

THE MERTON WAY



HOW FAR SHOULD WE TRAVEL?

I would like to wish you all a Happy New Year and success on and off the field.

The Club started the year with a very important event 'The Nick Papanastasiou Memorial game' It was an honour to stage this match to commemorate the life of one of our members who died so tragically in the Autumn and who is missed by so many. It was a really good event and memorable. The match had widespread support and see the match report and pictures.

Nick's death was the only real downer in 2016 which was a very encouraging year for Merton. We need to build on this in the second half of the season.

We will be tackling our issues of the facilities and discipline and the SAL is looking at Regionalisation (see below). I also set out an update on the Youth section.

But I went with the First team on Saturday and they had a terrific win at the Bank of England in a very high quality close encounter with our boys just holding on in a nail biter against a very strong Bank side. All our sides are competitive and there was another close encounter at the Hood with the 6s beating our 7s 2-1 brilliant stuff!!!

REGIONALISATION – YOUR VIEWS

The Southern Amateur League (SAL) is considering whether to increase the level of regionalisation because of some of the difficulties that some of the clubs are facing and which are causing difficulties throughout the league.

I believe that we are fortunate to be playing in the SAL which is the best amateur football league in London and probably one of the best in England. It is very well administered by some really dedicated men. But amateur football is going through a crisis with many clubs experiencing a reduction in the number of teams and members. It would seem that one of the difficulties members have is making the commitment to give up so much of their time for football on a Saturday. That means

they play less games a season and don't like giving up most of a Saturday to play an away game in a distant part of London. Travelling across London on Saturdays is not good with works to the rail network and traffic everywhere. This means that the league is becoming distorted as clubs are fielding weaker sides for away games at distant venues.

These issues have really surfaced this season. Carshalton has withdrawn its reserve side from the league as its members refused en masse to travel to distant away games. Lloyds Warren withdrew their first team in October. The SAL have taken a lenient view of this and not insisted that a lower side moves up to fill the gap. This is a change from previous years and is to encourage the clubs to recover their position but still causes a further distortion in the leagues as if you don't have reserve side it is inevitable that your 3s and lower sides will benefit.

So the Southern Amateur League is looking again at further regionalisation in order to reduce the travelling time to away games. Currently regionalisation happens to a limited extent with the third teams (junior) but almost exclusively from fourth team down.

It is right that we should look at these matters and keep them under review and I would recommend that you go on the SAL website and look at the options given and express your views by voting.

Personally, I believe that regionalisation is the way forward but I like the integrity of the SAL where the senior section has all the clubs first team's playing one another and the same with the Intermediate section. This is proper competitive amateur sport and on a Sunday morning I opened up the Sunday Times and I look for the Merton result. Of course I know what it is but I like to see it there. And I think to myself 'Yes it was important, it does matter, it's in the papers'.

THINGS TO KNOW

RUBBISH

It is important we remember that our home ground is a public park and we need to be careful with our language and also our rubbish.

From this Saturday a dustbin will be provided out on the pitch and please put your empty bottles, tape and trash at the end of the game.

FIRST AID

We take the safety of our members very seriously and as a Charter Standard club we have to ensure that proper first aid kits with each match and certificated first aiders in each team.

- we need the Manager/Captain to check the first aid kit and ensure it has adequate contents
- any player with any health issues such as allergies/asthma/epilepsy/heart issues should disclose these to the captain before the game. (inhalers are important for asthma)
- We also will be running an Emergency Aid training course in November at the Hood and we need volunteers to sign up for that.

VALUABLES

Please **DO NOT** leave any valuables in the changing rooms, and if a key is not available, take all belongings out to pitch side in your own kit bag or a team valuables bag.

YOU HAVE BEEN WARNED!!

TRAINING

LOCATION: St Mark's Academy School, Acacia Road, Mitcham CR4 1SF

TIME: 8pm-9.30pm on Wednesday evenings.
(please arrive by 7.30pm to stretch and warm up)

SURFACE: Astro-turf: please wear appropriate footwear

Each is responsible for their own physical fitness. Attendance at training is encouraged and preferable but not yet compulsory, however training is likely to affect team selection and there may be occasions when attendance is required.

SHOWERS

Teams that have an earlier kick off than other teams, can you please ensure you **TURN THE SHOWERS OFF** when leaving changing room.

Last weekend, the 4s had a Cup game and finished early, they kindly left the showers on and then there was no hot water for the 6s & 7s when they finished their games!!

RAM'S HEADS UP

I'VE RECENTLY GONE DEEP IN MY MIND AND THOUGHT OF SOME OBSCURE THINGS, HERE ARE A FEW THAT HAVE ROLLED AROUND IN MY HEAD:

1. Guys, always date a girl that's either the same height or taller. Dating a short girl and you hug her, she will hear your heartbeat and know exactly where to stab you if you hurt her!
2. Some people need a high-five, in the face, with a chair!
3. During sex you burn as much as running approximately 5 miles... who the hell runs 5 miles in a minute?
4. My girlfriend said to me the other day "I love me will all my boobs. I replied, "surely you mean heart?", she said "no, my boobs are bigger"... happy days!
5. I don't sugar coat shit, I'm not Willy Wonka!
6. Smoking helps you relax... 6 feet under!
7. Inside me lives a skinny man crying to get out, but I usually shut him up with biscuits.
8. Getting in an argument with a woman is like being arrested, because anything you say will be used against you.
9. I worked out that sex is like maths: you add the bed, subtract the clothes, divide the legs and pray you don't multiply.

