

THE MERTON WAY

MERTON FOOTBALL CLUB ISSUE 12 – 28.01.2016



DOES HE CATCH OR DROP IT?

CHAIRMAN'S CORNER

CUMBRIAN FLOODS COME SOUTH TO THE HOOD

HAPPY NEW YEAR TO ALL OUR MEMBERS!

Unfortunately, 2016 has started badly with so much rain. The Hood is hopelessly flooded! Over the past years the drainage does seem to have deteriorated from being not very good to dreadful and I fear it has collapsed completely.

The water just does not seem to drain away. In the short term we are trying to find alternative pitches on a weekly basis and that is alternatives to the Wimbledon Common Extension which is unsurprisingly available but in very poor albeit playable condition.

We have written to the Council to try and set up a meeting to explore short. Medium and long term solutions to the problems. We will wait and see but with the Council don't hold your breath, so I am afraid it is a lot of work for our fixture secretary in trying to find better alternatives.

Max Herbet

DISCIPLINE

Dear Players,

It gives me great pleasure to come back to Merton FC in my new role as 'Discipline Officer' and importantly be part of a fantastic family club. (My youngest son – Oliver is the Goalkeeper for our U10s).

I joined Merton FC as a player back in 2004 with 6th Team – 2005/6 Manager for 5s where we gained promotion as Champions – I recall this was a very special time for me and all players involved.

Since then I focused on refereeing and been very lucky to have officiated at many senior games within Amateur Football circuit and been blessed with appointments with FA on Vase and FA Cup matches as an Assistant Referee.

For me – refereeing has always been about the players and has allowed me to be involved with the game I love so. I am not saying job is easy – it takes patience and a great deal of discipline to succeed – though I believe that is the case in many aspects of life.

How can I help you – Players/Managers (Bread of Merton FC?)

1. By working together – Call Me if you need to discuss any incidents or have concerns about player/referee.
2. Captains – Make your appointed referee welcome by introducing yourself and asking if they need anything?
3. Captains – Act as true role model/leader on the pitch and work closely with referee to apply conduct and let referee deal with misconduct.
4. Players – Allow your captain to work with referee – no point everyone shouting – show respect and trust me you will get it back from referee.
5. Avoid silly bookings – 'Unsporting Behaviour' - these were largest volume of fines from 2014/15 season. "Walk away – dust yourself up and allow referee to handle the opposition player who has put you up in the air etc."
6. Smile – Smile – we all love the game and so do all officials.

How Will Fines be issued to players?

1. Discipline Officer will be notified by county – AFA through the Online System – Whole Game
2. Fine will be paid immediately to AFA via club.
3. Players – will be notified by email of the fine and breakdown of the incident and costs incurred – Captain & Manager will be cc'd in the email as well.
4. Players will have 14 days from email notification to make payment to Merton FC – details of payment will be shown on email.
5. Player **MUST** Notify 'Discipline Officer' that fine has been paid and by what method and when. (VERY IMPORTANT).
6. Discipline Officer will update Master Tracker Report.
7. Failure to make payment on time could lead to a suspension and should this be case player will be notified and Captain and Manager made fully aware.

How can you help?

Last season 2014/15 Merton FC was issued over 54 fines and 4 of these were for serious related incidents. As a result the club incurs additional penalties and costs when club exceeds different tiers of penalty points (costly to club).

I urge every player to think about how they behave and how they speak to Referee/s – can you improve? Do you think your behaviour is acceptable? Can you be an Ambassador for club and support Merton FC – to win 'Fair Play Award'?

Together I believe we can and will – thank you again for all your support – I am here to help and want to!

David Laughton (AFA Senior Referee/FA Coach/Discipline Officer)

m: 07984 152070

e: mertonfcdiscipline@gmail.com



RECRUITMENT

WE NEED YOU AT MERTON FC



Just a reminder to everyone that we are still on the lookout for players at all levels to join our club. So please put the word out to friends, family, work colleagues, people you meet at the park, at the bus stop, in the betting shop or in the fruit & veg aisle of your supermarket!

