

EPSOM & EWELL FOOTBALL LEAGUE ANNUAL REPORT SESON 2012/13

The first word that springs to mind as I sit down to write this report, is - WEATHER. From the end of November until early/mid April there were very few weeks when the weather did not intervene and seriously curtail the number of games played. Despite a one week extension to the playing season to the 12th May (we could not extend it further as the Presentation Day was fixed at Epsom Downs Grandstand for 18th May) this had little effect on the totally unsatisfactory build-up of fixtures. In the end, just looking at the 11 a side games alone 22 'double headers' were set up together with 44 midweek matches. A few of these have fallen by the wayside through sides not having enough available players as, come the summer months other sports, particularly cricket, take precedence. However, I would like to thank the vast majority of clubs for accepting the overload of games in April/May with good grace.

What this overload did show was that the vast majority of midweek games related to divisions with more than 10 teams in them. From my 30 or so years experience in youth football, I am firmly convinced that 10 per division is the ideal number. Thus, the committee will have this figure very much in mind when working on the constitution for all age groups for the 2013/14 season. The setting of divisions is an extremely exacting task on occasions and we take great care in trying to ensure that teams are placed at the right level. We do not always succeed, but you can help greatly by indicating to us if one of your current sides is going to be stronger/weaker in the coming season. Also, if a new side, what is its strength likely to be. Please do this sooner rather than later, preferably by 1st August.

The FA have produced another edition of the Standard Codes of Rules for Youth (SCORY), with a number of changes to playing conditions. Surrey County FA have also gone through our present rules in considerable detail and have 'fine-tuned' some of them, mainly by moving bits from one part of the rules to another. However, I have spent a number of hours in County Office ensuring that none of our core rules have been effectively altered, other than by any mandatory changes demanded by the new SCORY. Whilst you will all have a copy of the amended rule book well in time for the 2013/14 season, new rules you should be aware of before then will be distributed at the AGM.

The introduction of 9v9 football at U11 level has been a success, with, to my relief and surprise, little problems encountered. The bridge between 7 aside mini soccer and 11 aside football was too great and this interim stage appears to have been appreciated by all. Next season we will be running 9v9 at U11 on a Saturday and U12 on Sunday's

You will all be well aware of the FA's gradual changes to the structure of youth football, particularly at mini soccer level. This coming season sees the introduction of 5v5 being played at the U7 age group. The greater change though is at U9's. There will no longer be a league or cup structure at this level and to all intents and purposes they will continue to play friendly matches, as they have done as U7's and U8's. However, the FA are allowing competitive matches, covering a maximum of 12 weeks (3x4 weeks). Details of how these are to operate are still being worked out, but will hopefully see the light of day at the AGM.

U7's and U8's will continue to play all friendly matches, but the league has taken notice of comments raised that there were not enough of these matches organised and next season will see more weeks being utilised to give more football.

To reflect the growing 'non competitiveness' of mini soccer the league has decided that there will be no Annual Sub due for U8 teams (U7's are already free) and the U9 fee will be reduced to £40.

With a slight increase to 5500 registered players, discipline, which is of paramount importance, was generally satisfactory and the overwhelming majority of games were enjoyed by all concerned. Whilst there was an early/ mid-season flurry of 4 games being abandoned (an increase of 3 on the previous year), it was interesting to note that most of had little or nothing to do with the players. Once again spectators/ managers showing a poor example. When are people on the touchline going to learn that it is the players game, not theirs?

My grateful thanks go to the providers and organisers of the various cup finals. This season, with the advent of the 9v9 competition, we had three venues:- As usual the mini soccer games were an outstanding success at Old Coulsdon Colts and the U12/17 matches graced the Banstead Athletic pitch. The three U11 matches were impeccably staged by AFC Walcountians. Everywhere saw excellent games played in a fine spirit, well controlled and thoroughly enjoyed.

As usual my appreciation of the work done by your committee cannot be left unsaid. They are a dedicated and committed group of people and I would be lost without them. The work they do is tremendous and it is all channelled in trying to ensure that you and your players get the best possible service. I am proud of them all. There are vacancies on the committee in the guise of club representatives, so if you would like to join us and help run this friendly league, then please let me know. You will be very welcome

One final point. I need to find someone with football and administrative expertise to take over the General Secretary role within the league. If you would like to know more, or you know of someone who would be interested, then again, please contact me.

David Goldsmith
Chairman