EPSOM & EWELL TIMES
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12th November 2026

ISSN 2753-2771

EPSOM & EWELL TIMES

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Epsom and Ewell FC win 2, lose 1 in pre-season friendlies.

13 July 2022

Reports courtesy of Richard Lambert of www.eefconline.co.uk

Farnham Town 3-2 Epsom & Ewell Pre-season Friendly Saturday 2nd July 2022.

The artificial surface at Kings College in Guildford was the place to be to witness the opening match of the Anthony Jupp and Liam Giles era.
Farnham are a Step Five team and they held the balance of the play in the first half, although only broke through in the third minute of injury time when a near post right wing cross was converted with a sidefooted volley past our keeper.
The half time whistle blew immediately after the restart, and both teams changed a number of personnel and in our case, the formation too. This bore fruit within 35 seconds as a smart strike from the left about fifteen yards out put us back on level terms. We then hit the face of the bar with a shot from the left before another shot took a slight deflection and came back off the Farnham post.
Unfortunately a foul just inside the penalty area gave our opponents a spot kick which was converted in the 73rd minute and then two minutes after we had hit the post once again in the 87th minute, Farnham scored a third goal with a fine finish into the top corner from just inside the box.
This third goal was a little harsh on our team, but in the 91st minute we did get a second of our own when our earlier scorer latched on to a fine pass, held off his man and steered the ball under the keeper from an angle about ten yards out for his second of the match. It was the least we deserved, having also hit their woodwork on three occasions during that period!
As always at this stage of the season the performance is more important than the result, but with so many players absent it is hard to say much more than the scoreline was about fair, largely due to Farnham holding a greater balance of play in the first half. Suffice to say our new Management seemed happy enough with the way things went and that's all that really matters at this point. We move on to meet another Step Five team when we visit Hassocks next Saturday.

Hassocks 0-1 Epsom & Ewell Pre-season Friendly Saturday 9th July 2022.

It is generally accepted that the most pretty ground in the area is Arundel's; sitting in the shadow of its imposing castle. However, Hassocks home ground of The Beacon would certainly fit in the tier just below that, and on a gorgeous day that was probably too hot for football an impressive crowd around the 130 mark were present to witness our victory, although once again the support from an Epsom point of view was really low. This was a pity as the performance showed a clear upgrade from the previous week, despite the heat, although admittedly both teams were almost entirely changed at half time, so most players only played one half of the match.

This was an incredibly unusual result. In my forty years as a regular supporter I can only recall a couple of previous occasions where the only goal of a match occurred in the opening minute, but that's exactly what happened in this contest. There were more new faces on show at Hassocks, including another former Epsom player from 15 years ago, although the only goal after just 18 seconds, came from a familiar face as Athan Smith-Joseph collected the ball some thirty yards out and strolled unchallenged to the edge of the penalty area before casually striking the ball into the corner of the net. It's possible that our opponents hadn't realised we were playing three at the back to start the match and lost track of the extra man we had further forward, but either way we caught the hosts cold with this strike.

From that point, the home team had as much of the match as we did and had a couple of really good chances to equalise; firstly in the 38th minute when a deep ball to the left was volleyed across goal only for the Hassocks 10 to strike over the bar from close range, and then in the 79th minute when a free kick to the far post was headed against our crosssbar and as the ball bounced down and then up again, it wouldn't come down in time for the incoming striker who headed the loose ball over. Our (currently) unnamed keeper, who was different to last week's, also had a good game and made a couple of solid saves, but the match was largely devoid of real goalmouth action and this was a fairly attritional contest at times, which isn't always a bad thing when you are leading.

Did we deserve the win? Maybe a draw would have been fairer over the 90 minutes, but I also felt we were worth a draw at Farnham Town last week and we didn't get it! Whilst the actual result isn't that important at this time of the season, I felt we saw the match out well and this bodes well for the future when some of our other new names will be appearing to strengthen the competition for a place. All in all though; sunny day, lovely ground and my team won. Why would you want to be anywhere else if you truly are a genuine and loyal Epsom supporter?

AFC Uckfield Town 0-2 Epsom & Ewell Pre-season Friendly Tuesday 12th July 2022

In my last report I referred to the clean sheet secured at Hassocks being our first in a long time and we have now added a second just three days later with a good 2-0 win at Step Five AFC Uckfield Town at the Oaks.

We had visited this ground before, back in 2009 for an F.A. Cup tie when one half of the merged Uckfield club were previously known as Wealden FC, and it remains as picturesque as it was back then. Around 65 people attended on a warm and sticky evening to watch the home team hold the upper hand in early proceedings, but without really looking like they would break through.

However, the pattern of the match changed in our favour in the 21st minute. I wouldn't normally advise the name of an unsigned scorer, but seeing as he did it himself on social media, I can advise that Jahobi Maher collected the ball just over 45 yards out and launched a strike at goal. The keeper stumbled, at which point you knew instantly that it was going in for

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ISSN 2753-2771

a spectacular opener.

Confidence grew from that point and we should have made it 2-0 with a great move, but Ricardo Fernandes blazed over from the edge of the penalty area. In response the home side flicked a shot at goal but our keeper was able to deal with it comfortably and we extended our lead in the 42nd minute when new signing Nick Wilson met a long throw with a glancing header across and beyond their keeper from around eight yards out, and only a great save from the home keeper stopped a spectacular third goal after a good move concluded with a superb volley from the edge of the area, but the ball was tipped over the bar.

There were less changes than usual at the break with only three players coming on, bringing the total of subs up to four at that point after one of our players had limped off ten minutes from half time. One of these was our keeper from last year, Kane Charles and he would prove to be very busy in the opening quarter of an hour, making a couple of spectacular saves, although he needed some help in the 49th minute when a defensive header back into our penalty area enabled a home striker to shoot at goal, but Louis Chin was perfectly positioned to head the ball off the line via the crossbar and out to safety!

We made four more changes after an hour and the contest, which had been a bit niggly throughout to this point then flared up again after one of our players crashed into the hoardings near the dugouts which required his replacement, but the home side seemed to run out of ideas a little and the game ended in a fairly comfortable 2-0 win in the end.

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