luke Miller, Craig Dundas, Carl Oblitey, Luke Taylor, Ethan Nelson-Roberts

Subs: Sean Anderson for Oblitey (13), Fabian Nunes for Taylor (54), Anthony Nazareth for Young (69), Niall Stillwell for Dundas (81)

Report Source: [www.eefconline.co.uk](http://www.eefconline.co.uk)

---

## Late Seaford rally too late to knock Epsom out

25 September 2024



Epsom and Ewell FC 3-2 Seaford Town FC. Combined Counties League - Premier Division South. Saturday 21st September 2024.

Although ultimately irrelevant, two Seaford Town goals in the 86th and 88th minutes would be the memory of this match that most supporters will have taken as they headed home, which was a pity as this was the most dominant performance I had seen from an Epsom and Ewell team since we returned to Step Five in 2023. We won this F.A. Vase contest by three goals to two in the end, although 5-0 wouldn't have been a score line that the visitors could complain about. When considering that they brought a supporters coach to this match, and that we had around a dozen children in the ground as mascots, together with a number of parents, the attendance of 78 on a hot sunny afternoon was an extremely disappointing one for such a prestigious match.

Two changes were made to our starting eleven after Tuesday's defeat to high-flying Knaphill, with Ethan Nelson-Roberts and fit again Fabio Nunes coming in for Luke Taylor and the absent Sean Anderson. Jason Bloor put in a fine appearance from the bench in that match and may have started here, had he not been on holiday! Taylor dropped to the bench where he was alongside a pair of debutants in Niall Stillwell and Anthony Nazareth. Stillwell spent much of last season at Guildford City, where he stood out despite their disappointing season. He is also my boy's P.E. teacher! Nazareth played for us briefly in pre-season but has now joined after spending time at Cobham. Both would make their debuts later in the match.

We went into this match in fairly good form with three wins from our last four matches, but Seaford Town were top of the Southern Combination Division One and were expected to put up a decent fight, even if their main priority is probably a run at promotion. We also carried a strange statistic into this encounter, as we had not scored in the first half of the twelve competitive matches we had played so far, which equalled a record set way back in 1982, starting with our famous F.A. Trophy match at home to Altrincham and concluding with a 2-1 win at St Albans City in our thirteenth match. What we would give to be playing those sort of teams again!

We nearly consigned that stat to the history books as early as the fourth minute as Nunes set up Carl Oblitey for a good strike from close range, but he sent the ball flying into the car park at the Tolworth end. Adam Green then struck a tapped free kick from Nunes wide from twenty yards. The next chance came when Oblitey did well on the right and his delivery was met by a brave low dive from Nelson-Roberts whose header went just wide.

We were completely dominant at this stage and a Green corner was met by a header from Stefan Aiwone that keeper Wester Young did well to keep out before Nunes sent the loose ball wide from only a few yards out. Young is advancing in



years now but was part of the strong Molesey line up that used to play us around fifteen years ago before moving to East Sussex and playing for Hailsham Town against us in recent seasons. Young punched away another good delivery from Green before Oblitey finally got the ball past him from Nelson-Roberts' low left wing delivery, only to see the Assistant's flag raised against him.

Nelson-Roberts then hit the crossbar from twenty yards out with a curling strike from out wide and Oblitey then cushioned a header back for Green to strike at goal, but Young parried the ball away to safety. We were half an hour into the match before the visitors even had a half chance when a deep cross had Dan O'Donovan scrambling and he just clawed the ball away just when it looked like it might drop over him, although was relieved to see the incoming striker send the loose ball way over the bar from not that far out.

Aiwone couldn't get his header on target from a Green corner and Luke Miller was sending in some dangerous deliveries, but it was becoming apparent that we were approaching the half time mark with another blank. Just as I was preparing my half time tweet to the masses, I had to re-write it as Miller's ball in was sliced into the far top corner of his own net by the Seaford Captain Ryan Knight from about eight yards in the 47th minute and there was no time to restart the first half. Technically, we did still set a new club record in terms of 619 minutes without scoring in the first half, even if we didn't quite register that thirteenth consecutive half time duck!

But 1-0 was the least we deserved, and it arguably could have been much more. We had to change things around almost immediately after the restart when Aiwone hurt his knee and had to be replaced by Nazareth in the 48th minute. It didn't stop the flow of traffic though and we extended our lead in the 52nd minute with a superb defence splitting pass from Green that Miller ran onto in the right wing channel. He drew the keeper and struck at goal, only to find a defender had just extended a foot to block the shot, but it fell kindly for him and with Young committed to blocking the previous effort, our tricky winger had the simple job of sliding the ball at an angle into the empty net from eight yards. Miller has now scored thirty-four goals for our club and is one away from joining the club Hall of Fame which shows the top fifty goal scorers in our history and contains some names that regular supporters will know well, like Jamie Byatt, Kyle Hough, Robbie Burns, Daryl Cooper-Smith and Dale Marvell, not to mention the top man himself Tommy Tuite. It is quite an elite group!

Toby Young had a chance from a corner, but the ball hit his back as he jumped and the ball just looped over the bar, before Green saw his strong shot cleared for a corner. Craig Dundas then sent his header wide from that Miller corner as we continued to boss the game completely.

We had a scare in the 62nd minute when O'Donovan, who was probably a bit bored by his lack of action to this point, started to make a number of incursions outside his penalty area and from one of these, his headed clearance just went up in the air behind him and Young had to react quickly to head the ball clear of our goal under pressure from a visiting striker.

But this was an isolated foray into our half and we scored a third goal in the 65th minute when a deep Green corner was reached at full stretch by Nelson-Roberts at the far post. His shot struck the foot of Young's left hand post, but rebounded kindly across goal, where Nazareth reacted first to poke the ball over the line from a couple of yards out.

Frustration boiled over for the visitors and Lewis Hallett picked up a yellow card for going straight through the back of Oblitey, although our centre-forward then picked up a card of his own just a few minutes later, although it wasn't clear what for, and even Oblitey seemed perplexed by the decision. Nazareth then sent a header wide as we continued to do most of the work.

However, in the 86th minute the visitors received a lifeline when a long ball out of defence was reached by Josh Wright ahead of O'Donovan who had come a long way out of his goal, leaving their man with the simple job of putting the ball into the empty net. Although it might look as though O'Donovan was at fault here, it is important to question why he felt the need to come so far out of his goal so often in this match. It's worth noting that Dundas had by this time left the field and we just didn't seem to be so organised after that point. Two minutes later, a right wing cross was turned in unmarked at the far post by Matt Holland to make the score 3-2.

We still had chances as a couple of substitutes got involved. Taylor sent a header back across Young, only to see the ball drop inches beyond the Seaford crossbar, while Felipe De Lima was booked for an unconvincing fall just outside the penalty area that the referee correctly saw as simulation. In fact, De Lima was probably a little lucky to stay on the field as he clattered into a visiting player in the 96th minute and could easily have picked up a second yellow card. Although the whistle blew as the Seaford player landed, fortunately it was to signify full time!

So it's now four wins in five matches for our boys and we remain in good form ahead of our League Cup First Round tie at home to Hilltop on Tuesday. It's also good to report that discipline was much better, following the issues from last Tuesday and now we have to focus a little better on concentration for the full ninety minutes, or it may cost us next time. Overall though, this was a strong performance against a team that I thought would push us far more than they did and obviously credit goes to our boys for restricting them as well as we did.

Monday's F.A. Vase First Round draw will be released around lunchtime and, as always, we'll have full details available within minutes of the draw being released on Twitter / X at @EEFCOnline and soon after that at the Epsom and Ewell FC Archive website at: [www.eefconline.co.uk](http://www.eefconline.co.uk) That match will take place on Saturday 19th October, unless we are drawn at home, in which case it will probably be the Friday evening as our landlords are at home that day in a League match. That means our next Vase match will take place just one week before the fifty year anniversary of our first ever F.A. Vase match in 1974/75, which ended with an appearance at Wembley Stadium in the first ever Final. Wouldn't it be nice to have a Vase run to match that!

Epsom & Ewell: Dan O'Donovan, Ethan Brazier, Kionte Gillfillian-Waul, Adam Green (c), Toby Young, Stefan Aiwone, Luke Miller, Craig Dundas, Carl Oblitey, Fabio Nunes, Ethan Nelson-Roberts



Subs: Anthony Nazareth for Aiwone (48), Felipe De Lima for Nunes (63), Niall Stillwell for Young (76), Luke Taylor for Dundas (83)

Report Source: [www.eefconline.co.uk](http://www.eefconline.co.uk)

## Sutton & Epsom Denied at the Death in Epic Encounter

25 September 2024



Sutton and Epsom RFC 43 v Old Reigations 48. Saturday 21st September 2024.

It has been a Jekyll & Hyde start to the campaign for Sutton & Epsom. However, the reality dates back to Epictetus and his motto that has been adopted by coaches from around the globe: "Control the Controllables". The one aspect out of your control is the standard of the opposition and Beckenham last Saturday provided a far sterner test than the opening day Old Colfeians. Last season Old Reigatian did the double over S&E in a couple of high scoring contests. They started by winning a fluctuating game at home 35-29 before a first half blitz was the basis of their second success at Rugby Lane by 38-21. New heights were reached on Saturday with a dizzying 12-try spectacular with the tries equally distributed as Old Reigatian hung on in a fabulous finale to win by 48-43 and continue their unbeaten start to the season.

It was a superbly sunny Saturday, firm under foot with a refreshing breeze and all was set fair for entertaining running rugby and these two sides did not disappoint. The visitors dominated the early exchanges including their front row winning a penalty at the first scrum. In customary fashion the front row offender demonstrated his prelapsarian innocence with a look of amazement at having been penalised. With tenacious defence OR were denied. It was frustrating for Sutton that their first possession in the backs culminated in an interception near halfway and Harrison Mitchell running in the opening try that was unconverted for a 5-0 Reigatian lead. After the restart Adam Bibby's reward for his excellent chase and tackle was a twisted ankle and being replaced by Lawrence Elliott for the remaining 70 minutes.

After a dozen minutes S&E were on the scoreboard. Gareth O'Brien initiated the counter before a powerful carry by Jordan Huie and a probing run by Pete Gordon. Then the backs were released and the crowd enjoyed the delicate tracery of O'Brien's weaving run to score under the posts. Freddy Bunting's conversion gave the hosts a slender 7-5 lead. In the next 20 minutes Sutton's hopes were hampered by discipline. Tom Baldwin willingly accepted a trio of penalties and the Black & Whites were reduced to 14 when Jordan Huie connected with an opponent in midair. The yellow card was perhaps not a condign punishment but this law is harsh if not essentially fair. With the visitors leading 14-7 Glanville and Whitaker rallied the hosts who were awarded a penalty of their own and Freddy Bunting reduced the lead to 14-10 to OR. Moments later a further 3-point opportunity was declined and Captain Bunting kicked to touch for a 5-metre lineout. Mount, no doubt, wearied by the moil of his scrummaging duties delighted at receiving the ball close to the line and dutifully scored. Despite the balmy temperatures Freddy Bunting was as cool as the underside of a cucumber and being as hard to rattle as two grapes in a wine glass he converted from the flank to take a 17-14 lead as the first half entered time added on.

