

CRAY VALLEY (PAPER MILLS) 3-0 AFC CROYDON ATHLETIC
Southern Counties East Football League Premier Division
Wednesday 27 February 2019
Stephen McCartney reports from Middle Park Avenue

Cray Valley leapfrogged over Chatham Town into third-place in the Southern Counties East Football League Premier Division to close the gap on leaders Corinthian to seven points going into the last two months of this exciting title race.

The Millers claimed the points courtesy of second half goals from Anthony Edgar – whose two goals took his tally to an impressive 24 goals for the season – and Chris Edwards.

Cray Valley reached The Buildbase FA Vase Semi-Finals where they will meet league rivals Canterbury City over two-leg s in March after beating Willand Rovers 3-1 in Devon at the weekend, but only 45 people watched their homecoming tonight.

AFC Croydon Athletic's players gave Cray Valley's players a guard of honour before the start of the game.

Right-wing-back Edwards was played in by Edgar and his low drive was tipped around the post by the diving Rams goalkeeper Danny Carpanini inside the opening three minutes.

AFC Croydon Athletic winger Nahum Green clipped the outside of the far post from 35-yards before he was forced off with a painful dislocated finger despite the efforts of his team-mate Abbas Agoro attempting to click it back into place.

Holding midfielder Jordan Knight swung in a corner and Rob Carter came up from the back to plant a free-header over the Cray Valley crossbar.

A poor defensive header from Jamie Thoroughgood set up a chance for Millers striker Francis Babalola, whose low drive was tipped around the post by the visiting keeper.

Andy Walker finished the first half by saving Dominic Ogun's shot on the turn from 15-yards and catching Bankole Koroma's dinked shot, before Ogun's header was also saved following Knight's corner from the right as AFC Croydon Athletic finished the half on the front foot.

Cray Valley ditched their direct approach for the second half and took the lead in the 53rd minute when Edgar played a give-and-go with Babalola before drilling a low shot into the bottom left-hand corner from 20-yards.

Edwards hit a 35-yarder towards the roof of the net, which was brilliantly tipped over by Carpanini on the hour-mark.

Kevin Rayner's seventh-placed side created just the one opening during the second half.

Jordan Greaves played the ball in from the right and central-midfielder Agoro controlled the ball and with his second touch he was denied by a diving save from Walker from the edge of the box.

The introduction of Denzel Gayle with 15 minutes left sparked Kevin Watson's side into life and two goalkeeper errors cost the visitors.

Edgar cut a corner back to Edwards, who sweetly hit a first time drive underneath the keeper to find the bottom far corner from 25-yards in the 79th minute and the third goal came just 95 seconds later when Carpanini allowed Edgar's 30-yard drive to squirm underneath him on its way into the same corner.

Carpanini made amends, however, pulling off another fine save to prevent Edwards scoring from a 28-yard free-kick but the bobbly playing surface and low crowd failed to distract Watson's men as they continue to mount

pressure on Michael Golding's league leaders.

Full report and reaction to follow on Thursday night

Cray Valley (Paper Mills): Andy Walker, Chris Edwards, Danny Smith, Ashley Sains, Brad Potter, Cem Tumkaya, Lea Dawson, Paul Semakula (Josh James 80), Gavin Tomlin (Calum Willock 84), Francis Babalola (Denzel Gayle 75), Anthony Edgar.

Subs: Tyler Myers, Ryan Flack

Goals: Anthony Edgar 53, 80, Chris Edwards 79

Booked: Francis Babalola 45

AFC Croydon Athletic: Danny Carpanini, Kazzeem Richards, Danny Bada, Jordan Knight (Abbas Odunco 87), Jamie Thoroughgood, Rob Carter, Jordan Greaves, Abbas Agoro, Dominic Ogun, Joe Nwoko (Jonathan Paoluccio 69), Nahum Green (Bankole Koroma 29).

Subs: Oscar Guana, Joe Hill

Booked: Jordan Knight 60, Rob Carter 85

Attendance: 45

Referee: Mr Paul Agboola (Walworth, London SE17)

Assistants: Mr Daniel Blades (Wrotham) & Mr Joshua Gilham (Welling)