TV OF THE WEEK:

Silent Witness – BBC1

SONG OF THE WEEK:

September Song – JP Cooper

PAINT OFF PAINT ON

For those of you who have popped down to the Hood since the dawn of the New Year, you will have noticed it's had a pretty significant series of improvements. On behalf of the entire club, we'd just like to say a huge thank you to Darren Fitzgerald, who so selflessly gave of his time over the holidays, and single-handedly did all the painting and repairs that have given our beloved clubhouse the facelift it so badly needed.

For those of you who don't know, Darren is one of our newer members who plays for the 3s. But he has also taken on the role of managing the U/15s, in conjunction with Daniel Woollard, and the duo have done a fantastic job so far this season.

We thank Darren kindly for all he is doing to help the club, and we hope you enjoy making use of the much-improved facilities at the Hood as a direct result of his efforts.



Merton FC: a new-look Hood, thanks to Darren

NEW YEAR'S DAY

MERTON FC XI 3 NICK PAP XI 1

New Year's Day marked a very special occasion at the Hood, as Merton FC gathered to commemorate a very special young man, Nick Papanastasiou, who tragically passed away in October 2016. In his short time as a member of the club, Nick had made a significant impact - most notably with his impressive football skills, fine bowling action, and a smile that was as infectious as any.

The occasion to honour his memory was a friendly fixture of a composite Merton XI in the iconic Yellow, who took on a team comprised of Nick's family and friends, donning white. There was no shortage of sore heads among the Merton contingent in the wake of the New Year celebrations the night before. Fortunately for manager Clappers, he had an inflated squad of 19 at his disposal.

His first act was to ambitiously/dubiously promise all the players an hour of football each - the sort of mathematical manipulation that would have put him on a par with the likes of Einstein or Nash, given the squad size and the limit of 90 minutes that comprise a standard football match.

Nevertheless, the forecast rain remained at arm's length, and it was all systems go. The Merton gaffer opted for experience in defence, with no fewer than 282 years, and 11,319 games under the belt of the back four. A crooked midfield three provided the foil for a more energetic trifecta at the top of the pitch, with Tom Benham and Nick's brother Chris leading the charge.

The game started at a 'leisurely' tempo, although the whites unquestionably had the better of things.



Their sustained pressure resulted in a misplaced pass from Welch, and the opposing striker looked a sure bet to score having intercepted and charged away. However, Sam spared Welch's blushes with a good outstretched hand to maintain parity.

Merton eventually began to grow into the game, with Tom in particular causing the opposing defence some problems. He was controversially ruled offside when clean through, and then had another effort cleared off the line.

The whites were still offering a bit going forward, but a crunching sliding tackle from Welch stifled one attack, while his partner Darren Avey was doing a good job with the aerial battles. The latter, though, displayed his attacking limitations shortly after, as he somehow conspired to blaze over the bar with the goal at his mercy from a corner. The belated offside call could hardly be used as a scapegoat either, and Max showed his videographic acumen by capturing the whole saga on camera, much to the delight of the onlooking crowd.

Clappers, though, had seen enough, and hauled Darren and six others off the park in what proved to be an inspired change. A scrappy through ball put Tom through on goal, and he made no mistake, hooking the ball home with his left to make it 1-0. Tom then looked to have made it two shortly after as he rifled one past the keeper and into the net. However, he was adjudged to have been offside once again.

The whites then hit Merton on the counter, as their striker - correctly adjudged to be onside after some 'attentive' linesman work from Mike - cottoned onto a ball over the top. A corner ensued, and the resultant chaos from the delivery looked sure to produce an equaliser. However, Merton somehow managed to scramble clear to maintain their slender advantage going into the break.

The oranges were much enjoyed by the tiring players, as Clappers attempted to shuffle his rather sizeable pack. Confusion reigned as Welch attempted to substitute himself, but eventually clarity was restored.

Merton began the second half strongly too, and had a number of half chances to double their lead. The whites keeper made a fine one-handed save early on, while Darcy later looked sure to score, but contrived to take long enough to allow a goal-saving block to be put in. It was one of a number misses from the buccaneering 3s midfielder; something his teammates gleefully alerted him to on each occasion.

The second goal eventually came, and from an unlikely source, in an unlikely manner. Vanny put in a cross, and Mustard was on hand to nod it home. His finish was all the more impressive given the levels of contortionism required to get his head so low to the ground - a side-footed tap in may have been the path of least resistance in retrospect. Nevertheless, a goal to be remembered, aptly chronicled by Max, who remarked, "That must be the first header Mustard has ever scored. In fact, that must be the first header he's ever produced that could be classified as a positive intervention."