As is frequently witnessed at every level of the game the restart is a vulnerable time for the team that has just scored. The Black & Whites secured the ball and seemed to have avoided the fatal error only to concede a penalty on their second sortie. Tom Baldwin made it four from four to level the score at 17-17. Neither side were content to just play out the first period with parity and audaciously tried to wrest the advantage from the other. Despite the endeavours of all concerned there was no addition to the score and the sides turned around level, 17-17. It had been a commendable effort by Sutton to shackle the Old Reigatian team and restrict them to one try and they now had the elements in their favour for the second period.

S&E were immediately under the cosh in the second half and were indebted to vital interventions by Jordan Huie, Alex Mount and Pete Gordon. But the Old Boys would not be denied and as it was Harrison Mitchell, who again opened the scoring, this time applying the coup de grâce from closer range. Ten minutes elapsed before the next score which was to be the first of a



Tom Baldwin hat trick. Showing great determination he forced his way over in the corner despite considerable attention from the defenders and a dubious crowd dropped their remarks into the understanding air. Though unable to add the extras to his try Tom Baldwin had stretched the lead to 27-17. Sutton needed a swift reply and that was supplied by the livewire flanker Dan Jones with the Bunting boot bisecting the uprights the game was once more in the balance with OR leading S&E 27-24.

The game appeared to have taken on an entirely different complexion, and ended as a contest, with a sensational 5-minute burst from the men from Geoffrey Knight Fields. When 18-year-old William Henry Perkin invented by accident the synthetic purple dye, mauveine, in 1856 he became a multi-millionaire. It appeared that this purple patch of three tries in five minutes would be equally priceless to Old Reigatian. The hosts muffed the restart and Tom Baldwin dummied with numbers queuing up to score for his second. The inside centre completed his trio courtesy of some indecisive defence. Then replacement back William Parker joined the party with the pick of the tries courtesy of some delightful legerdemain. It was suddenly 48-24 with Tom Baldwin's personal tally 33 points. Whilst their opponent's back play was passing and running in excelsis Sutton had embraced the arms of Morpheus. The third rapid score would have encouraged the Rugby Lane faithful to get to the bar before the rush or view the remainder through the leper's squint. However, it was the catalyst for the transmogrification of the home XV's performance. With ten minutes on the clock the game that was threatening to become a rout became a spectacular comeback. Sutton to their credit did not panic with reckless play but valued their possession and waited for the openings. Jordan Huie brought the ball out of his 22 and it was recycled wide to Lawrence Elliott who stepped inside and broke to halfway before launching a speculative kick. The ball nestled under the posts and Arun Watkins won the race to touch it down. The simplest of conversions made it 48-31. Playing with pride and passion the Rugby Lane men laid siege on their opponents' line. Finally, the pressure told and Matt Whitaker scored and though the touchline conversion drifted wide it was 48-36 as the game entered time added on. Ewan McTaggart demonstrated how to secure the restart and put Sutton on the attack again. Freddy Bunting saw a gap and accelerated into the Reigatian half. The retreating defence of the Old Boys conceded a penalty. Without hesitation it was quickly taken and Matt Whitaker was dotting down under the posts. The rapidly taken conversion was successful and the scoreboard read 43-48. It was breathless and unbelievable rugby and the passionate crowd had witnessed the most extraordinary reversal of fortunes. The Black & Whites secured possession and Bunting and Watkins led the charge to halfway. This time the penalty led to a yellow card and the 14-man Old Reigatian team were forced into their 22 by Freddy Bunting's arrowing kick. Then another penalty and Mr Whinney issued another yellow card with a mortician's lofty detachment for the irksome job in hand as OR were set to complete the game with 13 on the pitch. The visitors faced a 5-metre lineout with no doubt a mixture of emotions from total disbelief to grim determination. To their eternal credit the visitors defended with heroic valour tackling with ferocity and denying space until they forced a turnover. The final whistle was greeted with jubilation and relief by Old Reigatian whilst the Sutton faces were marked deeply with the hieroglyphics of pain.

First and foremost, this was a fabulous game of rugby that did great credit to all who were involved. The Old Reigatian backs attract a lot of praise, which is thoroughly deserved, but do not underestimate the front row triumvirate of Messrs Monk, Nestor and Collister who provided an excellent platform. No doubt the club archivist will be asked if Tom Baldwin broke the record for most points in a league game. For Sutton the remarkable revival should convince them that they have the capability to beat anyone in the league when they play their best rugby. Next week the 1st XV travel to Battersea Ironsides who themselves have enjoyed three close encounters of the rugby kind so far this campaign with two victories. The kick off will be 3pm at Burntwood Lane and it will be the first time Sutton have played a league fixture at this venue as last season the weather meant it was relocated to the Grasshoppers RFC's synthetic surface.

#### Sutton & Epsom

O'Brien, Watkins, Scott, Bibby, Huie, Bunting ©, Munford, Mount, Gordon, Boaden, Glanville, McTaggart, Rea, Jones & Whitaker.

Replacements: Hilton, Green & Elliott.

#### Old Reigatian

Woodford, Mitchell, Allen, Baldwin, Coyle, Holder, Skinner, Monk, Nestor, Collister, Jones, Franklin-Talbot, Brooks, Goldsmith & Travers.

Replacements: Lee, Courteney-Walker & Parker.

Photo: Robin Kennedy

---

## Blue sky sees Black and Whites in the red

25 September 2024



Beckenham 29 Sutton & Epsom RFC 14. Saturday 14th September.

Sutton & Epsom arrived at Balmoral Lane as league leaders after a comprehensive Colfeians victory by 50-7. Beckenham had impressed with a 27-13 triumph of their own over Reeds Weybridge in their opener. As are the vagaries of availability there were six switches in the Sutton set up but no new arrivals. Messrs Elliott and Rea were elevated from the bench with Joe Lovatt starting at 9 to be joined by the experienced quintet of Munford, Whitaker, Mount, Mohr and Tame. Apologies for absence ranged from concussion to watching the T20 cricket finals at Edgbaston. Meanwhile, Beckenham's hat trick hero of Round One, Geordie Boyce, had endured an Australian Friday night to forget in Cardiff and was absent. After a keenly contested encounter Beckenham deserved the honours with a bonus point victory by 29-14.

Freddy Bunting kicked off on a beautifully sunny afternoon with a stiff breeze over his shoulder. After the initial sparring from both attacking units it was S&E that produced the first chance of the afternoon. A flowing break after a dozen minutes saw Sutton thwarted by foul play 5 metres from glory. The tapped penalty found its way to Matt Whitaker who stretched for the line but Mr Burchell adjudicated that the ball had not been touched down. Beckenham put themselves under further pressure by knocking on on their 22. This time it was Lawrence Elliott for Sutton who came agonisingly close to opening the scoring but marvellous defence prevented the ball being placed over the line. Moments later it was not to be third time lucky as a rampaging run by prop Alex Mount set up the perfect platform for a try but the opportunity was squandered. At the start of the second quarter Beckenham winger Gabriel Jordan dashed into the enemy half and threatened a stunning score but he was scythed down by a tremendous tackle by Lawrence Elliott. Having that taste of moderate success the hosts looked probable scorers on the half hour when Number 8 Andrew Knowles was hauled down with the line at his mercy. It was a very temporary stay of execution for Sutton. From the ensuing scrum the ball was transferred to the left where winger Gabriel Jordan had time and space to score. Despite the Lewis Bunton conversion failing on the wind Beckenham led 5-0.

Excellent pressure from the Black & Whites at the restart gave them an advantageous lineout on the host's 22. The scenario improved when Beckenham conceded a penalty that was kicked into the corner. Initially the Kent forwards splendidly drove back the Surrey pack. However, a secondary Sutton surge saw the visiting forwards advance towards the line. Then play was halted by the shrill blast of the whistle and the referee not only awarded Sutton & Epsom a penalty try but also he flourished a yellow card to captain Richard O'Keefe to reduce the host's, who now trailed 7-5, to 14 men. The Balmoral Avenue men made light of the numerical deficiency and soon regained the lead. S&E failed to deal with a bobbling ball near their 22. From the scrum the home team struck down the flank with an arcing run followed by an inside pass to scrum half Craig Thomson who went through untouched to score. Lewis Bunton's successful strike concluded the first half with Beckenham leading 12-7 despite the wind and being a player down on the naughty step.

With the Beckenham coaching contingent imploring greater dynamism from their charges one contemplated that the collective noun for a group of coaches should be a 'Frustration' of coaches. Meanwhile in the visiting camp the message would have highlighted that the numerous visits to the opposition 22 had garnered only a solitary try whereas their opponents had been far more clinical with a couple of scores. The Balmoral Avenue faithful must have viewed their team as slight favourites as they had both the lead and the wind but they knew success would only come with an improved performance in the second half.

From the restart the hosts went in search of their next score. They upped the pace and ferocity and forced an error from the visitors when their scrum, on their line, came under considerable pressure. Beckenham looked to be mimicking S&E when they dropped the ball but rather than being fly-hacked to safety it fell into attacking hands. With commendable vision a long bouncing pass reached Matt Lovell in splendid isolation for him to score with ease. Lewis Bunton added to the growing lead with the conversion for 19-7. Moments later the Kent men looked likely to score a marvellous try as they swept down the pitch exhibiting superb support play but scrambling Sutton denied them a spectacular score.

S&E brought on their bench, Messrs Boaden, Hilton and Munford as they sought to hold out under their posts. The hosts conceded a free kick that was taken quickly by Matt Whitaker and in a flash he had relieved the siege and was crossing the halfway line. With the hour rapidly approaching Sutton were indebted to a wonderful solo effort from flanker Dan Jones who showed great pace and nimble footwork to score. Freddy Bunting nonchalantly added the extras to put his team back into the contest as they entered the final quarter trailing by 19-14. Elation became deflation from the restart. Failure to catch the kick led to the ball being deflected forward and giving away a hideous offside penalty as the approaching ball was as irresistible as an ice-cold

lager on a sweltering summer afternoon. Lewis Bunton punished the error as he chipped over the penalty for a 22-14 lead that meant the visitors needed two scores to avoid defeat.

Lewis Bunton now sensibly used the wind to keep Sutton at arm's length by pinning them in their 22 with well-placed kicks. S&E were chasing the game and conceded a kickable penalty but Beckenham went in search of the bonus point try. Though their bravery went unrewarded as they lost the attacking lineout they had their reward in time added on. Gabriel Jordan scored his second try by demonstrating great strength in contact to break the tackle and then notable determination to run 30 metres straining every muscle to score with tacklers hanging onto his frame. Lewis Bunton bisected the uprights from the touchline for 29-14. There was time for one more frustrating visit to the host's line for the persevering visitors but the lammergeyers had been hovering over the Sutton carcass for a while and the final whistle put the visitors out of their misery on a frustrating afternoon for them.

