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Epsom and Ewell FC finally win with a glut

8 October 2023

Epsom & Ewell 5-1 Colliers Wood United. Combined Counties League – Premier Division. Saturday 7th October 2023.

We may have had some cup wins already this season, but whilst they are always welcome, it is the bread and butter of the League that is most important, and so to finally secure our first points of the season at the eighth attempt with a 5-1 win over Colliers Wood United was a massive step towards closing the gap between us and the rest.

Following the resignation of our Manager James Scott on Wednesday, interim Manager Steve Springett made four changes to the line up after Tuesday's loss to Balham, two of which were enforced as Callum Wilson and Ayran Kugathas were only able to attend with their pet dogs in tow, following their hamstring injuries, so Jabari Ofosu-Hernandez and Tijani Eshilokun came in for them as we switched from three at the back to a four, while on the wings Jaan Stanley and Ade Batula came in ahead of Sirak Negassi and George Owusu, although they would join the action later.

Who knows whether the visitors, sitting just one place above us in the League, were expecting us to play three at the back, but by the time they had found out we were operating a different formation, we were in front. The goal came from a Stanley penalty in the fifth minute, but the build up to this goal was superb and needs reporting. It started off with a great pass from Ollie Thompson into the left hand channel where Stanley sent a ball into the danger area. This was only half cleared to Rory Edwards who then saw his shot blocked, but only as far as Ethan Nelson-Roberts, who was tripped right on the edge of the penalty area. Or so I thought! Actually, the referee decided that the tackle was inside the box and awarded the spot kick, with very little complaint from the visitors about whether it was in or out. Marlon Pinder had taken our last penalty, but Captain Zach Powell made it quite clear that Jaan would be taking this one and he stepped up and finished comfortably past Jack Minchin.

We continued to press against a lack-lustre Colliers Wood and Thompson Adeyemi found Stanley again, although his shot was just beyond the post before we realised it was all academic anyway as the offside flag had been raised. The visitors then sent a free kick beyond everyone from a dangerous position, but we were soon back on the attack again and our second goal followed in the 20th minute. Again, this started with our defence as Powell pushed towards the area and the ball found its way to Ade Batula. His low shot was well saved by Minchin who got down well to stick a hand out, but Pinder reacted first to slot away the loose ball from seven yards.

It just kept getting better though and we scored a third goal just eight minutes later as Stanley made good progress on the left before sending over a delicious cross that was over Minchin and a defender, but not Batula who jumped to head the ball back across goal into the net from just four yards out. We had further opportunities before the break when Batula struck powerfully at goal, only for Minchin to tip the ball over, and then from the following corner, Adeyemi headed a good chance wide from 12 yards, having beaten his man to the ball. Although the Wood had a goal disallowed in the 42nd minute for offside, it was the first time this season the supporters were able to relax a little at the half!

The second half stopped almost as soon as it had started, following an ankle injury to Daniel Webster and it seems like there is always at least one injury in matches on this pitch. A second would follow later, both of which would require the visitors to use substitutes, but in the meantime we extended our lead. Just nine minutes into the second half Eshilokun wasn't closed down on the edge of the area and he fired an unstoppable rocket past Minchin to become the second former Wood player to score against them in this match following Pinder's earlier strike.

On the hour another good Stanley ball in was cut out at the last moment by a defender, although he then picked up a silly yellow card for delaying the restart moments later. The Ofosu-Hernandez cleared the danger as the ball bobbled around in our six yard area for a moment. We made a couple of substitutions and Owusu interchanged passes with Pinder before sending a good ball in from the right but Edwards' attempted back flick wasn't the cleanest and the ball dribbled through to the grateful Minchin. The game was a little more even at this stage, even if it was over as a real contest.

We attacked again, only for Owusu to be pulled up for a foul when he was clean through, when all he had been guilty of was being stronger than his man. Kiyo Brown was also on the field by now and he received the ball from Nelson-Roberts but chose to shoot from a poor angle with team mates waiting. Had the shot been powerful he might have been forgiven, but it wasn't and his teammates made it quite clear what they thought about his decision making! Negassi would have a similar chance a few minutes later, but he too would make the wrong choice, although the shot did at least require a good save this time. The visitors saw a free kick deflect wide of Nelson-Roberts and Harvey Keogh watched a speculative effort sail over from twenty yards.

However, in the 94th minute a right wing cross from Evans Lamboh was headed in from close range by Christian Amankwah to spoil what would have been our first clean sheet since August, but within a couple of minutes we were celebrating again as Owusu was brought down in the 96th minute with Minchin picking up a yellow card and a minute later Owusu struck home the penalty he had won with a clinical finish to complete the scoring at 5-1.

This was a massive fixture for both clubs and should have been a tight encounter. The fact that it was so one-sided is

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largely because we were very good and Colliers Wood were so, well, wooden! This was inexcusable for such an important match and would have been obvious to the visiting officials, who sacked their Manager Ben Ewing within 24 hours. We now sit just a point behind them with two games in hand, which is a much healthier position than would have been the case if we had lost, as we'd have been at least seven points adrift of everyone else.

So, for once, I am able to report that "New Manager Bounce" does actually exist and is alive and well here at Cobham! The phenomenon that so often has gone against us in the past, has on this occasion come to our rescue and it will be interesting to see whether Springett throws his hat into the ring for the permanent job, or whether he or indeed, the club see this as a temporary role. Either way, he now has two weeks off to think about it as our match at Sandhurst Town, scheduled for next Saturday, has been moved back and we don't take the field until we visit Alton on 21st October. If you are a regular supporter, please make sure to let everyone know this, as our club haven't bothered to publicise the fact!

Epsom & Ewell: Harvey Keogh, Jabari Ofosu-Hernandez, Ethan Nelson-Roberts, Rory Edwards, Zach Powell (c), Ollie Thompson, Ade Batula, Tijani Eshilokun, Marlon Pinder, Thompson Adeyemi, Jaan Stanley

Subs: Nick Inwugwu for Eshilokun (58), Kiyo Brown for Batula (66), George Owusu for Stanley (68), Sirak Negassi for Adeyemi (70), Tino Carpene for Pinder (70)

Report Source: www.eefconline.co.uk

2 = brace, 3 = hat-trick, 4 = haul, 5 = glut, 6 = double hat-trick, 7 = haul-trick

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