But the whites weren't about to keel over, and they hit back soon after, as their big number 5 stormed through the Merton defence, and finished with aplomb to make it 2-1. And they looked set for an equaliser too, as a bullet shot stung Sam's fingertips a few minutes later. He fumbled, the ball spewed in front of him, but as the opposing striker descended upon it, Sam just about toed it away to safety.

The rain began to teem down thereafter, and this scribe, among other spectators, fled for cover. A third goal was allegedly scored by Vanny at the death, albeit with differing accounts as to the quality thereof. Some onlookers described it as a 'scuffed' finish, while the man himself later spoke of beating four defenders en route to glory.

Either way, Dave Laughton called time on proceedings soon after, with the final score of 3-1 an irrelevant one. Far more important was the occasion itself: an entertaining match, played in great spirit, in honour of a wonderful man, and a New Year's Day tradition that looks set to endure. The packed bar afterwards summed up the success of it, and, despite the weather, it was a day thoroughly enjoyed by all. A big thank you to Chris, family, friends and all the players and helpers on the day.

1s

MERTON FC 4 BANK OF ENGLAND 3

This was a cracking game to watch and an even better one to win and get a valuable three points from a very good side.

Right from the kick off, Bank of England (BOE) came at us moving the ball well and some good pace and movement upfront, We seemed a little off the pace and a touch sluggish. A corner to the near post caught us napping and after two minutes we were behind and the Bank were all over us and we looked in danger of being overrun. But how quickly things can change. We started to get into the game well into their half anyway and Vanny found himself in a little bit of space on the edge of their box and cracked in the equalise on 12 mins. Before we had time to take that on board when Woody bundled through their hesitant defence and put Johnny in for an improbable lead. But we were on top now and BOE were shaky at the back. They had a big shout for a pen turned down and then we went up field and from that Woody corner Clappers flicked it home at the near post with that wise old footballing head. (The whole sequence expertly caught on video and posted on FB) so 3-1 up and then their keeper failed to deal with a nasty high ball and Tills tapped in to make it 4-1. And that was the somewhat improbable score at half-time. Strange, but we had also missed a number of very good chances.

The second half started the same, but BOE had not given up, far from it and although we created a few good chances they dominated. On about 55 minutes they scored with a 30 yard unstoppable rocket and 10 mins later it was 3-4 and for the last 30 mins it was siege defending and very nervy stuff. The defence held out in no small measure due to some excellent and brave Goalkeeping from Sirij who got battered and flattened but not beaten. And we held on for an excellent three points and a great start to 2017. The Bank are a very good side and were a little unlucky but battled to the end with excellent spirit. But I was a cracking all round performance from the Boys. Everyone put in a big shift to win the game.

The game was well ref'd with considerable resolve by John Doe.

STARTING LINE-UP: Team; Sirij (GK), Kearsey, Clappers (Capt) Browner, Chas, Sam, Woody, Tills, Bosh, Vanny, Johnny, Bosh

SUB: Milo, James L



Merton 1s: go through a strenuous warm-up before taking on Bank of England

2s

MERTON FC 2 SOUTH BANK 2

TEAM HANDSOME MISSES THE CHANCE TO CLOSE THE GAP AT THE TOP!

Merton Reserves will look back at this a missed opportunity to close the gap at the top! Bundles of energy, spirit, effort & good football were on show – all until we managed to go 2-0 up!

The first half was a pretty tight affair, and it seemed it was always going to take something special (that little moment of magic) to break the deadlock. Step-up captain marvel Graham Willgoss, who is having a cracking season! It was he, who basking in this purple patch of form, felt the audacity to twist and turn a couple of South Bank defenders on the left-hand corner of their box, before looking up and measuring a delightful chip – in off the far post – to send Merton 1 – 0 up. (It definitely was not a cross, no matter what anyone or every player says.....I jest.....and to be clear GREAT GOAL....).

Ten minutes into the second half, Emmanuel worked a clever short corner to Connor Murphy, catching them and us by surprise, Connor whipped in a great left footed cross, and big Jase nodded it home. 2-0!!!

Now nobody panic! Oh no wait....! Whether it was a wave of naivety, recklessness, or over confidence it doesn't matter – within seconds Sherbs was saving a one on one, and from the resulting corner their skipper headed home to make it 2-1.

Two minutes later, we bring it back to 2-2, another corner (there is a pattern here), and a bundled home equaliser, having failed to clear our lines. It could have got worse, as Sherbs saved another one on one, before we woke up again and had a series of good chances with Tom Benham pretty much creating them with magnificent solo runs, speed and strength – but the ball never quite fell right for the final finish!

With the last kick of the game – South Bank shot wide – when it seemed easier to score.

2-2 in the end was a fair result, but having been 2-0 up – it hurts a little!