Beckenham deservedly won this encounter outscoring S&E by 4-2 in the try count. From the outset their pack had the upper hand in the set scrum despite an early departure of the influential Rimarni Richards. The brothers Caddy impressed in the midfield whilst the educated boot of Lewis Bunton kept Sutton in their half in the second period once an 8-point lead had been established. Credit must also be given to the host's dogged defence in the first half that frustrated the visitors' attack that could not get into top gear. The clinical finishing by the home team was the ultimate difference between two evenly-matched outfits.

For Sutton & Epsom Dan Jones put in his best performance for the 1st XV and his stunning solo score was a just reward for a tireless effort in the best traditions of openside flankers. It is easy to take Matt Whitaker for granted as he approaches his 200th appearance but his uncanny habit of gathering the ball at eight from a retreating pack and still getting over the gain line is an invaluable commodity. Though the tempo and ferocity of the contest went up a notch or two in the second half it was the rather flat performance, in contrast to Week 1, in the first period that scuppered the Black & Whites in this match. In terms of possession and territory they should have led at the interval but instead turned around with a 5-point deficit which proved to be a significant obstacle to success.

The Black and Whites return to Rugby Lane to take up the challenge of Old Reigatian who were most impressive 38-21 winners in the corresponding fixture last season. They will hope, no doubt, to recapture the sparkling form from the opening fixture and return to winning ways.  
Sutton & Epsom

Elliott, Watkins, Scott, Bibby, Mohr, Bunting ©, Lovatt, Mount, Gordon, Gibson, Tame, McTaggart, Rea, Jones & Whitaker.

Replacements: Boaden, Hilton, & Munford.

Beckenham

Kennedy, Lovell, J. Caddy, L. Caddy, Jordan, Bunton, Thomson, Baker, Willden, Richards,

Latouche, Moran, Keefe ©, Stapleton & Knowles.

Replacements: Hatfield, Bernard-Moore & Feldhaus-Davies.

## A hat-trick of wins for Epsom and Ewell FC

25 September 2024



Tooting & Mitcham United 0-2 Epsom and Ewell FC. Combined Counties League - Premier Division South. Saturday 14th September 2024.

After a horrible start to the season with five straight League defeats, it appears that we have now turned the tide as we recorded our third win in a row, all of which have come without conceding a single goal. This 2-0 win at Tooting & Mitcham United's Imperial Fields was arguably the best all round performance under Warren Burton's reign, as we nullified any home threat in the opening half an hour before going on to take control of the remaining sixty minutes and leaving the mostly home crowd of 177 severely subdued by the final whistle.

As always, there are some good stats we can pull out of this fine victory. This was the first win for our club on this day since a 6-0 home London League win over Carshalton Athletic in 1938, and it was also our first ever away win on 14th September in our history. Additionally, this was our fourth visit to play Tooting & Mitcham United since they left Sandy Lane and they have yet to beat us there. Finally, the last time we recorded three straight League wins without conceding was in January 2020.

We made two changes to the line up from Saturday's late win at Camberley Town with Callum Wilson being replaced by



Stefan Aiwone and Luke Taylor replacing the injured Axel Kodjo. For the home side, under the Management of former Salt Jamie Byatt and Club Captain Alex Penfold, we came up against two other former Salts in the starting line-up in Mario Quiassaca and Toby McKimm.

The opening exchanges were slightly in favour of the home side, but consisted mainly of long range efforts clearing our crossbar. Toby Young blocked an early strike that looked like it was on target, but by and large our keeper Dan O'Donovan had very little to do between the posts. We may have been nullifying the home attacks, but weren't creating too much of our own to start with, but that all changed just after the half hour mark when Ali Fofahan did well down the left before pulling the ball back to Carl Oblitey whose powerful shot from twelve yards was kept out well by McKimm. This heralded the start of a good spell for us and Adam Green cleverly set up Luke Miller down the left, where his pull back to Oblitey was also struck on target, although he was denied by McKimm again.

A Green corner bounced off the top of the Tooting & Mitcham crossbar and away, and whilst the home side forced some corners too, ours looked more dangerous. McKimm dropped a deep delivery at the feet of Aiwone, but was able to collect the loose ball before our man had realised what was happening just behind him. Then Ethan Brazier got away on the overlap and his right wing cross was met by the head of Oblitey who saw the ball tipped over the bar by McKimm. I don't think the header was going in, but it could have gone anywhere if it had struck the bar, which it looked like it might, so it was an important intervention by the home keeper. Our opponents fashioned a couple of dangerous moves just before the break, but Kionte Gillfillian-Waul was there in time to clear a ball in from the left before it would have been tapped in at the far post. Then a short corner and delivery to the near post was headed just wide of O'Donovan's right hand post, but it would have been harsh had we gone in trailing at half time, which ended goalless.

We had completed the opening forty-five minutes in the ascendancy, even though our failure to score in the first half has now been extended to eleven matches; one short of our club record set in 1981/82. Still, the players had only been back on the field for just ninety seconds when we broke through. Fofahan sent an aimless looking throw towards Oblitey, who was well marked, but he out-jumped two defenders to head the ball back to Green. He then gave the ball back to Fofahan out on the touchline, from where he ran at goal, beating a man on the way and then drilling a low shot just inside McKimm's right hand post from the edge of the area in the 47th minute.

O'Donovan had to make a fairly comfortable save from distance, but we were soon back on the attack and in the 57th minute we extended our lead after one of our corners wasn't properly cleared and the ball pinged around in the penalty area before striking Fofahan and looping up kindly for Oblitey to nod the loose ball past McKimm from just four yards to claim the goal his performance deserved and to give us a decisive two goal cushion.

Although the scoring was finished for the day, we continued to press. On the hour Miller put Green through on the left, but McKimm was out quickly to block his shot on goal with Taylor firing the rebound wide from just inside the area. Then Green picked up what looked like a harsh yellow card, although it might have been for persistent fouls. From their subsequent free kick, a deep delivery was headed back into the path of a striker, but from twelve yards he scuffed his shot and the grateful O'Donovan was able to make the straightforward save.

We should have scored a third goal after Gillfillian-Waul and Fofahan combined well on the left, with the delivery being side-footed wide by Green from only eight yards before Fofahan intercepted a pass moments later and set up Oblitey who laid the ball into the path of Miller whose powerful shot was directed straight at McKimm, who blocked it up and away.

The game started to get a little niggly and a couple of yellow cards were waved in the direction of frustrated home players for lunges and their day was summed up around ten minutes from time with a shot on goal that was so high it cleared the stand roof. If you've been to Imperial Fields, you'll realise how high that is!

I've referred before to there being very few substitutions in recent matches, and again we went for over 80 minutes with the starting eleven, but we made a couple in the closing minutes with both scorers being taken off in order and being replaced by Ethan Nelson-Roberts and Sean Anderson respectively. Nelson-Roberts then sent over a left wing cross, but his delivery was just ahead of Miller and he couldn't keep the shot on target. In the final minute of injury time Anderson sent over a good deep cross and Miller's header was inches away, nestling in the side netting.

It didn't matter though and after five minutes of injury time the whistle blew to confirm a very strong performance from our team. There was more good news today as our former Manager Adrian Hill was present at the game and was able to confirm at the age of 79 that his health is a lot better than it was a couple of years ago. He looked much stronger after going through some difficult days, as indeed did our team!

Epsom & Ewell: Dan O'Donovan, Ethan Brazier, Kionte Gillfillian-Waul, Adam Green (c), Toby Young, Stefan Aiwone, Luke Miller, Craig Dundas, Carl Oblitey, Luke Taylor, Ali Fofahan

Subs: Ethan Nelson-Roberts for Fofahan (84), Sean Anderson for Oblitey (87)

Report Source: [www.eefconline.co.uk](http://www.eefconline.co.uk)

---

## Seven-race card tips for Epsom Thursday

25 September 2024



Epsom Racecourse hosts its penultimate meeting of the Summer on Thursday with a seven-race card for punters heading to the track.

Racing gets underway at 2.00pm with a novice stakes in class four before the action comes to a close at 5.22pm with a nine-runner handicap in class five.

*Read below to discover the latest tips and meeting preview for Epsom's card on Thursday courtesy of BoyleSports, who offer the latest **horse racing odds** throughout the season.*

The opening contest on the Epsom card (2.00) sees a field of seven head to the start for the seven furlong handicap in class four, with the two-year-old's taking centre stage in the opener. Luna Girl was a €95,000 purchase as a yearling for trainer Richard Hannon and ticks plenty of boxes on paper making her debut here. Bold Impact for the Ralph Beckett teams also makes plenty of appeal, a thrice-race maiden who has been beaten as an odds-on favourite twice but could go one place better at Epsom this time around.

Race two on the card (2.35) is a seven furlong handicap in class four and a good field of 15 will be taking it on. Red Mirage was a winner at Catterick in April and followed up with a third in a Chester handicap so is a big player here 11lb lower in the weights. He should see off the inform Roscioli, a winner at Salisbury last month and a very good second of 11 in a Lingfield handicap three weeks ago.

Nine runners will head to the start for the class five handicap over the one mile and two furlong trip to mark race three on Epsom's card (3.10). Imperial Cult gets the nod here for trainers Rachel Cook and John Bridger, only narrowly denied in his handicap bid over this course and distance last month having landed back-to-back all weather wins at Lingfield. Mrembo rates the main danger if she can handle the expected softer conditions at Epsom as she has shown preference for better ground than this previously.

A competitive class four handicap is race four of the afternoon (3.45) with ten runners set to tackle the one mile and four furlong distance. Enochdhu gets the very slight edge here, the slow ground expected to be very much in his favour after a disappointing outing on a faster surface at Kempton last week when he was a disappointing fifth of seven. Of his rivals, Haliphon rates the main danger, the Ian Williams runner arriving off the back of a win at Haydock last time out just a week ago.

Dubawi Time looks very much the one to beat in race five of the meeting (4.20) having been bang in-form prior to flopping at Chelmsford last time around where he didn't appreciate the step up in trip so is back down at a more comfortable distance heading to Epsom, while race six (4.50) can go the way of Chips And Rice, who is in good order for trainer James Fanshawe despite being hampered in-running last time out at this track.

Finally, the card comes to a close with the class five handicap for three-year-old's at 5.22 over the extended mile trip. Preference in the finale heads the way of Tribal Chief for trainer David Menuisier, landing a career-best when winning a ten-runner Kempton handicap last month and has a very progressive profile to boost his chances. Crimson Spirit is a previous course winner and was second at Epsom on his last spin so clearly has a liking for the track and rates the chief threat so can fill out the second spot.

