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Redhill cruise to victory on Epsom waters

16 August 2023

Epsom & Ewell 1-3 Redhill. Combined Counties League – Premier Division South. Tuesday 15th August 2023.

We opened up our home League campaign on Tuesday evening against Redhill and found out fairly quickly why they will be involved at the business end of the table come season's end as they cruised to a 3-1 victory.

It has to be said that we didn't have a lot of fortune over the course of the evening either. Before the match Harvey Keogh jammed his finger into the turf making a save in the warm up and with it either dislocated or broken, Toby Colwell came in for his debut at rather short notice. Also making his debut was Kiyo Brown and he showed up well in the first half before being replaced in the second.

This was one of those matches that you watched from a distance. As most people know, I stand behind the goal we attack and if I'm honest, there wasn't an awful lot of that going on in this match!

Redhill had cheekily created a match poster including four former Salts, Adam Grant, Gavin Quintyne, Athan Smith-Joseph and Coach Matt Chapman, but they could have also included Manager Jordan Clark and Tom Harland-Goddard too. As it turned out, only the ageless Quintyne and Smith-Joseph were in the starting eleven and they nearly took an early lead when Colwell stood up well to make a fine save from a Smith-Joseph shot in the fourth minute which was then cleared.

A couple of dangerous crosses went through our six yard box and out as Redhill controlled much of the first half. We had occasional half chances and Ethan Nelson-Roberts was set up for a strike by Sirak Negassi, but his shot was easily dealt with by Luke Roberts in the Redhill goal.

We then saw our Captain Callum Wilson injure his ankle in a collision with a Redhill player and although he had treatment, he was clearly not able to continue much longer and he limped off around ten minutes later. Negassi got past Quintyne who brought him down cynically, although no card was issued when it probably should have been, and Rory Edwards sent the free kick from an angle goalwards, but without enough power to trouble Roberts.

The visitors continued to threaten and Jack Saunders struck the bar from the edge of the penalty area, having just shot over the bar moments previously. Then Reuben Duncan sent his low shot just beyond our far post. They were getting closer and it was no surprise when they went ahead in the 39th minute with a move down the left that was finished off by a shot from around 15 yards across Colwell into the far corner by Tyrese Sutherland.

At this point Wilson was replaced and a couple of minutes later Tommy Williams also needed to go off. In fact every few minutes it seemed like we had another player on the deck. Nick Inwugwu and Ayran Kugathas came on in their places, but Duncan broke through in the 48th minute after we had failed to clear the danger and smashed the ball back past Colwell from just inside the area, giving him no chance as Redhill registered their second goal. It nearly got worse as Inwugwu had to be alert to clear the ball off the line and although Ade Batula struck just over in the eighth minute of injury time, it was a very despondent looking Salts eleven that trooped off at the break.

The visitors continued to press in the second half and shots came in, but we weathered the storm and on the hour we started to become a lot more competitive ourselves, and the final half hour was much more even as a contest. We put together a good move, only for the final pass to Batula to be accompanied by the raising of the Assistant's flag for offside. We then held the ball for a bit of time, although the Redhill defence looked fairly solid and despite having our best ten minutes of the match we then conceded a third goal when Grant broke through our defence and finished easily past Colwell in the 70th minute.

We made a couple of substitutions with Ben Amissah and Jaan Stanley joining the fray and Batula saw his shot deflected for a corner. The 79th minute set piece looked like being an easy catch for Roberts, but he dropped it and Inwugwu was there to force the loose ball over the line at the second attempt to register his first goal for the club with the Redhill defenders hoping for a flag or whistle that might save them, but it didn't come, and rightly so.

Despite pulling a goal back, we rarely looked like adding to it and Redhill almost scored a fourth with a great crossfield pass to the right wing where a low shot from an angle was parried to safety by Colwell. In the final minute of normal time we had our final opportunity when a long ball found the advancing Zach Powell who set up substitute Jaan Stanley who found Batula but the shot was dragged across goal with his weaker foot.

To be fair thoough, a second goal on the night would have seriously flattered us and we could have no complaints with the final score. More concerningly, with Friday's F.A. Cup match coming up against Met Police there must surely be some question marks over the availability of some of our players following the injuries and with other players Chester Clothier and Ben Bauchop at the match but also unable to play, we appear to have a rather early injury crisis.

Epsom & Ewell: Toby Colwell, Tommy Williams, Ethan Nelson-Roberts, Zach Powell, Ollie Thompson, Callum Wilson ©, Kiyo Brown, Ash Snadden, Ade Batula, Rory Edwards, Sirak Negassi

Subs: Nick Inwugwu for Wilson (41), Ayran Kugathas for Williams (44), Jaan Stanley for Brown (74), Ben Amissah for

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Negassi (74)

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