Merton 2s: Tom put in a MOM performance



Merton 2s: in bar for a post match drink

MAN OF THE MATCH:
Tom Benham

SCORERS:
Graham Willgoss
Jason Thomas

3s

MERTON 3 NOTTSBOROUGH 6

2017 had arrived and with it some extremely cold and wet weather but following what was by all accounts a great occasion for the New Years Day memorial game, the weather certainly did nothing to dampen the optimism amongst the lads that the 3s could turn their season around. A string of closely contested games before the Christmas break had brought no reward and we found ourselves locked in to a relegation battle as we entered January.

An uncharacteristically late confirmation of the squads from Lofty left everyone in suspense as the clock ticked by on Friday morning, but when they finally came in the excitement at the prospect of a strong result was only fuelled further with a strong 3s squad which, despite some notable absentees called up to the 2s, contained a returning Vin and the man mountain Mike Todt who'd earned another call up following a strong showing including a goal for the 3s earlier in the season.

Game day arrived and the news broke that the reliable Dan R's sofa had been safely delivered and he was on course to make the game. Unfortunately however, others weren't quite so keen to make the game and failed to show face (or notify) despite the close proximity to the Hood leaving the 3s with a bare eleven for a tough away fixture at title challengers Nottsborough.

The game kicked off with Merton in solid 4-4-1-1 shape with Fitz given license to get forward and support Denys up top. A very respectable pitch gave the team an opportunity to get our foot on the ball and play our passing game which had the positive impact of seeing Merton start the game the faster for a change, Frankie on the left and Mustard just inside him in particular were causing problems for the opposition.

Around five minutes in to the game, came the first incident of note. Denys' hold up play drew a challenge around 20 yards out and saw the defender play the ball back to the opposition goalkeeper who duly picked it up. As the referee blew up for a Merton indirect free kick on the edge of the 6 yard box, Mustard and Denys' were on the same wavelength and charged to the spot of the infringement leaving everyone else in their wake. On their arrival a quick free kick saw Denys square the ball to Mustard who duly passed the ball in to the net. Genius. Oh no, hang on, wait. In a moment I can only compare to the infamous Henry/Pires passing penalty, Mustard had inadvertently overrun the spot of the free kick (or Denys had taken too long to take the free kick, it depends who you ask) and their quick thinking had been ruined by a lack of composure on execution as the referee blew up for offside. Five minutes in and dick of the day was surely sewn up already.

The score may have been 0-0, but the opposition were clearly rattled as Merton continued to press and surge forward with numbers almost every time we had the ball. The attacking play did leave Merton exposed on the counter attack occasionally and Dan in goal was forced in to a couple of top class saves to prevent a goal against the run of play before Merton were finally able to take the lead at around the quarter hour mark. A ball was whipped in from out wide and the Nottsborough defence's ineptitude at dealing with the arial threat was exposed, the ball not sufficiently cleared resulting in some penalty box pinball. While Mustard and Denys engaged in a spot of mud wrestling with their respective defenders (claiming penalties) it was left to Fitz to rifle the ball home from close range, and this time the goal stood. 1-0 Boars and Fitz's first goal for the club.

The game continued in a similar fashion for the next 15 minutes or so before a Nottsborough counter drew a cynical but necessary challenge from Dan R in the middle of goal around 20 yards out. After what

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seemed an age with the opposition changing goalkeeper, the referee finally allowed the kick to be taken and a low skimmer across the wet surface and around the wall left Dan in goal disappointed he hadn't made the save. 1-1.

Unperturbed, Merton continued to play in the same fashion and posed further problems to the Nottsborough defence. By this stage however, the opposition were starting to come in to the game more and it was certainly a game with the attackers on top. 40 minutes in and Merton won a free kick on the right hand side around the half way line. Sensing an opportunity, Mike hurried forward to pose the opposition further threat in the air. Dan swung a great ball in towards the far post and although it eluded Mike who had drawn attention from the defence, Frankie was able to win the header at the back stick and loop it back across goal. What should have been a regulation catch for any normal sized goalkeeper turned out to be too tall a task for the diminutive opposition keeper at the time, who could only haplessly flap at the ball leaving Mustard the simplest of finishes from close range. 2-1 Boars.

Disappointingly, hopes of getting in at half time with a lead were dashed almost instantly as a great individual run from an opposition midfielder yielded a goal when he cut through our midfield like a hot knife through butter, side stepped Vin and slotted home neatly in to the bottom corner from the resultant 1 on 1 with Dan. 2-2, when half time arrived.

The lads came in at half time feeling hard done by not to have a lead following what had quite frankly been the best half of football the Merton 3s had put together all season. We knew we needed to come out firing early in the second half and get a lead, as with a bare eleven the final 20 minutes were always going to be a challenge.

Unfortunately, Nottsborough began the second half strongly, presumably buoyed by the fact they were level despite being outplayed during the first period, and after a period of early pressure and a string of corners the hosts took the lead for the first time in the game. The SAL Junior Div 2's answer to Adebayo Akinfenwa picked the ball up in the centre of the park and bulldozed his way to the edge of the box (with Dan later quoting "I just bounced off him for their 3rd goal") where he squared to a teammate who finished low in to the corner from around 12 yards out. 3-2 Nottsborough.