#### **Epsom selections - Thursday**

2.00 - Luna Girl

2.35 - Red Mirage

3.10 - Imperial Cult

3.45 - Enochdhu

4.20 - Dubawi Time

4.50 - Chips And Rice

5.22 - Tribal Chief

Image: Credit Paul. CC BY 2.0

---

## **Sutton and Epsom Rugby off to a flying-start**

25 September 2024



**Sutton & Epsom** RFC opened their 2024-25 league account against Old Colfeians, on Saturday 7th September, over whom they had completed an impressive double last season. There were nine changes in personnel from the last time the Black & Whites ran out at Rugby Lane in the concluding fixture against Reeds Weybridge. Among the multiple changes were six debutants: Arun Watkins on the wing; Finlay Scott and Adam Bibby in the centres; Pete Gordon at hooker; and Callum Hilton and Josh Rea ready to come off the bench. It very much had the feel of a new beginning for the Surrey outfit, with not a single player in the same position as in the curtain-raiser from last season. When the final whistle blew, the new-look XV had surpassed all expectations with a thrilling 50-7 victory.

Captain Bunting kicked off the campaign, and after ten minutes it was the hosts who opened the scoring. Pouncing on a clearance that failed to make touch, Sutton advanced into the opposition 22. Debutant hooker Pete Gordon exploited the blindside to race home untouched. Freddy Bunting added the extras for a 7-0 lead. As S&E dominated the early exchanges, the visitors' task became harder when winger Estefan Ellis was awarded a yellow card for a high tackle. The visitors, now a man down, were swiftly punished. Bunting kicked into the corner, and from the platform of the attacking lineout, Rob Hegarty forced his way over from short yardage. The conversion failed, but Sutton & Epsom held a useful 12-0 lead at the end of the first quarter.

The Rugby Lane team pressed hard to maximise their numerical advantage, gathering the restart and running the ball back with interest. Soon, winger Jordan Huie was threatening to add another score. The pack rumbled remorselessly forward before the ball was spun out to Gareth O'Brien, who jinked, stepped, and stretched out to touch down for a try. Freddy Bunting slotted over the kick for 19-0. The visitors were restored to their full complement, but the card had cost them 12 points. Old Colfeians struggled to gain a foothold in the contest, as errors and penalties frustrated their rhythm and gifted territory to the eager hosts. As the interval approached, S&E had another 5-metre lineout. Once again, the forwards controlled the ball and pressured the line before a timely release to the backs offered Gareth O'Brien the opportunity to cross the whitewash again. Freddy Bunting celebrated the bonus point score with another conversion, making it 26-0.

Sutton made personnel changes as debutants Rea and Hilton replaced Jones and Hilton. In the generous time allowed for stoppages, Colfeians started to find their feet and pressed for a morale-boosting score before the break. However, the Black & Whites' resolute defence neutralised the attacks, and the sides turned around with the hosts enjoying an impressive 26-0 lead. It was clear that the men from Horn Park would need an early score in the second period to initiate a comeback and try to sow the seeds of doubt in the confident Sutton squad.

Any hope for the visiting supporters of an early score was denied by a combination of Sutton's intensity in defence and Colfeians' mounting error count. S&E replaced Pete Gordon with Dan Jones as Lawrence Elliott came off the bench to swap with Adam Bibby. As the final quarter approached, it was Sutton & Epsom who recorded try number five. Arun Watkins reacted fastest to a loose ball and burst through a gap to score his first try for the home team. Freddy Bunting made it four from five as the lead stretched to 33-0.

With the score and the clock against them, the Colfeians' mountainous task was approaching Everest-like proportions. However, five minutes later, a flicker of light emerged from the abyss as Captain Andy O'Malley, carrying a couple of Sutton tacklers on his back, scored. Ryan Napper provided the conversion, making it 33-7. Sutton's fatalists were soon relieved when, minutes later, a familiar electrifying break by Dan Jones gifted Freddy Bunting a try. However, to the surprise of many, the usually reliable kicker saw his effort drift wide, leaving the score at 38-7.

Unfortunately, scrum-half Laurence Wise was forced to depart with a shoulder injury after a sterling performance as the game entered the period that Mr Ben Stewart's watch deemed necessary. There was still plenty of time for the Rugby Lane crowd to enjoy a brace of tries from debutant centre Finlay Scott. The first, an unconverted effort, followed two breaks, and Scott was on hand as the beneficiary. The second came after Colfeians' scrambling defence conceded a penalty try and collected a yellow card. A precise cross-field kick opened up the defence for the final try. Normal service was resumed as Freddy Bunting bisected the uprights for a 50-7 win.

There was an air of almost uncomfortable optimism before the kick-off at Rugby Lane, as pre-season had gone well, and there was evident intensity in defence and improved continuity between the forwards and backs. Lest one forget, S&E had conceded an uncomfortable 598 points last league campaign, and as the legendary coach of the University of Alabama football team, Bear Bryant, wisely stated: "Offence wins games... defence wins championships." However, few would have expected Sutton to break two all-time league records. Not only did they eclipse their previous points total of 49 against Bedford Athletic in 2018 by scoring 50, but they also surpassed the 31-point winning margin of their 2005 45-14 thrashing of Gosport & Fareham. What was most impressive was that the Black & Whites had integrated numerous new combinations at half-back and in the centres, with a debutant hooker in Pete Gordon. For a delighted coaching staff, this performance must bode well for the rest of the season. For the unfortunate Old Colfeians, it was one of those days where things simply did not go right. The first game of the season should never be a barometer for the whole fixture list, as numerous hurdles, from weddings to injuries, can distort the true picture.

The campaign will continue next weekend, Saturday 14th September, with a trip to Balmoral Avenue, where Sutton enjoyed one of their finest games of the last campaign, defeating the then-league-leaders Beckenham 26-22 on an afternoon notable for extraordinary winds.

**Sutton & Epsom:** O'Brien, Watkins, Scott, Bibby, Huie, Bunting ©, Wise, Boaden, Gordon, Gibson, Glanville, McTaggart, Pulvirenti, Jones & Hegarty.

Replacements: Hilton, Rea & Elliott.

**Old Colfeians:** Edwards, Chapman, Sleep, Griffiths, Ellis, Napper, Spaczil, Rameaux, Holland-Oliver, Whicello, O'Malley ©, T. Walker, M. Walker, Carter & Gray.

Replacements: Seva, Cunningham & Ramdhan.

---

Photo credit: Robin Kennedy

---

## 91st minute strike wins for Epsom and Ewell FC

25 September 2024



Camberley Town 0-1 Epsom and Ewell FC. Combined Counties League - Premier Division South. Saturday 7th September 2024

In my preview for this match, I wrote that on this day in history we had played a club record of 21 matches without a draw, but that sequence came under serious threat at Krooner Park where we required a 91st minute winner from Ali Fofahan to break the stalemate and clinch all three points with the only goal against Camberley Town.

On a personal note, this was my thirty-fourth visit to Camberley Town's ground, and the 66th time I had watched these two teams do battle. These clubs have now met each other on 95 occasions, which by some distance makes the Krooners our most regular opponent. However, it has been a long time since we had been this superior against them, as the last dozen or so results hadn't been great, with exception of a 2-1 win here last February. More relevantly, this win was our second in a row and also our second clean sheet in a row, which we had not achieved in the League since October of 2022.

Warren Burton made just one change from the eleven that defeated Chipstead on Saturday with Fofahan returning to the starting line up on the left hand side of midfield after being absent on Tuesday. Stefan Aiwone made way, although he was unavailable for this match, so it isn't clear whether he was injured, or indeed, whether he'd have made way for Fofahan had he actually been here! Kionte Gillfillian-Waul moved from the left wing to left back with Toby Young moving into the centre of defence as we unsurprisingly retained the same formation that had looked so solid against Chipstead.

The opening exchanges were fairly even as we kicked off heading up the Krooner Park slope. The hosts had a first chance as early as the eighth minute when Stan Jones ran onto a ball over the top of our defence, only for Gillfillian-Waul to get across and block his shot. Then Camberley's Captain Regan Hitch got on the end of a Luis Hamblin free kick at the far post, but his header was easy enough for Dan O'Donovan to field without undue alarm. O'Donovan was looking confident after recording his first clean sheet for the club four days previously and was often out to claim the ball with minimal fuss.

Our first real opportunity came just after the twenty minute mark when Adam Green's free kick was headed out by the first man to Axel Kodjo whose strike was not far wide of Ben Grummitt's left hand post from twenty yards. This heralded the start of some good Epsom pressure and Gillfillian-Waul and Fofahan produced some good interplay, ending in a shot from the latter that was blocked by a defender, with Green's follow-up being deflected wide. From the corner Green received the ball back and his shot from an angle was on target, only for another defender to get in the way.

Green appeared to be pulled back in the area, but the referee wasn't interested, although Luke Miller was then fouled in a similar way just outside the area, which was given in our favour. However, Green's free kick cleared the crossbar by about a yard. During this time though Kodjo picked up an injury and had to limp off, being replaced by Luke Taylor.

Grummitt punched clear a Salts corner which then led to a Camberley break, but Gillfillian-Waul did well to recover the situation before it got too serious. Our new signing has looked most impressive in recent weeks, particularly in the first half of matches, and it is almost easy to forget that Ethan Nelson-Roberts has been missing for these last three games. We also looked dangerous on the right wing with fit again Ethan Brazier linking well with Miller who sent a ball right into the danger area, where Taylor and Carl Oblitey were inches away from turning it into the empty net, although the Assistant's flag was up for offside anyway.

Craig Dundas picked up a yellow card for kicking the ball away and we had one final scare in injury time when O'Donovan came out of his area to clear and instead of putting it in row Z, he struck it against Hamblin and was most fortunate to see the ball rebound off him and out for a goal kick. Moments later, he showed he had learned his lesson as he sent the ball flying way over the Krooner Park clubhouse as the referee blew the half time whistle!



This was our tenth match of the season and it is important to note that we haven't scored in the first half of any of these matches! For those who love a stat, this is now our joint second longest run in club history, matched in 1972/73 and 1992/93 and only exceeded in 1981/82 when we went for twelve matches without scoring in the opening forty-five minutes. Strange really, as we had arguably the strongest team in modern times at that point, and matches against reigning non-League Champions Altrincham and Quadruple winners that season, Leytonstone and Ilford were both part of this twelve match run.

Going down the hill in the second half Louis Lindsay picked up a yellow card for a similar offence to that of Dundas in the first half, although Dundas then did it again moments later and despite the protests from the home team, he was fortunate indeed not to pick up what would have been one of the softest dismissals of his career. However, the game gradually began to tilt in our favour and although Fofahan and Hitch picked up yellow cards for the dictionary definition of "handbags" we were creating most of the pressure, but with one issue; we weren't actually causing Grummit any trouble in his goal. In fact the hosts probably should have taken the lead in the 68th minute when a left wing cross was flicked on to Hamblin at the far post, but he got it all wrong, spooning the ball over our bar from close range. Maybe emboldened by our escape, we were back on the attack soon after and Taylor made a good overlap on the right, although Oblitey was unable to get his header on target from Taylor's delivery.

