



Penalty shoot out won by Epsom and Ewell FC

9 January 2025

Epsom and Ewell 0-0 Berks County. Combined Counties League Cup - Second Round. Tuesday 7th January 2025.
Epsom and Ewell FC won 5-4 on penalties

On a very chilly Tuesday evening at the KGF our boys progressed to the last 16 of the Combined Counties League Cup and earned a first ever trip to Wallingford & Crowmarsh with a penalty win over Berks County, following a goalless draw after 90 minutes. This was the thirteenth penalty shoot out in our history, and it was our sixth win.

The Swords had of course visited us once already this season when we defeated them 3-1 in the F.A. Vase and their friendly keeper Harvey Rackley-Hayes advised that he thought the match would be called off; such was the weather forecast, added to last Saturday's postponement of our landlords' League match. The uncertainty certainly would have put many floating spectators off the idea of making the journey, seeing as the match wasn't confirmed publicly as being on until 5.30pm. As a result, only 55 were present at the ground to witness an attritional battle, but they would be rewarded for their attendance with an exciting ending and a penalty masterclass.

The playing line up was a positive one. Although a couple of regulars were missing, Anthony Nazareth and Carl Oblitey were back amongst the substitutes after injuries with the latter coming on in the second half, while Stefan Aiwone played the full match alongside Callum Wilson who had not been in the line up at Jersey Bulls. Also providing a further attacking threat was Ali Fofahan who had been abroad for a while. From our trip to Jersey Nicolas Bostan moved to the bench, while Tobi Falodi was absent and new signing Nathan Best was cup tied.

The match would follow a similar pattern to the first meeting between the clubs, with our boys looking slightly more dangerous than the visitors, but with possession being only slightly in our favour. We had an early chance, that looking back may have been the best of the night when Kionte Gillfillian-Waul found Will Kendall with a cross field pass, only for our striker to see his shot from twelve yards expertly turned around the post by Rackley-Hayes. It was a good strike and was definitely going just inside the keeper's left hand post and maybe it would have been an easier evening for us had it gone in.

Instead, the match contained a succession of half-chances, mostly for us. Jason Bloor set up Fofahan who twisted and turned, but fired just a yard away from the top corner, while a good piece of interplay between Gillfillian-Waul and Bloor resulted in a chance for Adam Green, but his low shot was wide of the mark.

We thought we had taken the lead in the 30th minute when a good ball over the top from Niall Stillwell was guided beyond Rackley-Hayes into the far corner by Sean-Michael Anderson but the offside flag was raised against him. At the other end Kevin Kardel was a lot less busy than in his Jersey debut and dealt well with the few chances that came his way, most notably after the visitors had got down the right wing and pulled the ball up for a strike in goal, but it didn't have the power or direction to cause much concern.

Kendall saw his shot deflect wide off a defender for a corner before Green was brought down on the edge of the area out on the right wing, but the free kick was blocked. Finally a Kendall looping header from a corner was claimed comfortably by Rackley-Hayes and we went in for the break goalless.

Nothing appeared to change in the second half. Gillfillian-Waul was getting forward quite frequently in this match and he latched on to a Fofahan pass, although his shot was well blocked for a corner. Anderson limped off after a foul on him that earned Lawson Jones a yellow card and Ethan Nelson-Roberts took his place; interestingly playing out on the right wing for the remainder of the match for the first time as far as I can recall. Kardel made another comfortable save and we looked like we were the only team that would be scoring, but as time ticked down everyone knew that one error either way could decide it. We continued to make the better chances and Fofahan saw another shot deflected wide before Kendall then struck a shot against a defender on the ground from just ten yards and was maybe surprised to see the ball come back to him as he then skied the second chance.

in the closing minute Green was not far away with a strike from distance, while Wilson also saw his shot on target gathered by Rackley-Hayes before their keeper dropped the ball under pressure from Kendall, but we were unable to reach the loose ball and after four minutes added time we went to penalties.

We first faced a penalty shoot-out at the start of the 1983/84 season, yet it wasn't until our fourth spot kick lottery in 2010 that we would win one! Since then our record has been fairly even. However, this would be only the third time in our history that we scored all of our penalties. As most normal people would expect, I'm not going to give away much detail about our penalties while we remain in three cup competitions, but Green, Wilson, Craig Dundas, Kendall and then Fofahan stepped up bravely and netted emphatically in that order. To be fair, the visitors did exactly the same with their first four penalties, but the fifth from the Captain Dan Money came at a good height and Kardel guessed right to parry the ball to safety and ensure a 5-4 win!

In summary the conditions and playing surface were better than I thought they would be, but they were certainly not perfect and two teams at the wrong end of the table who are used to having to compete, battled each other almost to a standstill. We were the better team and did deserve the win, but apart from the penalties which were superb, it was just one of those matches where you chalk up the victory and move on. To our credit, that's what we did!

Epsom & Ewell: Kevin Kardel, Niall Stillwell, Kionte Gillfillian-Waul, Adam Green (c), Stefan Aiwone, Callum Wilson, Sean-Michael Anderson, Craig Dundas, Will Kendall, Jason Bloor, Ali Fofahan

Subs: Ethan Nelson-Roberts for Anderson (63), Carl Oblitey for Bloor (70)



Report Source: www.eefconline.co.uk