MATCH REPORTS – 09.01.16

1XIs

ACTONIANS ASSOCIATIONS 1 v MERTON 2 (HT: 1-1)

SCORERS: Boshier, Rayner

MOTM:

Rarely do games end like this. All prayers answered after 85 minutes of gutsy battle on an unforgiving, strength-sapping bog of a pitch: 1-0. Then, the devastating concession with just a minute remaining on the clock: 1-1. It takes a calm mind, a strong character and a sure strike to deliver in such circumstances against Actonians - a team that had won five from six in the league.

Step forward, Chris Rayner. In the death throes of this hard-fought match in which Merton needed both rearguard and goalkeeper Alex Herbert at their repellent best, Rayner's handsome left foot arced the ball low from the edge of the penalty area around the goalkeeper's despairing dive to win it.

It was the three substitutes who combined to make the difference. A Wilgo clearance found David Quainton with just Actonians' last man for company on the half-way line, the home side having pushed everyone else forwards in search of glory. Desperately tired, treading water on an increasingly muddy surface, the Acton man tried his best to impede Merton's Action Man who, having been on the pitch only a matter of minutes, was full of running and outmuscled then outpaced him.

If all hope was lost and found again in the space of a few seconds, it felt like an age for the ball to reach Rayner's feet from Quainton's pass. One-on-one with the goalkeeper, DQ found Rayner, but the ball lacked pace and invited a shot with Rayner's right. Having never knowingly had a pop with his weaker foot, Rayner carefully weighed up his options, checked the weather and had time to write and deliver a short note to DQ thanking him for the opportunity - all before sliding it round the keeper. Delirium.

So dramatic was the final flourish that it will inevitably hog the limelight. But Matthew Boshier's brilliant individual opener for Merton is worthy of high praise. As was Peter Brown's last-ditch clearance when Actonians poured forwards, pressing for an equaliser. So too, Ivan Gladkov's performance on the right. Vanya, despite having had a good Christmas, terrorised the home side's left-back throughout.

Vanny had such a good time, in fact, that he necked his first two pints afterwards (just what is his deal?). A true Merton classic, then, in every sense.

MATCH REPORTS – 16.01.16

3XIs

WINCHMORE HILL 0 v MERTON 0 (HT: 0-0)

SCORERS:

MOTM: Pete & Vin

DOTM: Ricky

Maximum effort but a lack of incision saw Merton's penultimate North London visit of the season result in only the one point, leaving a must-win game vs Nottsbrough next week to keep any faint title hopes alive.

Despite the recent rain in South London, Winchmore Hill appeared to have their own micro climate as the massive pitch was pretty much in perfect condition. A big pitch for the first game back after 6 weeks certainly meant this was going to be a workout.

With Kieran letting us down with a no-show for the second time this season (fyi 1 point from those two games, 22 from 27 in the other 9 games), Merton were forced into an unanticipated reshuffle with Pete Jennings and Neal Davison manfully volunteering to keep for a half each. Pete started between the sticks with Merton lining up 4-4-2. This was a step into the unknown somewhat as in the return fixture they had cunningly (or perhaps not) saved all their best players from being worked out by only showing up with 7 men.

Merton started the brighter of the two teams early doors, Denys volleying over the bar from a corner (was almost too good a contact), but an energetic Winchmore Hill side were very much in the game, using the large pitch to good effect with a string of good counter attacks as Merton failed to keep the ball with much regularity. Merton ultimately repelled these without too much alarm, but our shape was somewhat lopsided and somewhat bizarrely was resulting in both Mike Reed and Dan Kelly effectively sharing a LWG role as Winchmore often overloaded their right side (whilst playing a lot down their left). Winchmore's best chance came via this route, a counter down their right resulting in a cross to the back post that was headed just wide.