For the next 20 minutes, Merton came back in to the game but were never able to regain the dominance shown in the first half and it was relatively even affair. Some more great stops from Dan in goal along with some resolute defending kept the Boars in it before Merton's first real opportunity of the second half arose. Some lovely footwork from Dan picking the ball up at right back and cutting inside past two opposition players before sliding a great ball through to Fitz who'd made a great run in behind and thought he found himself through on goal. That was until the opposition's last man savagely scythed him down on the edge of the box (think Sol Campbell's never ending slide tackle but more man and less ball). To the dismay of every single boar, the referee failed to give the decision (perhaps not wanting to dirty the new red card he got for Christmas) and waved play on.

From this point on the lack of substitutes and soft ground began to take its toll on Merton's legs and before long it was 4-2 with the Nottsborough forward finding too much space on the penalty spot and drilling one in to the corner. Swiftly afterwards it became 5-2 as the little opposition midfielder, now relieved of his duties in goal, picked the ball up a full 30 yards out and drove a high dipping ball towards goal. Dan back-pedalled rapidly and rose to get a hand on the ball sending it skywards before landing on his back on the goal line. Time seemed to stand still at this point as the ball dropped and the lack of any attempt to get up from Dan left the rest of the team to assume another top save had been made and the ball was dropping over the bar. This was not the case however, as the ball dropped under the bar and over the line to the bemusement of pretty much everyone, Boars and opposition alike. Not least Dan who claimed landing on his back had left him momentarily in shock and stopped him from moving as the ball dropped down over him. Perhaps the dick of the day vote was opening itself up again after all.

5-2 became 6-2 not long after as the fight had seemingly been knocked out of Merton by the time we entered the final 10 minutes, a run down the wing from the oppositions star man (AKA "the lad in the blue boots") left three Merton players for dead before cutting inside and slotting home at the near post from close range. Nottsborough continued to pile on the pressure in the final ten minutes but unwilling to concede a

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seventh Merton battled away in defence and with Dan able to make another couple of top saves (sore back eh?) it was the Boars who were able to have the last laugh. Merton were awarded a foul on the half way line in a similar position to that from which we had scored our second and once again Dan Rist, who had been having a strong game going forward all day, stepped up to take it. Not keen on delegating responsibility for scoring a consolation to any of the lads in the box, Dan stepped up with a goal of the season contender (also his first goal for the club) bending the diagonal ball across and finding the top corner off the underside of the bar – think Ronaldinho free kick against England in the 2002 World Cup, but from the half way line.

And with that came the final whistle, a day that had started out with so much promise (and plenty of new boots) for the 3s had ultimately ended in defeat, as have so many other close fought games this season. But a strong performance from the lads for 70 minutes is something we can take heart from for the rest of the season, with the opposition skipper commenting post game that we were the best footballing side they had faced all season and with a bit more fitness or some substitutes available it could have been a different story.

MAN OF THE MATCH: Dan R

DICK OF THE DAY: Dan B

SCORERS: Fitz, Mustard, Dan R

4S

MERTON FC – NO GAME

5s

MERTON FC 2 POLYTECHNIC 9

Unfortunately, the Merton 5's didn't really turn up, despite being in very familiar territory. It felt like we were still on holiday, in fact.

Things started badly, and we went 2-0 down quickly. Poly scored a couple of goals on the break. Merton finished the half strongly though, with a lot of pressure from corners. The Poly keeper made 2 quality saves, one from Steve Burchell.

The second half started slow again, and we conceded 2 quick goals.

Dulanie then pulled one back for us, as he finished from close range off a rebounded Dwayne shot.

A couple more Poly goals later and an Aaron Ackerman cross into the box was bundled into the goal by the Poly centre back under pressure from Gibbo. The goals panel eventually decided to generously award the goal to the Welshman, who may or may not have got a touch on it.

A few more Polytechnic goals later and the end result was 9-2. A poor result, but let's put it out of our minds, and get back to winning ways next week.

MAN OF THE MATCH: only one candidate – Dwayne Forest Bedford

6s v 7s

MERTON FC 6s 2
MERTON FC 7s 1

It gives me a great sense of satisfaction writing this report about the eagerly awaited Merton derby, the first competitive game between two Merton teams in many a year!

On a personal note and knowing of all the struggles in previous years, it's great to finally see competitive Merton 6's and 7's getting full squads out week in week out and future is looking bright!

Anyway onto the game and the sixes were missing a few regulars in Tyron (sunning himself in Mexico), Pete and George so in came Merton legend Spense for a run out. The sevens were pretty much unchanged from recent weeks and are starting to form a very competitive squad for themselves.

