

REDSKINS v. LEE VALLEY LIONS

THE VIEW FROM T7

Last week's game against Telford saw a superb exhibition of teamwork and precision. Both lines looked balanced and equally strong. The skating was powerful and fluent. Overall we were treated to a demonstration of why Streatham are tipped for the top.

Well enough of the Streatham Ice Dance Formation Teams' first interval display, back to the Hockey. The Redskins 10-5 win over previously unbeaten Tigers was encouraging especially as it was only our third game of the season. As Craig Melancon later said "it was a good team effort". The "kids" again looked good, Brent Hogan found his scoring touch, Gary Cloonan looked solid at the back, and Tony Goldstone appears to have recaptured all his old enthusiasm and drive.

I think that we must keep the results thus far this season in perspective. It is still too early in the season to make judgements or predictions. Neither the defeat at Solihull or the victory over Telford mean very much in the context of the whole season. Our real test will come later when we meet the very top Premier teams such as Fife and Durham.

With all the changes to the team this year, with two new imports, youngsters beginning to break in, the return of Gary Cloonan and Gary Brine, it will obviously take some time to settle down.

One way in which we, the supporters, can help the team is to provide encouragement, even if we fall behind in a game. Last year I was very disappointed at the lack of noise from the crowd, and especially when we were losing, the building sounded more like a morgue than a "hot bed of ice hockey". The practise of some supporters of going to the bar as soon as possible, and staying there throughout the game may help Mecca's profits, but it doesn't do much for the atmosphere in the building. Our visitors tonight from East London are likely to bring a large number of fans, after all it is a big game for them, it would be nice if we can't hear them. The Redskins need your support, and I'm sure they will respond to your efforts.

In the same way that I would like to see more enthusiasm during the game, the Club off the ice also needs your support. Running a Premier Division Hockey Team is now an expensive business and any contributions are invaluable. I'm not just talking about buying lottery tickets to be sold. Why not see Em, down at the Club Shop and try to sell fifty tickets or so at work? Have you any fund raising ideas? Do you want to give some of your time to the Club? If so see me (seat T7) and I'll point you towards the right people. On a personal note, I would like to see some contributions to the programme. Everyone I meet at the rink or in the bar has their own ideas and opinions about what is wrong (or right) with Streatham, or British Ice Hockey in general, so what about putting your views on paper. You know where I am.

So on to tonight's big London derby. I know that the Lion's supporters are looking forward to this game. On the occasions last year that I spoke to Lee Valley's Captain Geof Williams in the 'Mapleleaf', he was convinced that the Lions would beat the Redskins. Tonight, Geof, it's put up or shut up time!

STOP PRESS BELFAST MONDAY 22nd SEPTEMBER.

UNKNOWN IRISH TEAM TRASH LIONS.

CASTLEREAGH COUGARS 14 LEE VALLEY LIONS 2

COUGARS SCORERS: Tony Mac Goldstone 4+4, Phil Mac Adams 4+3, Brendan Hogan 3+4, Patrick O'Quiney 0+3, Michael O'Rocchio 2+2, Craigan O'Melancon 2+1.

LEE VALLEY LIONS SCORER: Jari Virta 2 Goals.

TONIGHTS OPPONENTS

LEE VALLEY LIONS

Lee Valley Lions were formed in 1984 and played their first match against Oxford University on the 5th February, winning 11 - 9. A series of impressive challenge match victories, including a 14 - 4 win over Division 2 South Champions, Streatham Bruins, here at Streatham, guaranteed the Lions a place in the First Division for the next season.

A kind schedule gave the Lions an early lead in the division, but two heavy defeats by Solihull and an injury to American Bill Watson around Christmas, ended the Lions hopes. With the Division's top netminder, Finn, Vesa Pennanen, in fine form the Lions clung to a respectable sixth place.

Hopes were high for the next season with Pennanen lining up two Finnish imports Ari Arvila and Janne Lehti. The Lions great success last year was their form away from home, indeed it was home defeats by Solihull and Telford which finished Lee Valley's chances, despite going a year unbeaten on the road. That run ended with the last game of the season at Telford, a 6 - 7 defeat leaving the Lions in the runners up spot, just missing promotion. Lee Valley gained some revenge over Solihull (Division One Winners) by defeating the Barons weakened line up to win the Division One Trophy.

So far this season, without any tough challenge matches to prepare for their first Autumn Cup assault, the Lions beat Nottingham 3 - 2 in a classic at the 'Den', but lost last week to Solihull 7 - 9 despite having led 5 - 2.

In the team this year replacing Ari Arvila is another Finn, Jari Virta a 5 foot 9 inch centre from Helsinki. He appears to be fitting in well and is a good team player as opposed to Arvila who was more of an individualist. On defence in the first line are Captain Geof (OK so he can't spell) Williams, and the Lion's Finnish defenceman Lehti. Lehti is the Lion's second top scorer of all time (to Arvila) with a total of 151 points (147 last season). Also expected to appear in the first line are Eddie Joseph and Dave Petrie.

I am told that Lee Valley's big strength this year is the improved second line with ex-Redskins Erskind Douglas, Mark Nicholls, Chris and Andy Leggatt linking with Glaswegian Blue liner Alastair Rodger.

It is not known whether the Lions will play a third line consistently this year, as they did last, but if they do it is likely to include 14 year old Ludek Smelik, a Czech left winger.

Backstopping the team is Vesa Pennanen, the third of Lee Valley's Finns, acclaimed generally as one of (if not the best) goalies in the division, and some would say the entire British League.

The Lions look strong enough to mount another strong push for promotion again this year.

STOP PRESS Erskine Douglas broke his leg in last Monday's game in Belfast. We would all like to send him our best wishes for a speedy recovery.

Thanks to Mike Grafton for the information.