The temperature of the game went up a few degrees in the 74th minute as a long ball down the right found Miller and his ball across goal was turned into the net from twelve yards by Fofahan, but celebrations were then muted by the raising of the offside flag. There were a few Epsom supporters in different places who thought the decision was a wrong one, but none were level with the incident, which the Assistant quite clearly was. However, a cringe worthy episode then followed as both our Vice-Chairman and Chairman, who were also out of line, both literally and metaphorically, were both clearly heard giving a lot of grief to the Assistant about his decision, followed by that feeble plaintive shout we've heard before of "we've got the video", almost as if they thought the referee would turn around and say, "you know what, thanks for this, you're right, I'll just allow the goal!" Memo to our people who really should know better, it won't happen, stop embarrassing yourselves and set a better example!

Fortunately, the incident didn't stop our momentum as we were in full flow by now although another contentious incident followed when Grummitt punched clear after a collision with his own player, only for the free kick to be awarded against us! Still we attacked and Oblitey sent his header from a Miller cross wide. O'Donovan had to be alert to come out of his area to head a break off, literally, with his head before Camberley sent a header wide at our far post. It would be their last opportunity and in the first minute of injury time Miller's low ball in struck Oblitey and fell kindly for Fofahan to stick the ball away at Grummitt's near post from eight yards out to register his first goal for our club and clinch the points.

Maybe the goal had a touch of fortune about it, but it was a deserved winner and we now sit in sixteenth position, level with the recently vanquished Chipstead, who only sit above us on goals scored. I'm still a bit puzzled about our lack of substitutions at present, with just three made in three matches, but the early season form that left us at the foot of the table has now been netted off with these two wins and to use a football analogy, we are back in the game. Saturday's trip to Tooting & Mitcham United; a team that haven't beaten us at home since they were playing at Sandy Lane, are on paper, a better team than Camberley Town and will provide a better idea of how good we are currently, but for now we are outside the relegation positions for the first time this season, which is pleasing to report!

Epsom & Ewell: Dan O'Donovan, Ethan Brazier, Kionte Gillfillian-Waul, Adam Green (c), Toby Young, Callum Wilson, Luke Miller, Craig Dundas, Carl Oblitey, Axel Kodjo, Ali Fofahan

Subs: Luke Taylor for Kodjo (29)

Report Source: [www.eefconline.co.uk](http://www.eefconline.co.uk)

---

## Chips finally up for local football team

25 September 2024

Epsom and Ewell 2-0 Chipstead. Combined Counties League - Premier Division South. Tuesday 3rd September 2024

It wasn't pretty. In fact, at times it was quite attritional, but it was also a deserved first three points of the season as we defeated our former landlords Chipstead by two goals to nil at the KGF. It was also a first clean sheet in the League since 16th December as we found a way to get ahead and then showed good game management to see the match out, confirming our superiority with a late second goal.

For our boys, Toby Young came back into the starting eleven after suspension and he was joined by Craig Dundas who had been rested on Saturday. Ali Fofahan and Sean Anderson were both missing, requiring Kionte Gillfillian-Waul and Axel Kodjo to play further forward than they had against AFC Whyteleafe. Ethan Brazier kept his place on the right, meaning that Young played on the left of a back four with Callum Wilson and Stefan Aiwone partnering up in central defence.

Chipstead came into the match on the back of a win at Horley Town, although that had been only their second win of the season. This meant that this game took on extra importance as our opponents became one of the teams just above us that we needed to close the gap on, having already gone into this match four points adrift of safety at this admittedly early stage of the season. For such a big match it was a shame that only 51 people were counted as being in attendance, marking our lowest home crowd since our move here. Please do not believe the club's wildly inflated "official" attendance figure of 83. It was nowhere near that and it is really sad that they have to resort to these sort of things. Just because something is quoted by our club as "official" doesn't mean it is accurate.



The opening exchanges were mostly in favour of the visitors who made early inroads, particularly down their right wing where Young looked uncomfortable to start with playing in a less familiar position. Dan O'Donovan was called into an early save, although we had our own attack moments later with Adam Green firing just over the bar with a powerful shot that pinged off the corrugated roof at the Tolworth end of the ground and actually burst the football!

Green was involved again in the 13th minute with a free kick that Carl Oblitey headed just wide of the post and Kodjo was also not far away from 20 yards out. As we began to gain a real foothold in the match Oblitey headed wide from a Green corner before a Brazier delivery was met by a downward header from Kodjo that bounced up kindly for Sam Carman in the visitors goal to handle. Green was having one of his best games for us and saw his shot deflected wide for a corner that we were unable to take advantage of, despite Carman flapping at the ball and falling over. However, we hadn't really tested their keeper too much until Gillfillian-Wual was set up by a clever pass from Oblitey and he ran in at goal in the 39th minute, shooting from an angle, but Carman was equal to it. Another delivery from Gillfillian-Wual zipped across the Chipstead six yard area as the seconds ticked down and we went in at the break looking quite good, but without having made the break through. In fact, this was the ninth match in a row where we have failed to score in the first half!

Of course, regular readers will be aware that we have had similar situations frequently this season, failing to take advantage of them or making a crucial error at the wrong time, but this time we started the second half strongly. Young saw his header from a deep Green free kick saved by Carman at his far post, and we looked more confident. In fact, I was just about to say to supporters around me that we looked like we might score shortly, when we did exactly that in the 51st minute; a low left wing ball in from Gillfillian-Wual required Carman to stretch to reach it, but he couldn't hold on and Oblitey reacted quickly to force the loose ball over the prostrate keeper and into the roof of the net from four yards out. This was the first time we have led in a League match all season!

The visitors stepped up their efforts for a while and we found ourselves pushed back as Chipstead tried to force an equaliser. A long shot deflected kindly for O'Donovan but we had the biggest scare of the match on the hour when our keeper was unable to hold on to a fairly routine shot and the ball bobbed away from him in a similar manner to how our goal came about. However, Michael Dixon snatched at the shot from just twelve yards and fired it straight back at O'Donovan who redeemed for his error by gratefully reclaiming the ball.

This was a major let off, and maybe you would now be reading about a different ending had they levelled up the score at that point, but the miss knocked any momentum they were trying to build and there was very little of note to concern the home supporters as we began to see the game out in a fairly comfortable manner. Slowing the game down well and breaking up play almost seemed like second nature to our players, as if we did this sort of thing regularly. With ten minutes left Callum Wilson went down with cramp. I'm not sure about you, but isn't it surprising how players rarely, if ever, go down with cramp when their team are losing!

Either way, it was great to be in that sort of position after weeks of being behind in the closing stages. Wilson picked up a yellow card for a foul out on the touchline, but in the 91st minute Green's corner was flicked on by a defender to the far post where Young was waiting to volley the ball into the top corner of the net powerfully from eight yards out to confirm the destination of the points. But could we keep that first clean sheet in the League? Only just, as it turned out, as the visitors broke through in the 94th minute and rounded O'Donovan, but somehow the shot went wide of our post.

This was a determined performance from our boys in a match we really needed the points from. Some might think that describing this win as attritional isn't very fair, but actually it is a compliment. We looked much tougher to beat in this match than in recent contests and were able to see the game out in a confident manner, which is ultimately all that really matters in our current position. We now need to take this performance into our trip to Camberley on Saturday and start to build some momentum in an attempt to get away from the foot of the table. We took one step towards this last night as we leapfrogged Spelthorne Sports.

I have two further observations from this match. Firstly, we made no substitutions until the 96th minute when Luke Taylor came on for his first minutes of the new season, having only made one sub in our previous match against AFC Whyteleafe too. Although this happens from time to time, it is unusual, particularly in this era of multiple substitutions and it might indicate a lack of depth on the bench. We'll see how that develops. Secondly, it is interesting that we won our first league match in the 2023/24 season under Steve Springett with four at the back, after playing the first seven matches (all lost) with three at the back, and although this wasn't the first time this season that we have played "a four" the preferred formation appeared to involve three at the back. Maybe that will change now! In the meantime though, it was a very welcome and necessary three points.

Epsom & Ewell: Dan O'Donovan, Ethan Brazier, Toby Young, Adam Green (c), Callum Wilson, Stefan Aiwone, Luke Miller, Craig Dundas, Carl Oblitey, Axel Kodjo, Kionte Gillfillian-Wual

Subs: Luke Taylor for Dundas (96)

Report Source: [www.eefconline.co.uk](http://www.eefconline.co.uk)

---

## Epsom and Ewell wounded in injury time

25 September 2024

Epsom and Ewell 1-4 AFC Whyteleafe. Combined Counties League - Premier Division South. Saturday 31st August 2024.

Although the result of this match may give the impression that we were well beaten by AFC Whyteleafe at the KGF on Saturday, this match was still in the balance as we reached the ninety minute mark, only for two injury time goals; one dreadful and the other one quite special, to confirm a 4-1 win for the visitors.



For the greater part of the match we made this a competitive contest, although we were just lacking a bit of quality that might have turned the game in our favour. On the subject of quality, former Salt Mike Hill was in the opposition line-up. I once wrote that Hill was the best player that played for us in our Step Six years and after a slow start, he began to become more influential in this Step Five encounter. What our team would give to have a player like that in Epsom colours once again. Another former Salt in the all green kit for this match was Sirak Negassi, who only left us a few weeks ago. It is interesting to see that he now makes the squad for a club sitting at the top of our division, when he wasn't deemed worthy enough to start for us that often.

We had a debut in our line up as the newly signed Kionte Gillfillian-Wual was at left back in place of the absent Ethan Nelson-Roberts. Ethan Brazier was back in the starting eleven in place of Felipe de Lima, while Axel Kodjo came in for Craig Dundas who was rested and spent ninety minutes on the bench. Up front Will Kendall remained absent and this won't be a short term situation as he is getting married in Hawaii and will be away for a few weeks! Finally, Sean Anderson came in for his first start alongside Carl Oblitey with Mohssine Sabek dropping to the bench after making his debut five days previously.

We nearly had a bizarre start to the match in the 8th minute when the AFC Whyteleafe keeper James Shaw held on to the ball too long and suddenly found himself closed down by Oblitey about a yard out from the goal line. Shaw managed somehow to get the ball out for a corner from which Ali Fofahan saw his shot go straight at the relieved keeper.

In the early part of the match it appeared that Ryan Gondoh was involved in a personal mission against our defence. He had a low shot across goal that Dan O'Donovan did well to keep out, although the ball was recycled and fed back in again, where Gondoh then saw his next shot blocked by a defender. On the 20 minute mark his shot deflected up off another of our defenders, looping over O'Donovan and coming back off our crossbar!

At the other end Anderson sent an Adam Green free kick straight at Shaw, but on the half hour Gondoh managed to ride a challenge and made for goal, only for the whistle to blow for the award of an AFC Whyteleafe free kick, which angered him. Clearly the referee should have played the advantage, but Gondoh's reaction might have earned him a sin bin on another day and I'm sure the only reason he didn't go, was because the referee recognised his error and didn't want to compound it further.

Our best chance came on the 35 minute mark when the ball went between two defenders and fell nicely for Fofahan, although he chose to take a touch when he might have been better advised to shoot straight away, and by the time he finally struck at goal he was at a wider angle and could only find the side netting from twelve yards.

