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EPSOM & EWELL TIMES

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What were the odds of Epsom & Ewell's 4 x 2 + 2?

15 October 2024

Combined Counties League Premier Division South									
		P	W	D	L	F	A	GD	PTS
14	Horley Town	14	3	4	7	29	34	-5	13
15	Epsom & Ewell	13	3	4	6	19	30	-11	13
16	Camberley Town	11	3	2	6	15	22	-7	11
17	Chipstead	12	3	1	8	17	35	-18	10
18	Sheerwater	13	2	3	8	21	37	-16	9
19	Balham	12	1	3	8	14	31	-17	6
20	Spelthorne Sports	13	0	4	9	8	27	-19	4

Epsom and Ewell 2-2 Fleet Town. Combined Counties League – Premier Division South. Saturday 12th October 2024.

For the fourth time in a row our match resulted in a 2-2 draw, this time against high-flying and unbeaten Fleet Town at the KGF on Saturday. We could and maybe should have handed them their first League loss of the season, having come from behind to lead with twenty minutes remaining, but a late Dan Bone equaliser ensured that we had to share the points once again, and in all fairness, the draw was the correct result.

In front of an attendance counted as 116 (yet officially and farcically advised as 148) that included around twenty of our Colts, we made just one change from the team that had drawn 2-2 at Redhill seven days previously with Niall Stillwell coming in for his first start for the club at right back for the injured Ethan Brazier, as he had done in our draw with the leaders.

We kicked off towards the Chessington end for the first time in a number of matches and Carl Oblitey had the first chance when he tried his luck from long range but was well wide, while the visitors were a lot closer with their first attempt after a deep Tom Smith cross was headed wide at the far post by Danilo Cadete. However, they took the lead in the 11th minute after a good move on the left resulted in a low ball in that was teed up nicely for Matt Surmon to drive it into the net, with a slight deflection off a defender from the edge of the penalty area.

Last season we had to play two home matches against Fleet Town after the original contest had been abandoned for an injury, but in each case an early Fleet goal was answered rapidly with an Epsom equaliser, and this time it was no different, as we only had to wait three minutes to draw level. For the second match in a row we had another own goal in our favour, as Oblitey had tried to put a through ball for Ali Fofahan on the right, but over hit his pass. However, Fofahan retrieved the ball and sent over a dangerous low ball with his left foot. With Oblitey waiting for a tap in, Ross Stepney got there first, but only succeeded in diverting the ball into his own net off the crossbar from five yards out!

Stepney then earned a yellow card for going through Fofahan, but it's not entirely clear how Fleet didn't retake the lead in the 28th minute, when a low shot was well saved by Dan O'Donovan, but the follow up from close range from Tane Caubo somehow went back across the goal, missing the target from what appeared to be extremely close range. O'Donovan made another good low save with five minutes of normal time remaining from Luke Kandi before our keeper nearly claimed an assist when his free kick went to Jason Bloor, whose shot was on target and would have crept inside the right hand post of Finley Purcell, but was blocked by a defender and we went in at the break on level terms.

Surmon headed an early chance over the bar for Fleet within a couple of minutes of the restart and the majority of the possession was with them for a while, but on the hour we began to redress the balance and Ethan Nelson-Roberts sent in a dangerous ball that was cleared just ahead of Oblitey by Smith. Caubo headed another half chance wide for the visitors, but then somewhat against the run of play we took the lead in the 70th minute. A clever pass set Fofahan away down the right, and he cut back onto his left foot before delivering a peach of a cross to Oblitey, standing unmarked and five yards out, leaving him with the simplest of headers into the net.

David Romer came on for the injured Stillwell, which led to a little bit of defensive reshuffling, but we pushed forward again and Nelson-Roberts was denied by a superb last moment tackle, before Kionte Gillfillian-Waul produced a great run and pass across the six yard box, which was just missed by a defender. It appeared that Oblitey, standing beyond him, had expected the defender to reach it and didn't quite react in time; the ball scraping off the underside of his boot from a few yards out.

A third goal then would surely have finished off Fleet Town and their unbeaten record, but good teams find a way back and although their substitute, the prolific Dan Bone, sent a header just wide, he made amends with a low shot from the edge of the area that was just out of reach for O'Donovan in the 84th minute. It's not clear to me whether Bone was on the bench for tactical reasons, or whether he was coming back from injury, but he always gives us problems and it was fortunate for us that he didn't play the full ninety minutes.

We had one last chance in the final minute of normal time when a Fofahan free kick was headed wide by Oblitey who had done well to lose his man, but just couldn't keep the header on target, and after seven minutes of injury time the final whistle confirmed our fourth straight "Desmond".

For those who are unaware, our third 2-2 draw against Redhill last week was the first time in club history that we had even had three of these in a row, so to see a fourth consecutive one is quite bizarre. The simple facts are that we have only one loss in ten matches now, but whilst the Redhill result was a good one, particularly from 2-0 down, I don't believe I'm the only person that thinks the other three of those matches really ought to have been wins.

It's not a major criticism though. Although we are currently in 15th place now with thirteen points from the same number of games, we remain seven points clear of the two relegation positions and are in much better form than the clubs down there, who are presently Balham and Spelthorne Sports. Don't be fooled by the FA Full Time site or even the very useful

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Football Web Pages site though, it is two clubs and not one that will go down this season. Right now though, it definitely won't be us.

With our League position fairly secure for now, we can turn our attention and focus to a pair of cup matches now, and against the same club as Berks County visit for the League Cup tie on Tuesday and the F.A. Vase tie the following Sunday. On current form, we will be favourites to progress through these ties, but also will need to hold on to a lead when we have it, as a draw in either or both of those matches will send us to the lottery of a penalty shoot out. Additionally, we have fought back from going behind five times in the last four matches, so it would be nice to see us start a little better in the matches to come.

Epsom & Ewell: Dan O'Donovan, Niall Stillwell, Kionte Gillfillian-Waul, Adam Green (c), Callum Wilson, Anthony Nazareth, Ali Fofahan, Craig Dundas, Carl Oblitey, Jason Bloor, Ethan Nelson-Roberts

Subs: David Romer for Stillwell (71), Conrad Essilfie-Conduah for Bloor (75)

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