The game was very stretched almost from the outset, with Merton's only other chance of note coming when Tom bustled his way into the area to fire a return ball from Denys over the bar in a tough chance. At the other end, Pete Jennings was showcasing hitherto unknown goal-keeping skills, combining low-fuss competent catching with one superman punch from a corner to clear. Ticking all the boxes. The other first half incident to report saw a Winchmore player split his forehead open against Reece's knee as both challenged for the ball. This did result in a 5 minute delay whilst his teammates a) first wondered what to do, b) waited for a jumper to be chosen as a bandage, and then c) concluded they should all hold his hand and admire his bandage on the touchline for a few minutes rather than restart the game.

So 0-0 at half time. Merton rejigged their shape to try and give them more control of the ball, Denys taking a rest and Darcy making a welcome return to the side as we switched to 4-4-1-1, with Dave just behind Tom. As an added bonus, Pete was enjoying goalkeeping so much he said he'd play the rest of the season there. Well, he may have actually said "the rest of the game" but we all knew what he meant.

So, changes made, Merton were ready to go on and dominate the game and take the three points. All this was perfect in theory, but for the next 5 minutes instead Merton switched off slightly and faced wave after wave of attacks, with only some last ditch tackling and some wayward finishing stopping Winchmore Hill taking the lead. After this crazy 5 minutes, Merton got to grips once more with the game, Dave Scott linking play up well, and Darcy adding some creativity to the middle of the park, but still we couldn't find a final pass. The closest moment at this point in the game when Tom was played in down the left, only for his cut back to elude Dave and Dan, before the pendulum swung back to Winchmore Hill.

Two big moments in the game saw Mustard bring his Sniffing-out-danger skills to the fore again, firstly blocking with his shoulder/arm as a Winchmore Hill player wriggled free in the box. Next, Pete decided to make his goal-keeping life a little more interesting by dropping a cross at the feet of an opposition striker, only for Mustard to pivot the player away from goal and then block his attempted strike. What. A. SOD.

Merton made further changes, replacing Dan and Mike with Denys and Joel, and as Winchmore Hill tired Merton really came to dominate the game. Neal, Reece, Dave and Darcy were passing the ball well in midfield,

and with us now keeping the ball much more, there only looked like one team that could win it. At the back Vin continued to mop up loose balls and get us playing again as he had been all game.

The decisive pass of the game of the game came from Dave Scott. Some might say it was an overhit pass from the centre of the pitch behind the overlapping Ricky, but none could deny that seeing a flat, driven pass fly over the touchline and nestle itself from an impossible angle in a bin by the touchline was brilliant. The bin didn't even fall over. Both sides literally cheered, and the oppo even ventured that it should be worth half a goal. It was that good. Sadly the ref did not take them up on the offer.

Anyway, back to the football on the pitch. Merton were still searching for a final ball, and it almost came with a huge up and under clearance that Winchmore failed to deal with. Tom and Denys hustled, the defender lost the flight of the ball and fell, but somehow managed to slow play down as cover came in. Nevertheless Denys wriggled free to shoot from the edge of the area...only for the ball to fly just wide. More quarter-chances came and went, a succession of corners/wide free kicks, and one free kick just outside the box that the wall blocked. Again, Merton just couldn't find a final pass and ran out of time. 0-0.

A disappointing result, but probably what the performance merited, as despite a much improved second half we just couldn't fashion a clear chance on goal. There will definitely be some tired legs after all 14 men covered a lot of ground (well 13, as Pete did bugger all running in goal). Mustard clocked 7.5k on his fitbit from left back as a benchmark.

MOTM: Men this week as a tied vote. Pete for his excellent goal keeping performance as a volunteer, and Vin, who consistently broke up play and was tidy throughout with the ball from centre back. Dave also gets an honourable mention.