We were very much in this game though, which made it even more disappointing when we conceded just before the break. With the clock showing the 43rd minute O'Donovan made a good first save, and then made another from a close range header, but we were still unable to clear the ball which was then forced in from close range by Omari Delgado. We had one more chance before the break with some good interplay between Callum Wilson and Oblitey who flicked the ball on for Axel Kodjo to strike, but again the ball was too close to Shaw who made a routine save.

At half time supporters were bemoaning the similarity of this match to some of our recent ones, in that we were as competitive as our opponents, but we seemed to find a way to concede every time. Unfortunately, a second goal then followed in the 52nd minute after Hill weaved through our defence, only to square the ball for an unmarked tap in from Delgado to score his second on the day.

Not for the first time in recent matches, we faced a mountain to climb, but our next chance came from an unlikely source as Stefan Aiwone showed great skill in the penalty area to beat a number of men and get a shot on target away, but Shaw had closed the angle down well and made the block. A couple of minutes later Oblitey intercepted a pass and set up Anderson, but his shot from just ten yards out was too close to Shaw who made the block with his feet and then also held the follow up drive from Luke Miller. This was probably our best chance of the entire match and we have to start taking these.

Next up for us was Green's clever pass to Miller, but he struck across goal, missing the far post and then having the front to blame Anderson for not getting on the end of his shot! We had a lucky escape when Hill broke through, only to fire straight at O'Donovan and then the visitors had a shout for a penalty when the ball appeared to strike Brazier's hand at the far post, but it was clearly accidental and fortunately the referee agreed! In the 83rd minute we had a goal back, although it was a bit of a gift as Shaw kicked the ball straight out to Miller, waiting in a central position and he simply ran back in with the ball and drove his shot low past Shaw into the net, glancing off a defender's leg on the way from twelve yards.

At 2-1 down we now had something to aim for and pushed for an equaliser, but any momentum we were trying to build was obliterated by a piece of Sunday League defending as a long goal kick from Shaw was controlled in stride by the unmarked Aaron Watson and he flicked the ball past O'Donovan into his bottom left corner in the 92nd minute with our defenders nowhere. It was a horrible goal to concede, although two minutes later a rather stunning volley from twenty-five yards by Daniel Bennett flew past O'Donovan on the bounce for a fourth goal.

It seems to be a familiar story these days as we seem to be the equal of our opponents for large parts of the match, only for individual errors, or blown marking assignments to hurt us every week. We remain pointless and with two clubs going down this season we are already four points adrift of safety and have not had a clean sheet in a League match since December of last year. It was also a little strange that we only made one substitute in the entire contest at a time when something different needed to be done, even if it were only for fresh legs. These are concerning times for Salts supporters, and whilst it is still fairly early in the season, we really need to start picking up points urgently. Maybe on Tuesday at home to Chipstead?

Epsom & Ewell: Dan O'Donovan, Ethan Brazier, Kionte Gillfillian-Wual, Adam Green (c), Stefan Aiwone, Callum Wilson, Luke Miller, Axel Kodjo, Carl Oblitey, Sean Anderson, Ali Fofahan

Subs: Felipe de Lima for Kodjo (75)

Report Source: [www.eefconline.co.uk](http://www.eefconline.co.uk)

---

## Epsom take the boot from landlords

25 September 2024



Epsom and Ewell 1-2 Corinthian-Casuals, Combined Counties League - Premier Division South. Monday 26th August 2024.

A late rally almost enabled us to take something out of our first Tolworth based local derby, but we were ultimately unable to force an equaliser and had to accept defeat to our landlords and visitors Corinthian-Casuals by two goals to one at the KGF on Monday.

Our club will tell you that we had a good, if slightly inflated attendance of 224 in an attempt to justify switching this match to an afternoon kick-off, but the simple truth is that they still missed out on hundreds of pounds in gate revenue. By moving this match from the original 11.30am kick off, we missed out on at least fifty more spectators, as there were very few morning kick offs around in our area. Our match would easily have been the most interesting of those early kick offs, but instead we had to compete with an almost full Isthmian League programme, including the Kingstonian v Raynes Park Vale derby, plus home matches for Dulwich Hamlet and Horsham, not to mention National League teams Woking and Dorking Wanderers. Not a smart move, but they'll still try to justify it! Quite simply, our club needs to learn to leave our rare 11.30 matches alone and if they are genuine about getting more supporters in, then to consider different kick off times to the masses on more regular occasions, not less. Running out of programmes half an hour before kick-off won't endear the club to "floaters" either!

Our line up was still missing Toby Young who completed his three game suspension in this match in addition to the injured Reece Tierney and Fabian Nunes, while Will Kendall was also absent. Carl Oblitey came in up front in Kendall's position and played alongside Ali Fofahan who had made a promising debut at Sandhurst Town on Tuesday. Felipe de Lima continued in place of Nunes as he had done on Tuesday, while Ethan Brazier was moved to the bench with his place being taken by new signing from Guildford City, Sabek Mohssine, who had a fairly uneventful hour before being replaced by another debutant in Sean Anderson.

In truth this match followed a similar pattern to many of our others this season, in that we have competed fairly well against opponents, only for errors to cost us, and this would be the case again in a match that was niggly at times, but swung both ways and was entertaining with lots of half-chances. We had the first of those when a hopeful ball was dropped into the Casuals penalty area, where their keeper and a defender almost left to it to each other, but instead the ball fell to Callum Wilson, only his shot at a half vacant goal from just eight yards was scuffed and easily cleared by the covering defender. The ball was only half cleared to Fofahan whose strike skimmed inches over the crossbar from 18 yards.

Although we had chances, our opponents had the greater share of possession, particularly in the opening half and they responded with a low shot just wide of Dan O'Donovan's goal, before a free kick from Diogo Da Silva was straight at our man between the posts. He was in action shortly afterwards as a deep delivery was punched away from an unmarked Casuals player waiting at the far post before Jonathon Gjoshe sent a shot in that just cleared our own crossbar.

In response Oblitey produced a good run and low shot that was a couple of feet wide of the near post before an Adam Green free kick was cleared away which led to a counter attack from the most dangerous player on the pitch Shea Cascoe-Rogers, but Green had recovered well to make the tackle back. Fofahan was then booked for a foul on Cascoe-Rogers and we nearly conceded from a deep free kick when two of our defenders combined to get in each other's way, luckily knocking the ball out for a corner, just wide of our own post. However, in the 42nd minute we went behind. The visitors advised that the goal was scored by their number 4 Tommy Castelo, but it was actually headed past O'Donovan by our own number 4, Adam Green from close range, giving him no chance!

It had been coming though, as they were finishing the stronger of the teams and although Fofahan had his shirt pulled in the visiting penalty area, nothing was given, before a Luke Miller header was then caught at full stretch by Murillo Bernardes and we went in at the break a goal down.

The second half continued in a similar fashion, concentrated mostly in midfield and Sabek picked up our second yellow card for pulling back an opponent before being replaced by Anderson. However, seconds later with the clock showing the 62nd minute, a straightforward long ball went over Wilson and with no cover, Raf Barbosa had the simple task of squaring the ball to the far post where Reyon Dillon was able to tap the ball into the net from a few yards out to give Corinthian-Casuals a two goal lead.

We weren't quite done yet though and began to push the "visitors" back on their home patch. In the 72nd minute I'm still not sure how we failed to get the ball in the net after Miller knocked the ball through for Anderson who lobbed the ball

over the advancing Bernardes. Oblitey got to the ball in first, some four yards out, yet his touch then knocked the ball onto the shoulder of Marcos dos Santos and looped just over the bar like a Olympic high jumper. In fact, the only thing in the net after this was dos Santos who required a bit of treatment!

For some reason and despite Dos Santos being off the field after the treatment, we chose to take a short corner. It wasn't a good one and led to a counter-attack which required O'Donovan to keep us in the game with a good save. The next time, the ball got past O'Donovan, although Ethan Nelson-Roberts was there instead to clear the danger. Casuals chances kept coming though and in the 81st minute Frazier Osunkoya struck a shot against our bar with the ball coming down and being cleared. However, it then came back in and a cross from the left to the far post was met by a powerful close range strike from Cascoe-Rogers, but O'Donovan made another fine save to keep the ball out.

Opportunities were coming for our boys too as the game began to get more stretched, and a nice pass from Wilson put Anderson through one on one with Bernardes, but his touch was heavy and the keeper was able to clear. We then lost De Lima temporarily with what appeared to be something in his eye, but even though we were down to ten men at this point, we then pulled a goal back as a ball over the top was latched onto by Miller as our opponents appeared to stop, and he ran in on goal from the left before cutting back onto his right foot to take the keeper out of the equation before firing into the roof of the net from eight yards in the 88th minute.

This goal led to our opponents getting a little twitchy and they picked up a yellow card for delaying a throw in before Bernardes got another for wasting time himself. Time was running out, although we had a final chance when Fofahan put Oblitey through to find the bottom corner, only for the Assistant's flag to be raised against him for offside. After seven minutes of injury time the whistle blew to confirm that the points had been lost.

So it's now a fourth straight League defeat and Spelthorne Sports' draw with Knaphill leaves us alone at the bottom of the table once again. We could argue with some justification that we were worth a draw in both of our recent losses, but blaming the referee for our League position as our unknown club reporter does is disingenuous and we will need to find a way out of this before we find ourselves in a similar position to last season when we lost our opening seven League matches of the season. Two tough home matches are up next, so we quite simply have to improve or that dreaded "R" word will start cropping up again in supporter conversations.

Epsom & Ewell: Dan O'Donovan, Stefan Aiwone, Callum Wilson, Adam Green (c), Felipe De Lima, Craig Dundas, Luke Miller, Sabek Mohssine, Carl Oblitey, Ali Fofahan, Ethan Nelson-Roberts

Subs: Sean Anderson for Mohssine (61), Axel Kodjo for Dundas (73)

Report Source: [www.eefconline.co.uk](http://www.eefconline.co.uk)

---

## Shaky start to season for Epsom and Ewell

25 September 2024



Sandhurst Town 4-1 Epsom and Ewell. Combined Counties League - Premier Division South. Tuesday 20th August 2024.

We crashed to a 4-1 defeat in our latest League match at Sandhurst Town on Tuesday evening at Bottom Meadow in front of 86 spectators on a chillier than anticipated August evening.

Let's get one thing straight here though. We did not deserve to lose this match, particularly by such a heavy margin. In fact, some of our passing was the best I've seen all season. However, we didn't help ourselves either by failing to take chances and then by collecting a couple of sin-bins that really hurt us, just when we looked like we were about to take control of this contest.

We made four changes following our F.A. Cup loss to Hayes and Yeading United (who now travel to Margate in the next round by the way). Faebian Witter was absent and replaced by Dan O'Donovan, while Ethan Brazier replaced the suspended Toby Young. Further forward, Kenny Antony and Axel Kodjo dropped to the bench, with their places taken by Adam Green following his suspension and debutant Ali Fofahan, who started out on the left wing.