The game was played on a heavy pitch at the hood and the first 15 minutes you could tell nobody had played competitive football for a few weeks as passes went astray and touches were heavy. It then turned out to be a very even affair with both teams coming close, firstly a great save from Gubby denied Callum for the sixes and then some neat play by the sevens opened up the defence and Malcolm missed a great chance.

The match was still a bit scrappy and as was the case with two teams who knew each others strengths and weaknesses, this was to be expected. It was Merton 7 who seized the initiative with good work down the left and a squared ball (think it was Scott) across the box was slotted in by Dobson. 1-0 to the sevens! Was there a shock on the cards with the Merton lower team taking the lead against there higher counterparts!



Merton 6s & 7s: a fine bunch of athletes prior to their first league meeting since 2005/2006

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The gaffer of the 6's was not pleased and with the half coming to an end words were exchanged within the squad, actually it was just Chris moaning, but still words were exchanged! Half time came and a few changes were made by the sixes in a bid to freshen things up!

The sevens half time talk must of consisted of keeping things tight for the first 10 minutes, but unfortunately for them, this only lasted 1 minute as straight form the re-start the sixes equalised! Some great work from Callum saw him take a shot (which was going wide) and take a massive deflection into the bottom corner of the net and the score was 1-1!

Again the same pattern of play was similar to the first half, but the better chances were starting to fall to the sixes. Dan P was particularly guilty of missing a sitter!

As the half wore on the sevens looked slightly more tired and with the extra sub on the sixes side this began to tell. A few players from sevens began to pick up knocks with Dan and Billy in particular limping around, it was then when the sixes struck again. After the ref finally found his whistle, a freekick was awarded to the sixes and with presence of mind a quick freekick from Chappell released George who broke free and squared the ball for Trey to neatly slot the ball in the net. 2-1 sixes!

As the game was entering the latter stages the sixes had further chances to put the game to bed, but whilst it remained tight the sevens were always in the game and towards the end caused numerous problems for the sixes defence. Scott was causing problems with his runs and Adam on the wing was seeing some joy. Swanny made a great save to keep it 2-1 and with the final kick of the game Dobson volleyed wide from close range.

After the game much banter was delivered from the sixes, but they knew they were in a game and in fairness the real winner was Merton Football Club. I personally found it difficult playing against mates on the oppo and others may have done as well as both teams weren't at their best.

I would like to mention that Ram apparently thought he was Deli Alli and nutmegged their left winger's three times.

Also for a change, the 6s skipper is writing a report without scoring or finding an assist.

Now for Man of the Match, and as no votes were cast, I will give it to the following:

SIXES: I am going to give it Paul, battled hard and produced that bit extra to make the difference.

SEVENS: A choice between Gubby and Adam, however I will give it to Gubby for keeping the 7s always in the game.

DICK OF THE DAY SIXES: Nominations were for Chris for playing in a very very attacking midfield role and too much moaning ;o) and Dan P for a missing a sitter. But as they need to be dished about fairly, it goes to Swanny for two reasons a) for being late and b) the reason for being late was he was attending a hospital appointment to arrange an operation for his bad back (I am sure they didn't recommend playing football after that diagnosis!)

DICK OF THE DAY SEVENS: Not my place to say, but just for Malcolm's miss let's say him.

VINCENZO DI MATTEO



1. Tell us who you are outside of the club. What do you do, how would you describe yourself?

I work for a commercial radio station based in Guildford as a media sales executive. I would say I am ambitious and I love winning.

2. How did you end up at Merton FC?

I worked with Neal Davison at The Weybridge Health Club as a sales manager. Neal was my GM and invited me down two seasons ago.

3. What was your best moment in your MFC career till now?

I won Manager's Player of the Year at the end of last season when Lofty was managing the 3's (before he deserted us)

4. If you could play for a professional team, which would be it and why?

Barcelona, because it would mean I could play with the world's best team and win most of the time

5. Do you have any pre-match rituals or superstitions?

Obviously a fry up on Saturday mornings followed by a pre-match dump at about 11.30am

6. Lastly, share us your goals/expectations for the season.

Given that the 3's were promoted last season and the position we find ourselves in this season currently I would say staying up would be a good ambition. And perhaps a better goals against record.

Player of the season (so far): N/A

Childhood Team: Manchester United

Favourite team in the UK: Manchester United

Favourite team outside the UK: Napoli

Childhood Hero: Paul Scholes

Favourite Food: Pizza

Favourite Drink: Robinson's Peach Squash

Favourite Band/Artist: I'm slowly getting into Mustard's

Whale Music that he introduced me to last season

RAPID FIRE

POSITION: I LITERALLY PLAYED EVERY POSITION ON THE PITCH FOR MERTON FC HOWEVER MY PREFERENCE IS HOLDING MIDFIELD

BIRTH DATE: 20/12/1979

BIRTH PLACE: LONDON, TOOTING

PREVIOUS CLUBS: MERTON, BATTERSEA OLD FIRM, PETER JONES, POST OFFICE AND BATTERSEA IRONSIDE

NEAL DAVISON



1. Tell us who you are outside of the club. What do you do, how would you describe yourself?

I am a health club General Manager currently working for Fitness First. Generally I am young at heart and pretty sarcastic.