DOTM: Lots of contenders (Dan K for "jumping for a header like a total fairy", Dave for the bin shot (also a reason he was voted by some as MOTM!)), but Ricky prevailed in a tight battle after stopping in disgust after a bad pass to him and letting his opposite number run off into the space behind him with the ball.

STARTING LINE-UP: PETE JENNINGS (GK), MIKE REED, VINCENZO DI MATTEO, MIKE STONE, RICARDO INGLESIAS, DAN KELLY, NEAL DAVISON, DAVE SCOTT, REECE, DENYS ZHURBY, TOM BENHAM, DARCY YATES, JOEL OOSTHEIZEN.

MATCH REPORTS – 23.01.16

3XIs

NOTTSBOROUGH 5 v MERTON 1 (HT: 0-0)

SCORERS:

MOTM: Mike Reed

DOTM: Dave Donovan

A hard fought game ended with three late goals for the home side and a somewhat flattering scoreline against the now champions-elect.

With regulars Mike, Tom and Dave all casualties from last weeks' trip to Winchmore Hill, there were a few changes to the squad with regulars Lofty and Ryan returning alongside Dave Donovan, making his first appearance since October. Merton had battled hard in a 2-1 reverse against the runaway leaders in the corresponding fixture early in the year, and the 5 at the back approach deployed then was brought back, with Pete, Mustard, Lofty, Vin and Reece lining up across the back. After some debate, in front of them a midfield three of Darcy, Ryan and Neal and a front two of Donno and Denys was deployed. Chappell deputised between the posts, and Dan, Ricky and Joel manned the substitutes bench.

The game started relatively evenly, with both sides working hard without creating too much. For Merton, Pete Jennings almost played in Donno but just overhit the pass, and a few set pieces saw the ball ricochet in the box a couple of times without quite falling to a Merton player. At the other end, Nottsborough were asking some questions down the flanks, particularly overloading vs Reece down the Merton right.

20 minutes in and the first goal came, courtesy of a Merton mistake. Vin looked all set to make what looked like a routine interception, only for the ball to bobble over his foot and put the Nottsborough striker through on goal. Chappell was off his line quickly to close the angle and force the striker wide, but he kept his cool to finish from a narrow angle despite Vin's despairing lunge on the line. 1-0.

Merton tried to respond, switching to a 5-2-3 to try and close down the opposition full backs; Reece moving to play right in a front 3 and Neal moving to right back. However, they were struggling to create anything of note and the next big chance of the game fell to the home side. With Merton on the attack, Darcy surprised everyone by turning back to his own goal and fizzing a 40 yard defence splitting diagonal back-pass in behind the Merton defence. With 2 Nottsborough forwards clean through, a goal looked inevitable, but Chappell once again was off his line quickly and blocked the effort on goal. The rebound fell to another Nottsborough forward with Chappell stranded, only for Mustard to block from nowhere, displaying once again outstanding SOD skills.

Merton needed a response, and Lofty summoned Dan from the bench to replace Donno on the 35 minute mark. Not for the first time this season, the change brought a reward. A fresh legged (and perhaps keen to prove a point from the bench!) Dan made an instant impact harrying the opposition and within 5 minutes had levelled the game. The goal was a beauty, an outstanding counter-attack from a Nottsborough corner. Neal cleared the ball which was helped on to Denys in the centre circle. Denys held off three Nottsborough defenders as he waited for Dan to spring past him, releasing a perfectly weighted ball down the inside right channel for him to run on to. Racing on to the ball, Dan took a touch before cutting inside and nutmegging the covering defender, and then curled a low left-footed finish into the bottom corner from just inside the box. 1-1, and Merton were back in the game.

Nottsborough were rattled, passing the ball straight out from their kick off. Merton sensed this was a big chance to push on, and ended the half in the ascendancy, but despite a couple of corners they could not force a second goal before the break.