We made a bright start and Ethan Nelson-Roberts, making his fiftieth appearance for the Salts, was just over the bar with an early strike, before a Green corner led to a shot from Fabian Nunes that was dragged wide from the edge of the area. We had a scare at the other end after the Sandhurst right winger got past Nelson-Roberts and O'Donovan too, but could only find the side netting with his shot. They then attacked down the left and Shane Qoloni got past Ethan Brazier, only to then go down after a collision, with the referee deciding to award a penalty. We've seen them given before, and no doubt will do again, but it was definitely in the soft category. Regrettably, Elliott Miles then dispatched the penalty in the 24th minute, although O'Donovan did manage to get something on the shot on its way in.

This was harsh. We had been doing most of the work to this point and we nearly equalised on the half hour when a Nelson-Roberts cross caused panic in the Sandhurst penalty area and Luke Miller and then Fofahan saw their shots blocked by defenders in quick succession. Our next corner was met at the far post by Callum Wilson, but his header back

towards goal took a touch off a defender and fell kindly for the keeper to fall onto.

By this time Fabian Nunes had been replaced after suffering a groin injury, but his replacement Felipe de Lima had only been on for about a quarter of an hour when his ill-advised back pass was intercepted by Tshin Kumuaro who ran in and beat O'Donovan with a clinical strike in the 39th minute. Nelson-Roberts then had to be alert to block a shot for a corner as did Stefan Aiwone on the other side of the goal as Sandhurst threatened a third goal before the half which fortunately did not come.

At half time it was hard to comprehend how we could be behind, although to this point we hadn't forced the keeper into a save, so we could hardly complain just because the other side had taken their chances. Fortunately, we got a goal back quickly and it was Craig Dundas who got on the end of a Green free kick to knock the ball in from eight yards for his first goal for our club, just six minutes into the second period. Both myself and a supporter next to me were certain that it had been knocked in by Dundas's hand, but no one complained and the referee seemed happy too, so we were back at 2-1 with a long time left to play.

And play we did. We took the game to Sandhurst for a while with wave after wave of attacks. Corner after corner followed as we pushed for an equaliser and it seemed like a matter of time before we would be level. Dundas set up Kendall with a great tackle, but our striker shot straight at the home keeper from just inside the penalty area, while moments later De Lima missed a good opportunity to head at goal from another Green free kick, but in the 65th minute Wilson said something to the referee and was promptly sin-binned in the 65th minute. In that moment all of our momentum was lost.

The pattern of the match changed and we stopped creating opportunities, while the home side tried to take advantage of the extra man and a cross was well cut out by O'Donovan before Nelson-Roberts was adjudged to have brought his man down in the corner of the penalty area. It was a long way away from us, so it was hard to see whether this one was equally soft. Strangely, even with their first penalty taker still on the field, their number 16 chose to take this one in the 77th minute and O'Donovan produced a good low save to his right to keep the ball out, and although the loose ball was turned in by another player, he was deemed to have encroached and the free kick went our way. Wilson returned to the field of play and maybe we could start to press again.

Not this time though. We let the ball go out of play carelessly and from a throw in, allowed to be taken further up the field than it should have been, the home side broke away and Maurice Black smashed the ball past O'Donovan just two minutes after the penalty to make it 3-1. Things got worse a few minutes later when Nelson-Roberts was sin-binned too and as the wheels came off the ten man cart, O'Donovan was alert to make a good save from a one on one situation as we parted at the back. Debutant substitute Joel Onu had a smart shot on the turn in the 90th minute that was well saved, but from the keeper's clearance they broke straight through and whilst O'Donovan again did well to keep the first shot out, he could do nothing about the loose ball which was fired in from close range to leave the final score looking extremely harsh.

As it turned out, Spelthorne's 5-0 loss at Cobham ensured that we actually climbed a place in the League table after this defeat, but this was a harsh loss to take. We played really well at times, and yes, a couple of rather odd refereeing decisions didn't help us, but there were still self-inflicted incidents that let us down and we really need to learn that being reduced to ten men for a throwaway comment is such a severe penalty that it must be avoided at all costs. I am absolutely certain that we would have scored an equaliser in this match had we kept eleven men on the field midway through the second half and may well have gone on to win from there, but the harsh reality is three matches, three defeats, two red cards and two sin-bins. We need to keep working harder, but also work smarter too, if we are to avoid another serious relegation battle.

Epsom & Ewell: Dan O'Donovan, Ethan Brazier, Ethan Nelson-Roberts, Stefan Aiwone, Callum Wilson, Craig Dundas, Luke Miller, Adam Green (c), Will Kendall, Fabio Nunes, Ali Fofahan

Subs: Felipe de Lima for Nunes (25), Joel Onu for Brazier (78)

Report Source: [www.eefconline.co.uk](http://www.eefconline.co.uk)

---

## Out of the Cup

25 September 2024

Epsom and Ewell 1-3 Hayes & Yeading United. Emirates F.A. Cup Preliminary Round. Saturday 17th August 2024.

We were defeated in our latest F.A. Cup match by Step Four Hayes & Yeading United FC at the KGF on Saturday, but I couldn't help wondering how different this match might have been, had we not had such an awful start to the contest.

In terms of personnel, Craig Dundas returned from honeymoon while Adam Green was suspended after his Guildford indiscretion, so Callum Wilson took on the Captain's armband for the first time in twelve months. Up front Kenny Antony came in for Carl Oblitey who was on the bench. On a hot day, a decent cup tie crowd of 160 were present to watch the action as we kicked off towards the Chessington end of the ground with a switch to four at the back for this match, maybe respecting the level of our opponents, or maybe just due to player availability, as yet again we failed to name a full bench.

The visitors started off with an early sighter from the edge of the penalty area that was just wide of Faebian Witter's left hand post, but the next chance fell to us in the sixth minute, and it was a really good one. Will Kendall robbed a defender and Fabio Nunes sent the loose ball into the stride of Antony. Arguably he had too long to think about it though and sliced his shot high and wide from just twelve yards.

When playing a team from a higher league, it is not rocket science to suggest that we must take the chances we get, as we may not get many. This was clearly highlighted within seven minutes by which time we had conceded twice! The first goal

in the tenth minute was a real morale sapper as a harmless ball in from the right wing should have been gathered by Witter, yet despite being under no pressure, somehow the ball rebounded off him and worse still, it went behind him and into the net! The visitors credited the goal to their man Adrian Clifton, so we'll leave it at that. Three minutes later there was no disputing Clifton's second goal as he took a nice touch and followed it with a clinical volley from twelve yards that gave our keeper no chance.

It would be easy to think that this was game over, just thirteen minutes into the match. Indeed, after missing a chance and then conceding in such bizarre circumstances, morale could drop here, but to our credit we continued to work hard. However, maybe unexpectedly, we then had two more great opportunities within a matter of minutes, firstly when the visiting keeper Juliusz Pazio kicked the ball straight out to Luke Miller, just twenty yards out, who inexplicably couldn't control the ball and ended up knocking it straight back to the keeper!

A pair of cards, one for each team, followed midway through the half as both teams battled for the middle ground before Antony sent a good cross over, but with no one there to finish it off. As we approached the 40 minute mark Miller put over a great cross to the far post, but Antony's volley, with his admittedly weaker foot, flew into the side netting from twelve yards out. Witter was being kept busy too and he had to come out of his area to chest the ball clear, but the final Epsom chance came in injury time when Antony did well to rob his man and square the ball to Kendall, who got there first, but a defender was there just afterwards and his contact slowed the ball down on its way, allowing Pazio to clutch the ball, almost in slow motion, just a couple of inches from the line. We had created four great chances, yet were 2-0 down at the interval!

The second half was a little quieter in terms of real chances and our only real opportunity in the opening twenty minutes came on the hour when Miller did well on the right but the pull back to Nunes was met by a slice that a golfer would have been unhappy with, as the ball skewed across goal and out for a throw!

The visitors then extended their lead in the 63rd minute with a corner that was met by a strike from Adam Martin, only for Hani Bircheche to get a close range touch to the shot, giving Witter no chance. This was a little harsh on our boys and we deservedly reduced the deficit in the 74th minute when Nunes played a one-two with our newly introduced substitute Fabian de Lima and finished off the return pass into the left hand bottom corner from twelve yards. It was such a simple goal, but the first one in competitive action at the KGF in nearly four matches. De Lima looks quite a lively player and he had a great twenty minute cameo on his debut.

Witter made a smart near post save as time ticked down and ultimately we were unable to threaten the visitors further in this match. However, you couldn't help but wonder whether this match might have ended with a different winner if we hadn't started so badly. Ultimately, we never got the chance to see what our opponents would have done under a bit of pressure, but make no mistake, we will have to start taking our chances, starting on Tuesday at Sandhurst Town, who also lost in the F.A. Cup this Saturday.

Epsom & Ewell: Faebian Witter, Toby Young, Ethan Nelson-Roberts, Stefan Aiwone, Callum Wilson, Craig Dundas, Luke Miller, Axel Kodjo, Will Kendall, Fabio Nunes, Kenny Antony

Subs: Felipe de Lima for Kodjo (61), Carl Oblitey for Dundas (75), Ethan Brazier for Aiwone (78)

Report Source: [www.eefconline.co.uk](http://www.eefconline.co.uk)

## Racing tips for Friday at Epsom

25 September 2024



The action continues at Epsom Downs this week with a competitive six-race card on offer for punters heading to the track on Friday 16th August.

Racing gets underway at 1.40 with a class five nursery contest before rounding off at 4.35 as eight runners tackle a class five handicap.

*Read below to discover the latest tips for Epsom's card on Friday, courtesy of **OLBG**:*

The opening race of the afternoon (1.40) sees a field of nine head to the start for the class five nursery for two-year-olds. Liberty Bird was a runner up last time out at Leicester for trainer Charlie Johnston and gets the nod here to bag a second win of the campaign, having been victorious at Beverley in June. Enchanted Eye rates the main danger from the Eve Johnson Houghton yard, a good second on nursery debut at Leicester 29 days ago.

A small field of four will take on race two of the afternoon at Epsom in the maiden fillies' stakes (2.15) over the seven furlong distance. The Amy Murphy-trained Creative Lady is the clear pick on form here, a decent second in a Lingfield maiden last time out and is the one to beat here. Graduated, for trainer Dr Richard Newland, can fill the second spot,

second at Brighton on her last spin.

A class four handicap marks race three on the Friday card at 2.50, with eight runners set to travel over the six furlong sprint distance. Winner of this race last year, Musicka is back for another crack for trainer David O'Meara and has hit form at the right time with a second in a big-field handicap at York last month so is the one to beat again. Of his rivals, Tourist can make his presence felt if bouncing back to form following a fifth at Doncaster last time out.