2. How did you end up at Merton FC?

I was introduced to the club in 1997 by a friend Gavin Frost and played a 5 seasons before leaving to play with friends from school. I returned late 2014 to see out my career.

3. What was your best moment in your MFC career till now?

Without a doubt winning Club player of the year last season, winning the league with the 2s back in 1998/99 as a close second.

4. If you could play for a professional team, which would be it and why?

Chelsea. Been a supporter of Chelsea all my life (before the money)

5. Do you have any pre-match rituals or superstitions?

I play the first half with shirt tucked in and second half untucked.

6. Lastly, share us your goals/expectations for the season.

To avoid relegation with the 3s and help out any other teams where needed.

Player of the season (so far): I have been really impressed by Glenn Pitmann at Merton and of course Diego Costa at Chelsea.

Childhood Team: Chelsea

Favourite team in the UK: Chelsea

Favourite team outside the UK: Don't really have one, but enjoy watching Barcelona and Madrid

Childhood Hero: Dennis Wise

Favourite Food: Steak and Chips

Favourite Drink: Coke and Lager

Favourite Band: Don't really have a band but enjoy drum and bass music

RAPID FIRE

UPDATE



Merton U9s



Merton U13s



Merton U15s

The Youth section is thriving. The teams are well managed and organised with lots of motivated players and parents. The challenges in Youth football are slightly different to those facing the adult club and child safeguarding and parental discipline are the two hot topics in youth football which are being gripped with closer vigilance at FA, County, League and club level.

We have ambitious plans for next season building on the firm foundations established by Steve Dewsbury and our managers and coaches in the Youth section. We hope to increase the number of teams from five this season to eight next season so that we cover all age groups from Under 9s to Under 16s and also put in place plans for the transition from youth to adult football.

Here is a check on how each of our teams is doing:

U9s: Been promoted 3 divisions.

U11s: Been promoted 1 division and through to the quarterfinals of their cup, their cup match is on Sunday 15th Jan 10.30am at home against Bedfont & Feltham Yth FC.

U13s: Currently second in Division 2, they're 8 points behind the leaders but have 2 games in hand and have yet to play the leaders, they're also through to the quarterfinals of the Surrey FA County Cup which will be played on 29th Jan, team & venue TBC.

U14s: Top of Division 3 and through to the 4th round of the Surrey FA County Cup, their cup match is on Sunday 15th Jan away against Sutton United who are some 5 Divisions ahead.

U15s: Currently mid-table of Division 1, fantastic achievement from a new team and new managers.

So come on down to the Hood on a Sunday morning and support the lads. It is really good fun and uplifting.

Max Herbert (Chairman)

U9s

MERTON FC – NO GAME

U11S

MERTON FC 5 **CB HOUNSLOW 4**

Time to blow the cobwebs away and play footy.

We are back in cup as we were informed, the opposition had played over aged players and we automatically get the win as a result.

Sunday, very mild conditions and we had just one substitute available.

Ref blew the whistle and within one minute we had gone a goal down.

We quickly equalised through Zion as he accelerated onto Cormac's through ball.

Half-time: 2-2.

Second half, Zion picked up another hat-trick... that's 4 already this season from a very talented player.

Ollie was like a cheetah on the wing...cutting inside and was taken out... 'penalty' screamed the crowd and the ref agreed.

Ollie stepped up and placed it in low right corner for his first goal of season.

Cormac scored another screamer in the top left corner leaving the goalkeeper flapping in mid-air... he loves to score these Brazilian stunning goals.

The team played so well and to be fair Hounslow were class...if Thomas had not gone in goal, it could easily have been a defeat as he pulled off some amazing saves.

Next week, we are at home in the quarter finals...

Big thanks to parents for another great turn out.

Onwards we go.

Match report from: David, Co Manager

U13s

MERTON FC 3
MOTSPUR PARK 3

MERTON WIN 5-4 ON PENS

ROUND OF 16 COUNTY CUP

The match began, our line up: Milo (GK) Nikoy (CB) Jack (CB) Alfie (LB) Freddy (RB) McKenzie (CDM) Evan (CAM) Bullet (LM) Isaac (RM) Marcus (ST) Justin (ST). The first half we played very well, we were playing one touch football & we were feeding the ball to the wing a lot but the opposition defended the ball very well. We kept on trying but did not manage to break their defence. They pushed up and won a corner and succeeded in scoring, 0-1. Kieran then had a nice run down the left wing and scored a lovely goal, at the end of the first half we were drawing 1-1. Both teams had their team talk, the second half started.

The midfield went a bit all over the place, they put a lot of pressure on our defence and we tried to clear the ball but they managed to score leading to 1-2. Another good run from Kieran on the left wing and he scored another banger, we were then drawing 2-2. Marcus had a run down the left wing and shot the ball which went under the keeper's arm. We were then winning 3-2. They were pushing very well and got another corner but did not score but it led to another corner which ended in them scoring the equaliser. The whistle blew for the end of the second half.

