

Epsom replay rise from the ashes hoped for

5 August 2024



Epsom & Ewell 0-0 Phoenix Sports. Emirates F.A. Cup Extra-Preliminary Round. Saturday 3rd August 2024.

Our first competitive match at the ninth official “home” ground in club history took place as we took the field at Corinthian-Casuals’ King George’s Field against Isthmian League Phoenix Sports in the opening round of the F.A. Cup and the contest ended in a largely uneventful goalless draw, with both teams appearing content to hold out for a replay as time ticked down in front of a fairly healthy crowd of 148.

As befits any new match of the season, there were a number of players making their debut, although less than in recent years as Manager Warren Burton chose to retain quite a few from last season. Grabbing all the headlines though was Sutton United Hall of Fame member Craig Dundas, who made his competitive bow in Epsom colours at the age of 43. A few years ago we had 40 year old Jamie Byatt making his debut for the club and I wrote at the time that he would probably be the last player to play for this club who was born before I started watching Epsom and Ewell in 1981. However, since that day we have seen Paul Springett, Reggie Savage and now Dundas who fit into that category with surely the former Sutton man becoming the last. For those who like their stats, our former Manager Ray Purvis holds the record as the oldest player to represent the club at the age of 47 years and 29 days when he took the field at Clapton on 30th April 2005.

Anyway, back to the match! Four players took the field for the first time in defender Toby Young, Dundas, Carlos Polo-Infante and Kenny Antony, with Fabian Nunes joining the action later in the day. Chances were few and far between, although we had an early concern when our keeper Faebian Witter had to come out of his area to clear and conceded a free kick just outside. Fortunately the strike deflected off our wall and away for a fruitless corner. The opening fifteen minutes were slightly more in our opponents favour as they attacked mainly down the left and Young picked up a fairly early yellow card for a foul, although he was then clattered into a few minutes later, earning the Phoenix number 3 a yellow of his own.

The game became more even after this, although not a lot was happening in either penalty area. Our best opportunity of the half came with a cross from Ethan Nelson-Roberts that was a little off target and required a catch on the line from the Phoenix keeper or we might have had a fortuitous opener. Back came the visitors though and a shot from the left was well blocked by a defender before Witter had to get down well to make a good save with his left hand. Nelson-Roberts then picked up a card on the advices of the referee’s assistant and we went in at the break as we had started.

The second half continued in a similar pattern and Phoenix nearly scored with a volley in the 55th minute after a free kick was only headed out as far as the waiting player. Fortunately for us, the well-struck effort from just inside the penalty area cleared our bar, but only just. Luke Miller then created something out of nothing as he controlled a deep ball across the field, just keeping it in play, before running at a defender and crossing into the danger area, although his low ball in was a little too close to the keeper who claimed the ball.

Moments later we had our best chance of the match after a wayward keeper clearance left us with an opportunity. Will Kendall closed the keeper down and the loose ball fell to Polo-Infante, but with a fairly vacant net ahead of him from eighteen yards, he couldn’t keep his shot down. Nunes replaced him shortly after this. Then Miller went down in the area between two defenders, but there was never enough there to award a penalty and the game continued to meander. Kendall was tripped on an attack and everyone appeared to stop, expecting a free kick which wasn’t given and the opposition broke away at goal. However, Young got over well to make the saving challenge.

As the time started to run out Young was just over the bar with a looping header from Adam Green’s corner, while Miller was off target with two tries, although not by that much in either case, particularly the latter effort which almost shaved the far post from an angled shot. Both teams seemed happy enough to take a replay by the end of the match and as a result we will make our first ever appearance at Mayplace Lane, near Dartford on Tuesday evening, which means that our League game at Alton will be moved back. It would have been moved anyway though as Alton also drew in their cup tie.

Looking back at this match, there were quite a few similarities with our goalless cup draw twelve months ago against Met Police. Both they and Phoenix finished in sixteenth position in their respective Isthmian divisions last season and of course, we went on to win that away replay by two goals to nil. I wonder if we can repeat that feat on Tuesday evening!

Epsom & Ewell: Faebian Witter, Toby Young, Ethan Nelson-Roberts, Adam Green ©, Callum Wilson, Craig Dundas, Luke Miller, Thompson Adeyemi, Will Kendall, Carlos Polo-Infante, Kenny Antony

Subs: Fabian Nunes for Polo-Infante (65), Sirak Negassi for Antony (76)

Report Source: www.eefconline.co.uk

James Redfarn adds:

Epsom and Ewell FC new signing Article

The Epsom and Ewell Football club have pulled off an exciting new signing for the 24/25 season, acquiring the skills and talents of the football veteran Craig Dundas. This player is well known for his immensely impressive tenure at Sutton United, having played over 500 games and scored over 100 goals; Dundas has rightly earned the moniker of Sutton United legend.

At the impressive age of 40, Dundas became one of the oldest players to make a debut in the English Football League. EFL statisticians have proclaimed Dundas to be the oldest debutant since World War Two.

Now at the age of 43, his signature to the Salts is a coup for Epsom and Ewell, adding a wealth of experience and leadership to Warren Burton's squad. Dundas is expected to deliver not only in terms of skill and composure on the field but also by offering his invaluable experience and guidance to younger teammates.

In addition to his role as a player, Dundas will serve as a player-coach, a dual role that promises to have a significant impact both on and off the pitch. His presence is anticipated to bolster the team's performance, offering strategic insights and enhancing team dynamics.

There could be exciting times ahead for Epsom and Ewell FC, and the Dundas effect will hopefully be in full force for the rapidly approaching season.