Race four (3.25) is an 11-runner handicap in class six for horses aged three and older, with preference heading the way of Imperial Cult, who landed a career best when scoring in a 12-runner handicap at Lingfield 17 days ago to follow up another win at that venue a month previously so is taken to complete the hat trick here ahead of Corporate Raider, a Brighton winner in June and second at that track 45 days ago.

The penultimate race on Epsom's card this week arrives at 4.00 as six runners head to the start for the extended mile handicap in class five. Unreal Connection for trainer Amanda Perratt looks the one to beat here, a previous winner at Epsom who was fourth in a Sandown handicap when last seen. Eretat is the main danger, a cosy winner at Wolverhampton three weeks ago who is bidding to follow up.

Finally, the card comes to a close with the class five handicap over seven furlongs (4.35) and eight runners will take it on, with preference heading the way of Marlay Park, a four-time course and distance winner who has yet to fire this season but is sliding down the weights as well as dropping in grade here.

### **Epsom selections - Friday**

1.40 - Liberty Bird

2.15 - Creative Lady

2.50 - Musicka

3.25 - Imperial Cult

4.00 - Unreal Connection

4.35 - Marlay Park

Image: Credit Paul. CC BY 2.0

---

## **When a 2 goal defeat marks improvement**

25 September 2024



Epsom and Ewell 0-2 Jersey Bulls. Combined Counties League - Premier Division South - Tuesday 13th August 2024.

Jersey Bulls are not the sort of team you want to face, having just been hit for five goals in our previous outing. However, we acquitted ourselves fairly well on the day and a two goal defeat, the second of which came quite late, was a lot better than I had feared it might be. An attendance counted at just 84 was a disappointing one, considering the opposition.

In terms of personnel, Callum Wilson and Carl Oblitey returned to the starting line up, although Craig Dundas remained absent and Thompson Adeyemi was also missing, while Reece Tierney's head injury ensured that he would not be available for selection either. Stefan Aiwone made his first start, while Kenny Antony was on the bench, but would join the fray later.

Our keeper Faebian Witter was in action early, diving low to his left to keep out a low free kick from James Sunlay and another shot went just over our crossbar as the visitors tried to assert themselves. They probably should have scored in the 18th minute but Fraser Barlow scuffed his shot wide from in front of goal. We had showed fairly little to this point, struggling to get the ball up to our front two, Oblitey and Will Kendall. However, Luke Miller took a long pass in his stride in the 25th minute and made tracks down the right, only for his ball across goal to be spooned over the bar by Oblitey from eighteen yards.

The visitors were doing more of the work, but we were keeping them mostly at arm's length. A free kick was sent into the wall by Barlow, before Sunray got down the right wing after some clever interplay, but there was no one on the end of his cross. They had a penalty shout in the 31st minute after Witter collided with a visiting player, but it looked ambitious and nothing was given. However, four minutes later they took the lead after a right wing cross was met at the far post by a header from Miguel Carvalho that Toby Young tried to keep out, but was unable to, with both he and the ball ending up in the net.

We had a decent chance in the 38th minute with a free kick. Adam Green's delivery was flapped at by the Jersey keeper Evan van der Vliet under pressure from Oblitey and the ball was nodded back to Kendall whose header entered the net, despite an attempt to block it with the hand of a defender. Just as we were wondering whether the defender would be penalised for the handball, it transpired that the Assistant's flag had already been raised for an offside against Oblitey and

the chance was gone. Wilson then blocked a good effort just before the break and the teams went in separated by just the one goal.

The second half followed a similar pattern, although we did register a shot on target just after the hour mark when Fabio Nunes struck at goal from twenty-five yards, providing Van der Vliet with a comfortable save. Carlos Polo-Infante came on for Alex Kodjo but we never had the chance to see whether this would make a difference as in the 69th minute Young was sent off for a challenge on Carvalho that was extremely solid, but just a little high for the referee's liking.

The extra man enabled the visitors to attack with a little more freedom and in the 78th minute they had a second goal with a move that started on the right and was finished off from a narrow angle by Jonny Le Quesne. Although we had battled well to this point, Jersey did deserve that two goal lead and despite a late cameo from Antony, which included one mazy run, there was more chance that we would concede again and Aiwone did really well to block a shot from Lorne Bickley who had scored both goals against us when we last visited the island in September of last year.

Witter made a good block from a volley at goal from the subsequent half cleared corner and the final whistle blew soon after. Whilst always disappointing to lose, it was maybe no surprise that we would concede twice as this was our fourth meeting and Jersey have scored two goals in each of them. No one could argue that the better side had won, but from an Epsom point of view, this was a marked improvement on our Saturday shocker against Guildford City and although we face another difficult match on Saturday, a hard working shift is the minimum requirement expected by the supporters. I believe we got that in this match.

Epsom & Ewell: Faebian Witter, Toby Young, Callum Wilson, Adam Green ©, Stefan Aiwone, Fabio Nunes, Luke Miller, Axel Kodjo, Will Kendall, Carl Oblitey, Ethan Nelson-Roberts

Subs: Carlos Polo-Infante for Kodjo (67), Kenny Antony for Oblitey (86)

---

## Things can only get better.....?

25 September 2024



Epsom and Ewell 0-5 Guildford City. Combined Counties League - Premier Division South. Saturday 10th August 2024. On Tuesday our club acclaimed a "great" performance in defeating Step Four Phoenix Sports; a club that faced severe budget cuts and a new Manager who started eleven new players against us in the first tie, and who will surely struggle this season at that level. I wrote at the time that it had been a solid performance but nothing more. Fast forward four days and I was proven right as we threw in a shocker to open our League season as Guildford City; one of the few teams to finish below us last season, handed us a five goal lesson at King George's Field and provided a reminder that no club in this League will give us anything unless we earn it in every single game.

We were missing Carl Oblitey, Callum Wilson and Craig Dundas from Tuesday's win, with Kenny Antony coming back in to the starting line up and at the back Reece Tierney made his first start of the season, alongside new signing Axel Kodjo. Just 93 were present, despite the sunshine, to witness this display which was probably just as well! It was also disappointing to note that our club have now increased adult prices to £9 and as a result we now charge as much as anyone in this division and more than most, which I wish they had been open and honest about, instead of sneaking it under the radar and hoping no one would notice. When considering our finishing position of 16th last season, it's hard to see the justification for this increase at a time when they should be trying to attract supporters. A lazy "double-issue" programme priced at £2.50 didn't help either. In fifteen years as programme editor, I only ever did that over Bank Holidays when printers were closed and can confirm from much experience in this area that the excuses provided within the programme for doing this were bogus. If our new Editor wants some help or advice, he only has to drop me a line.

We had an opening warning as early as the sixth minute when Manny Acheampong was left in a lot of space on the right, requiring Faebian Witter to make a really good low save to deny him from only twelve yards. However, we didn't heed the warning and five minutes later they worked their way down the left, dragging our players across and leaving Darnell Jon-Peter with an easy finish when the ball was sent over to him on the right.

This was frustrating, but there was plenty of time left to rectify matters if we could improve, and to be fair things did get better for a while. Luke Miller combined well with Thompson Adeyemi to set up Antony, only for our striker to miss his kick completely from the edge of the area. Antony redeemed himself by hitting the target with his next effort after some really clever skill from Ethan Nelson-Roberts, but visiting keeper Jacob Terry made a good block at the near post. Then Miller sent in a good delivery that was flicked on and punched out off a defender for a corner, from which the ball was half cleared to Will Kendall at an angle and on the edge of the area, but his powerful strike cleared the bar by about a foot.

It was looking as though we were quite likely to get back into this match, but in the 34th minute the game took a fatal turn as a cross in from the left was met with a close range header that Adam Green did really well to tip over the bar. The only problem was that Green was not our keeper and his inevitable red card, followed by Jake Brown's penalty conversion,



left us in a mess. Some might say that his actions were instinctive and I'd agree with that if he were our keeper! In fact, I'd say it was a worthwhile thing to do, had we been defending a narrow lead towards the end of the game, but at 1-0 down, the handball was inexcusable. Green will also now have to serve a one match suspension, which I believe will be our next F.A. Cup tie on Saturday.

In difficult situations like this, you often find out how your players will react, but nothing really happened by way of attacking threat, with our only chance coming in the third minute of first half injury time when a great pass from Nelson-Roberts was chested down by Miller and he was through on goal from a slight angle, but Terry stood firm between the City posts and Miller uncharacteristically put his shot into the side netting from ten yards. Had it gone in, maybe it would have given us a chance of second half redemption, but instead we went in completely deflated.

Our Manager understandably made changes at the interval with Carlos Polo-Infante and Stefan Aiwone (called Hiwone by the club) coming on for Antony and Thompson Adeyemi respectively, but the visitors came out in confident mood against the ten men and extended their lead in the 50th minute with a strike that was at least twenty-five yards out and swerved viciously away from Witter who had no chance as it flew into the top corner. Even their keeper Terry said "he'll never score another one like that again!" It was a wonderful strike, and nine minutes later there was another one of high quality, as Malachi Cole made it 4-0 when we were caught cold by a short free kick; the Guildford man cutting back and striking across Witter into the far corner from a narrow angle. It clearly wasn't going to be our day today!

Things got worse still in the 67th minute after we again failed to react to a deep free kick to the far post that was put back across by Tobi Falodi with Young being unable to clear the ball off the line before it had crossed. However, the visitors' feed advised this as an own goal, so clearly it wasn't quite as straightforward as I described. Either way though it was 0-5.

With fifteen minutes remaining Polo-Infante sent in a good cross from the right that was met by a bullet header from Kendall from just inside the penalty area that Terry reacted superbly to tip over the bar. This was a superb passage of football from both teams and we then saw Young's header from the subsequent corner aim goalwards, only to hit teammate and debutant substitute Sean Omoigboade-Agun and rebound to safety!

Witter made two more good saves and we finished with nine men after Tierney suffered a head injury and had to leave the field in the 85th minute. Although the visitors then hit the post with a low shot in the 92nd minute, they were unable to breach our defences again and the referee helped us out here by only playing four minutes of injury time, despite there being closer to ten minutes expected in my opinion.

So what positives can we take from this defeat? As you might expect, not many. Witter did as well as he could and from where I was, I don't believe he could have done any more with the goals. Kendall provided a threat on occasions, but the whole task was rendered impossible after Green's unnecessary red card. With very difficult looking home matches coming up against Jersey Bulls and Hayes & Yeading United in the next seven days, it will take a monumentally better performance than this one if we are to get anything out of either of those contests. If we do, then they truly will be "great" performances.

Epsom & Ewell: Faebian Witter, Toby Young, Reece Tierney, Adam Green ©, Axel Kodjo, Fabio Nunes, Luke Miller, Thompson Adeyemi, Will Kendall, Kenny Antony, Ethan Nelson-Roberts

Subs: Carlos Polo-Infante for Antony (HT), Stefan Aiwone for Adeyemi (HT), Sean Omoigboade-Agun for Nelson-Roberts (62), Sirak Negassi for Miller (70)

Report Source: [www.eefconline.co.uk](http://www.eefconline.co.uk)