Both teams picked their penalty takers, our penalty takers were 1) McKenzie 2) Isaac 3) Evan 4) Kieron 5) Nikoy. McKenzie scored a good goal they also scored their first penalty, then Isaac scored a nice goal but so did they, then Evan scored and so did they! Kieron scored, then our goal keeper Milo saved a good attempt! Our final penalty taker Nikoy scored his goal leading to us winning 5-4 in penalties! We all bundled and cheered and then gave our respect to the opposition, it was a great match!

MATCH REPORT: Isaac Tossio



Merton U13s: line-up before their win over Motspur Park; penalty takers & keeper. Isaac, Evan, Nikoy, Milo (GK), McKenzie and Keiron

U14s

MERTON FC – NO GAME

U15s

MERTON FC 0 KINSTONIANS 1

Kingstonians overcame Merton for the second time this season with a 1-0 win to boost their league position. Number 7 tapped in a volley after the Kingstonians left mid was given too long on the ball and curled in a brilliant cross only for the unmarked centre attacking midfielder, lurking at the back post, to tap it into an open goal. Merton dominated in the centre of the pitch and were very unlucky in the closing minutes of the game, when the ball came in from a corner and Jamie Esteban rose above the defenders to smash a header onto the crossbar.

Dan and Darren's side, who are 7th in the league only 2 points behind whitton wanderers, have played four more games than Kingstonians, who sit 5th very comfortably. Although Merton showed good pieces of play in the first half, Kingstonians got the result that was expected and their defence played a big part.

A year ago Merton were 12th in the league and had only one point after 15 games so to think that they travelled to Kingstonians and came away with a 1-0 loss is very respectful. They showed good spirit and battled till the last minute.

Kingstonians are by far the best defensive team in the league and there are a lot of stats to back that up. They have only conceded 2 in their last 5 games and conceded 11 in 7 games this season. Merton found it hard to find a way through and Kingstonians built from the back. The yellows strikers Sam, Bradley and Felix just couldn't beat the defence.

It could be argued that Merton deserved a penalty when Bradley controlled the ball, knocked it forward and accelerated past the centre back but was then pushed in the back to stop the counter attack.

Connor, the Kingstonians goalkeeper, pulled off some great saves in the closing five minutes of the game when Merton really piled on the pressure. Alex, Merton's right attacking midfielder, played a neat one two with Harrison and took the shot at speed, dipping right into the top corner. However, it was stopped by a great dive from the goalkeeper.

At this point the reds made it clear they were looking for the goal to kill off the game by bringing on their tall, pacey striker. For one moment it looked over when he turned on the ball and beat two Merton centre backs only to skew his shot weakly wide.

A breakthrough for Merton seemed imminent. Attack after attack, shot after shot but the back of the net just wasn't found. The rain poured down on the pitch and it made it hard for both teams to play their football.

One minute of injury time wasn't enough for Merton and it was clear the game was done. Kingstonians won it because of their defence. Merton dominated because of their midfield. It seemed an unfair result for such an even match. However, Merton have to look on the bright side and finish this month in a high because their 3 upcoming fixtures could potentially all be wins. Hampton away will be a test but it's safe to say if Merton perform the way they did today then they will win comfortably.

On the other hand, Kingstonians face a few challenges with Haworth away, whitton away, Bedfont away and Wallington home. Last time the reds faced whitton it finished in a 3-0 deficit. So Kingstonians know they are certainly still in the title race and need to keep putting in these performances.

Merton, who are surely aiming for a mid-table finish, will keep working on their defence and will probably work on scoring more goals and creating more chances. The yellows are under new management this season and are doing well to pick up the pieces from last season miserable 3 point finish.

WHO'S WHERE AND WHEN

SATURDAY 14 JANUARY 2017

1s
MERTON FC v HSBC
Joseph Hood Recreation Ground – 14:00

2s
AFC OLDSMITHS v MERTON FC
Loring Sports Ground – 14:00

3s
MERTON FC v OLD OWENS
Joseph Hood Recreation Ground – 14:00

4s
LLOYDS WARREN v MERTON FC
GAME CALLED OFF

5s
MERTON FC v IBIS EAGLES
Joseph Hood Recreation Ground – 14:00

6s
NO GAME

7s
MERTON FC v OLD SALESIANS
Joseph Hood Recreation Ground – 14:00

SUNDAY 15 JANUARY 2017

U9s
MERTON FC v CLAYGATE ROYAL SWANS
Home – AM

U11s
MERTON FC v BEDFONT & FELTHAM YOUTH
Home – AM

U13s
HOOK YOUTH REDS v MERTON FC
Away – AM

U14s
NO GAME

U15s
HAMPTON YOUTH HRBFC v MERTON FC
Away – AM

MERTON FOOTBALL CLUB

Joseph Hood Pavilion, Joseph Hood Recreation Ground, Martin Way, Merton, London SW20 9BU