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This time a victory counts!

18 April 2024

Premier Division South							
Pos	Team	P	W	D	L	GD	PTS
16	Spelthorne Sports	36	10	8	18	-25	30 *
17	Guildford City	36	8	4	24	-51	28
18	Epsom & Ewell	36	8	3	25	-37	27
19	Colliers Wood United	34	6	7	21	-36	25
20	Sheerwater	36	7	4	25	-56	25

Epsom & Ewell FC 4-1 Fleet Town. Combined Counties League – Premier Division. Tuesday 16th April 2024.

After just two wins under his tenure to this point, our Manager Warren Burton was able to celebrate his 48th birthday with a third victory as we won this rearranged League match 4-1 against Fleet Town. In fact it could be argued that this was the most impressive of his three, quite probably better than our 6-2 win over a lacklustre Sandhurst Town side in March, as this win came against a better team and we had to come from behind to do it too!

The win must have been particularly tough on the visiting supporters who had been 3-1 up on Saturday and had probably already added the three points to the League table to close on the playoff pack, only to see one of their players badly injured and the match subsequently abandoned, and then to face a second trip up from Hampshire in four days before being heavily beaten; a win that ends any faint playoff hopes they may have had.

We made three changes to the line up from Saturday's match with Nick Wilson and Jaevon Dyer coming back into the starting line up and they were joined by Thompson Adeyemi who was originally due to be on the bench, but got the call up after Carl Oblitey was late arriving for the match and had to be content with a place on the bench. Tijani Eshilokun and Matt McGillivray were absent for this one.

We got off to an awful start on Saturday when we conceded in the eighth minute, but this time we were behind even earlier as a harmless looking ball came over towards Wilson in the sixth minute, but somehow the ball got tangled up in his feet and then fell for the opposition's leading scorer Dan Bone who scored twice on Saturday and then added another with a low drive past Dan O'Donovan from twelve yards.

The teams seemed to be following Saturday's script as we equalised soon after with a nice passing move that went from left to right where Ethan Brazier went forward before feeding Luke Miller whose low right wing cross was met at the near post by Will Kendall from just six yards out to give Filip Chalupniczak no chance with a left foot strike in the twelfth minute.

Kendall was unlucky to see his low strike deflected into the side netting before another Kendall header from a Miller delivery was only half blocked by Chalupniczak with Dyer knocking in the loose ball from close range, only to see the offside flag raised against Kendall. Kendall looked to be linking with his team mates much better in this game and it was good to see Dyer looking much more like the flying threat we had seen so frequently last season. In short, even with Oblitey by now sitting on the bench, we actually looked like we posed an attacking threat, which you couldn't often say about our team this season.

It was around the half hour mark in the original match that we started to get pushed back, but that didn't really happen here. In fact we looked the more likely to score as the half concluded and had a great chance when Kendall supplied a superb reverse pass into the path of Dyer, but just as he went to round the keeper, he stumbled over the ball and allowed Chalupniczak to claim the ball. This was a massive chance and when O'Donovan tried to see a ball out for a goal kick but got caught out, nearly leading to a goal for the visitors, it made you wonder if we had missed our chance. We went in at the break level at a goal each.

We continued on the front foot in the second half and Dyer sent a curling shot just beyond the far post after Adeyemi's set up. We've not had a vast amount of luck this year and just when I was thinking it would be great to get some here, that's exactly what happened, when in the 51st minute a deep left wing cross forced Bradley Pegg to turn back to defend it, only for him to knock the ball into his own net under pressure from Kendall from eight yards out. The ball could have gone anywhere, but squirmed into the corner of the Fleet net!

We had the lead which was crucial, as I was concerned about the idea of us trying to see the match out for a draw, but could we hold on to it? As you would expect, Fleet came back at us and a far post header by Argjend Ahmetaj was just wide but we were soon back on the attack and Kendall wasn't able to keep his header on target from Adeyemi's superb left wing cross. However, any concerns about the miss were forgotten soon after and we extended our lead on the hour mark. Miller set the ball back to Brazier, whose cross from out wide looked like it was just going to hang in the air for an easy catch, but Adeyemi had other ideas and out jumped Chalupniczak, heading the ball up in the air. It seemed to hang in slow motion before coming down off the bar, but fortunately Kendall was first to reach it and he smashed the ball into the roof of the net from just six yards out to make the score 3-1.

Relief was evident across the ground and we continued to take the game to our opponents who then began to self-destruct when Dan Bone was sent to the sin-bin after believing that he had been fouled. During that time we had further chances with Reece Tierney's header being blocked, while Wilson was just wide from 35 yards and Taylor forced a low save at the near post. For such an important match, it was unusual to feel so relaxed, particularly this season, but we were under relatively little pressure.

Although O'Donovan picked up a yellow card for a bit of time wasting, the visitors were chasing shadows as we passed the ball around like a training session and even when they returned to eleven men we remained the better side. Oblitey came

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on for Dyer and he was in the action soon after, with a low shot smacking Chalupniczak's right hand post and rebounding to safety, but by this time Matt Sirmon had become the second visiting player to visit the sin-bin and this left them down to ten for the remainder of the match, during which we scored a fourth goal. It was the 96th minute when the ball came in from the left and was then passed to Miller who feigned to shoot on two occasions, completely tricking the defenders before slotting past the keeper from close range to complete the scoring.

It would take a brave person to say that they saw this performance or result coming after Saturday's abandonment and our recent displays, but it obviously gives us a huge lift in our relegation battle and it has to be said that if we had played like this more frequently, we wouldn't be in the position we have been in. It was certainly very good timing to produce our best ninety minutes of the calendar year and maybe our Manager should have birthdays more often!

Epsom & Ewell: Dan O'Donovan, Ethan Brazier, Ethan Nelson-Roberts (c), Adam Green, Reece Tierney, Nick Wilson, Luke Miller, Luke Taylor, Will Kendall, Thompson Adeyemi, Jaevon Dyer

Subs: Carl Oblitey for Dyer (79), Sirak Negassi for Brazier (83), Zack Ingham-Wright for Taylor (86)

Related report:

This defeat will not count

Report Source: www.eefconline.co.uk

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