Hotshot Harrison brings home the points

Contributed by Terry Ryan
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Waltham Abbey
0 Ashford Town (Middlesex) 1
Ryman League Premier Division,
Cappershots, Waltham Abbey
19th September 2009 A Byron Harrison goal secured all three points for Ashford as they travelled to Waltham Abbey for the first ever encounter between the clubs. But, the Middlesex side left it late, two minutes into stoppage time to be precise, after a multitude of missed chances from both teams you would be forgiven for wondering if either team would ever score. Abbey had the first chance of the game when Aaron Gayle slid the ball wide after the Ashford defence had stopped and shortly after, Craig Ross had to be alert to save at the feet of Josh Cooper as he looked to profit after being found by Billy Holland. Harrison missed a good chance to open the scoring in favour of the visitors following a good move started by Davis Haule who played in Ivo Ginev on the left. Ginev squared the ball across to Harrison who shot over. Neither side seemed to be able to produce the spark that would ignite the game and it deteriorated into an uninspiring game of attrition with chances missed and passes going astray though a move in the 25th minute from the visitors caught the eye. Ricardo Joseph started the move, winning the ball and pushing it down the left flank to Ginev who held the ball up before back-flicking it into the path of the overlapping Joseph, Joseph crossed aiming for Brian Haule but the ball was intercepted and headed clear by Amin Ibrahim. Abbey seemed to play all their goal kicks and free kicks up to Gayle and he looked to be the main danger but Billy Jeffreys and Russ Canderton gave him little room to work and, to a large part, his effectiveness was annulled. The visitors had a good spell of dominance mid-way through the half in which time Harrison had a good left foot drive saved by Joe Taylor, then a foul on Warren Harris afforded Paul Johnson the opportunity to swing in a left foot free kick from the Ashford right which was cleared for a corner. Johnson’s corner kick was cleared just as far as Jeffreys who headed the ball back into the danger area where Brian Haule volleyed just over Taylor’s bar. Just before half time, Jeffreys headed over from a Ginev cross then Ginev provided a little entertainment when he baffled Abbey’s right back George Chanda with several step-overs before nut-megging him, but the affronted defender pulled the Bulgarian winger back to give away a free kick curled in by Harris which was cleared. Early in the second half a free kick for a foul on Byron Harrison was swung in by Warren Harris but the ball was headed clear to Brian Haule who twisted and turned and slid the ball back into Harrison’s half where his vicious shot was tipped over. Denny Webb advanced from left back and sent a dangerous low cross screaming across the face of the Ashford goal where just the slightest touch would have given Gary Ross problems but the ball eluded everybody then two minutes later, in the sixty third minute a dangerous two footed tackle on Davis Haule earned Lee White a caution. Abbey danger man Gayle found room to create a chance from nothing when he turned and sent a powerful shot just over Ross’s bar, then a late tackle on Harris by Webb earned a caution for the Abbey left back. Harrison headed over Vinnie O’Sullivan’s cross then in the seventy seventh minute George Chander pulled back Byron Harrison, the free kick taken by Warren Harris was headed over by Johnson, and another chance went begging a minute later when Chander collided with his keeper Taylor, the ball fell to Ginev who blasted over from just inside the box. This was Ginev’s last action of the game as he was replaced by New Zealander Hone Fowler. A good spell of pressure from Waltham Abbey forced Ashford back in which time James Elmes came closest to creating a chance but he blasted over Ross’s bar, then in the eighty sixth minute Ashford had a reasonable penalty appeal turned down by Referee Norcott when Davis Hall was bought down from behind but Mr Norcott saw nothing wrong with the challenge and waved play on. Two minutes into stoppage time Warren Harris ran onto a ball but his shot was blocked the ball came out to Byron Harrison who forced his way into the Abbey box and stabbed the ball home at the near post from a tight angle. Ashford take a break from league football next week when they entertain either Badshot Lea or Lingfield in the second qualifying round of the FA Cup. Another major fixture is on Sunday 27th September when the Tangerines host a testimonial match for long serving goalkeeper Paul Burgess who will take the field against his boyhood heroes Spurs Legends. Both the Ashford and Spurs squads will be announced on the Ashford Town website www.ashfordtownmiddlesexfc.com later in the week.