The half time team talk was an upbeat one. Lofty noted that having played 45 minutes and it being half time, there were still 45 minutes to go and win the game. Bobby Robson-esque. However, having already changed shape and the team and got us back into it, he'd already displayed some excellent managerial chops so we'll forgive that particular one! The need to keep up the intensity was also discussed - with the memory of the previous game still sharp in the mind where we faded badly in the second half. Denys took a breather with Dan moving up front, and Ricky came on as a wide forward to bring fresh legs to the game.

Merton started the second half as they ended the first. Neal was getting some joy playing the ball in behind

the opposition left-back, only for the move to peter out from an initially threatening position. Darcy then just overhit a pass to put Dan clean through on goal following fine work in the middle from Ryan and Darcy. Unfortunately, almost straight after this Merton fell behind.

Nottsborough had been moving the ball well throughout to exploit the space and were getting a lot of joy down their left. This proved Merton's undoing as a ball played down the left saw the Nottsborough wide midfielder take the ball to the corner of the box, jinking past tackles from Neal and Ryan en-route. He continued to drive inside, feinting to shoot before riding another couple of tackles and then passing the ball into the bottom corner from 18 yards as a despairing Lofty tried to block. Great skill, but Merton were disappointed to have missed so many attempted tackles.

2-1, and Merton needed something. Joel, Denys and Donno returned to the pitch as Merton tried to find another equaliser. A series of free-kicks and corners came and went, Joel coming close to an equaliser with a close range reaction shot following a knock-down from a corner. Darcy then had goal-bound left foot drive headed clear by the full-back. At the other end, Merton were somewhat riding their luck, Chappell tipping a shot on to the crossbar as Nottsborough continued to look dangerous with the ball.

Then, as the game entered the last quarter, the killer third goal came. Chappell came to claim a routine cross only to fumble it slightly. As it bounced it still looked to be the keepers' ball only for a second fumble to see the ball run loose as an opposition striker challenged. As the ball ran loose outside the box a Nottsborough midfielder gleefully smashed the ball through a sea of players for 3-1. Their wild celebrations showed how big a goal it was.

Merton tried to summon one final effort. Dan almost played in Donno after some sharp work from Reece, before heading a tough chance wide from a free-kick. Great work from Ryan down the right saw him clip in a cross that left the keeper in no-man's land. Ricky looked all set to convert for 3-2 but just couldn't adjust his body in time and the chance was lost.

Instead, Nottsborough went back up the pitch and grabbed a fourth. A corner wasn't fully cleared and a shot driven in from the edge of the box took a deflection off the opposition striker standing in front of Chappell and went in. 4-1. Merton's legs (and heads) had gone at this point, and after hitting the bar for the second time, a fifth for Nottsborough came as a tame shot slipped through Chappell's hands. In his defence he had dislocated a finger in the incident for the third goal but manfully continued after popping it back in. 5-1. Game over.

Merton were gutted to have put so much in to come away with nothing, but have to reflect that ultimately a combination of individual errors and a lack of creativity/composure on the ball ultimately cost them. The title dream is over, but promotion remains a possibility if maximum points can be collected from the remaining fixtures.

MOTM: Mike Reed. Honourable mentions for Reece and Dan

DOTM: The returning Donno, who took it well and downed a pint with aplomb.

STARTING LINE-UP: MARK CHAPPELL (GK), PETE JENNINGS, MIKE REED, VINCENZO DI MATTEO, SIMON WHITE, RYAN GRESTDY, NEAL DAVISON, DAVE DONOVAN, REECE, DENYS ZHURBY, DARCY YATES

SUBS: RICARDO INGLESIAS, DAN KELLY, JOEL OOSTHEIZEN



MERTON 0 v ALLEYN OLD BOYS 8 (HT: 0-2)

SCORERS:

MOTM: Dom Plumridge

Forty two long days had passed for the mighty Merton 4s since they had last trudged onto the field together. The Christmas break, combined with the ongoing problems with waterlogged pitches had scuppered the momentum of morale-boosting, back-to-back wins in early December, so the task of toppling the table-topping Alleyn Old Boys on a dreadfully boggy Wimbledon Common Extensions pitch was a stiff one.

