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Lobsters at home with Salts

29 August 2022

Salts battle hard but Lobsters progress in the Vase. Redhill 2-1 Epsom & Ewell. Isuzu F.A. Vase – First Qualifying Round. Saturday 27th August 2022. Report Source: www.eefconline.co.uk Reporter: Richard Lambert

Our first Vase match of the season also became our last as we were defeated by Redhill at Kiln Brow on Saturday, but our opponents will know that they had to work for the full ninety minutes before coming through in a match that was ultimately only decided by a defensive error.

In fact, over the ninety minutes we had the greater chances and against a team in the top four of Step Five at the time the match kicked off, it was hard to tell that there was a full step between the two opponents. Although that didn't count for much in the end, our boys deserve a lot of credit and know that performances like this will result in a promotion at the end of the season, which was and remains our ultimate goal this season.

We made four changes to our starting line up with the injured Steve Springett, the unavailable Andy Hall and Adam Grant and the suspended Richard Pingling replaced by Johnny "Sonic" Akoto, Aaron Bogle, Tiago Andrade and Athan Smith-Joseph respectively. However, I have referred to our strength in depth and we looked as good this week as we had seven days previously at Worthing United.

Following a minute's silence for a Redhill Vice-President, Les Smith, we had a couple of early half chances with Ryan Smith's strike at goal and a nice bit of interplay between Jaevon Dyer and Andrade finished with a Dyer shot that was well blocked by the Redhill keeper Mike McEntegert. At the other end Matt Walton saved a low shot from Fred Hill with his feet after we were caught out by a long ball.

Our next chance fell to Zach Powell but he scuffed his shot from a good position before a defender made a great challenge to deny Dyer in the act of shooting. Then Dyer turned provider but Smith-Joseph couldn't quite direct his header on target at the far post. Next to try his luck was Smith from fully thirty yards although it was just wide of the post.

On the half hour Dyer struck another shot which I can confirm was creeping inside the post, but a defender's leg blocked the effort and the hosts broke with speed, earning a corner which was headed wide by Antonio Simeone. Then Walton was in action again, blocking away a shot from Jason Kaate, before Lyndon McGugan made a superb challenge after it looked as though Smith-Joseph would be able to finish easily when the ball fell kindly for him. Both of these Redhill players were with us briefly during the Covid friendly phase, although neither made a competitive appearance for us.

Dyer was giving the Redhill defence a lot of work and just before the break he was brought down by Sol Patterson-Bonner who earned the first yellow card of the day, but overall both teams looked solid in defence as we went in for half time with the goalless scoreline.

This looked like being a really tight encounter, decided by maybe just one goal, so when we took the lead in the 51st minute it looked like it might be pivotal. Dyer was again involved as he connected with a low ball in and his shot was well saved for a corner and from the Smith delivery Brad Peters rose highest to head home his third goal of the season from eight yards; his finish across McEntegert was unstoppable.

We could and maybe should have extended our lead a minute later when the ball was fed to Smith-Joseph, but his shot from ten yards was kept out by the keeper's feet. However, the game turned in the 56th minute. Dyer was brought down inside the penalty area, but it didn't look enough for a penalty for me. Meanwhile Redhill broke at pace and within seconds Yannick Monga ran in from the right and struck a low drive across Walton into the far corner. We had led for just five minutes.

Still we made chances as Andrade's delicious pass to Smith-Joseph was in stride, but his shot from six yards was straight at the advancing keeper and our flying winger was denied again by a saving defensive challenge minutes later. A couple of substitutions followed as Dyer and Jubril Adamson departed, but we failed to carry the same attacking threat that Dyer had posed and then in the 80th minute we tried to play out from the back, only for Max Oldham stole the ball, ran in and drilled the ball below Walton from close range for what proved to be the winner.

Moments later our Captain Gideon Acheampong to pick up a harsh yellow card for trying to get the ball off Oldham and nudging him over, although it should be noted that Oldham also received a card, but disaster then occurred in the final seconds when our defender tried to reach the ball to block an upfield clearance and he was adjudged to have caught the Redhill player, picking up a second card in the fourth minute of injury time. Clearly our Captain was angry at the decision, which I also thought was the wrong one. As it is Acheampong will now serve a one match suspension.

It is always unfortunate to depart the FA Vase. It is a competition that we have an indelible link with, having been one of the first two finalists in 1975 and we recognise our part in its history. However, as a Step Six team currently, promotion has to be our top priority and if we were going to get the rough end of a decision like that, then at least it didn't cost us league points. Hopefully we can put this result behind us when we face Oakwood on Monday morning as we go for our fourth League win in a row.

Epsom & Ewell: Matt Walton, Gideon Acheampong ©, Johnny "Sonic" Akoto, Ryan 'Butch' Smith, Brad Peters, Aaron Bogle, Athan Smith-Joseph, Zach Powell, Tiago Andrade, Jubril "Jibs" Adamson, Jaevon Dyer

Subs: Gavin Quintyne for Jaevon Dyer (69), Ricardo Fernandes for Adamson (69), Josh Alder for Powell (85)

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