Nevertheless, with a near full-strength squad, the Yellows had no reason to fear, and made a steady, albeit defensive start to the match. Getting out of their own half was proving difficult against a visibly superior Alleyn outfit, who showed impressive quality passing the ball around on a woeful surface. It didn't lead to any goals for the first 25 minutes though, as Merton dug in gamely.

But the breakthrough had an air of inevitability about it, as one of their pacey strikers beat the offside trap and slotted home clinically to make it 1-0. The second came 10 minutes later; again some good interplay that proved very difficult to deal with. The finish was clinical too, Sam had no chance, and 2-0 it was.

Yet while it wasn't exactly an unfair score line, it was a little tough on the hosts, who had done well to carve out some decent chances of their own through direct football. Dulanie got on the end of a fine cross from Mikey, and was unlucky to see his header on goal well saved.

There was also some controversy, with Dom brought down by the last man when it appeared he was clean through on goal. A free kick, but no card, and it became a bit farcical as Billy's subsequent effort with the dead ball was deliberately handled on the outskirts of the box – again no card from the official though.

And seconds before the whistle came for half time, a delightful overhead flick found Mikey just a few yards out, but a difficult finish to execute slid agonisingly wide. Still, the heads were up at the interval. At 2-0 the game was far from gone, and with the whole team working hard and Dom and Dulanie chasing down and holding up long balls admirably, there was hope.

The first 15 minutes after the restart were decent too, with Merton putting in some good tackles and working hard. But the third goal was the straw that broke the camel's back. A simple through ball managed to squeeze through the defensive line, and the Joleon Lescott-esque Alleyn forward simply had too much pace, and tucked it away to make it 3-0.

The heads hadn't quite dropped at that stage, and Merton charged up the other end soon after and had half a chance to pull one back. But with that attempt foiled, Alleyn counter attacked, and with the Yellow's caught short, the opposing striker again found himself one on one with Sam and made no mistake.

That made it 4-0, and the rest, quite frankly, was a nightmarish blur. The goals flew in from all angles. Among them was a goal where the player was clearly offside, but like the South African cricket team losing wickets, the scoreboard kept ticking over, 5, 6, 7, 8.

Mercifully, the referee may have called an end to proceedings a few minutes early, with the damage kept to single figures. A cold shower afterwards seemed like a fitting end to the dispiriting two hours of football before it.

But the lads should also keep a cool head when assessing the performance as a whole. The opponents have a 100% record in the league, and for an hour, we held them at bay and caused them a few problems of their own. Yes, the wheels came off for the final half hour, but that's best forgotten about. There are winnable games to come - let's consign this one to history, and continue the run we started at the end of last year.

STARTING LINE-UP: SAMUEL SINGER RIPLEY (GK), JOHN GRIDLEY, STEVE BURCHELL, MIKE TODT, SIMON WHITE, EDWARD PLAISTOW, CHRIS OUTRED, MIKE ELGAR, SEB LECHANOINE, BILLY DOWIE, DULANIE RICHARDS, DOM PLUMRIDGE

SUBS: ARNOLD COLLIER

YOUTH SECTION – 23.01.16

U10s

MERTON 10 v ROEHAMPTON 1

Team arrived ready and eager to play after what has been a long delay due to weather conditions.

Excellent team performance under new skipper Steve Gumble who chased every ball and played exceptionally.

Jamal had a quality game with outstanding passing and movement off the ball and scored 4 goals.

Oliver Cat In goal produced a triple wonder save which left crowd speechless... really important moment in match.

Rohan had his best match ever and overall team really passed well and really starting to jell for each other.

Big thanks to all parents for coming and hats off to Managers, Matt and Steve for all their great work on building this team and encouraging boys to produce their best efforts.

David Laughton
Referee on day.



MERTON FOOTBALL CLUB

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