

14/11/05 TT No.109: Mike Latham - Stockport County (FC2) and Blackpool (FC1)

Sun 13 Nov 2005, League Two, **Stockport County** 1-1 Barnet (att.- 6,056) Match rating: 4*.

Stockport County's alarming slide through the divisions has been sad to behold. Seven years ago, they finished eighth in the old division one- nowadays they are precariously placed in the newly named League Two and in real danger of losing their Football League status.

It was pleasing to observe that some standards had not fallen. County's matchday programme, lovingly compiled by Des Hinks, is one of the best around the leagues, 72 pages chockfull of colour and information for £2.50- an outstanding effort.

With this 1.30pm kick-off beamed live on Sky, County attracted their largest crowd of the season after several worthwhile initiatives in the community. Edgeley Park, now co-shared with Sale Sharks RFC, whose owner, Brian Kennedy, owns the ground, is a friendly place to watch football and it was noticeable how many families had ventured out on a sunny autumnal afternoon.

County's most vociferous supporters gather in the magnificent cantilevered Cheadle Stand behind the goals that dominates the ground. The main stand also gives a good view of play with the Vernon Stand opposite, half allocated to away fans, sparsely populated. The railway end behind the other goal is open to the elements.

With plenty of car parking close by, in neighbouring streets or on the municipal car park part of the Edgeley shopping complex, a visit to Edgeley Park is relatively straightforward and the close proximity of the town centre makes it ideal for rail or bus passengers.

Barnet could have been four or five up at the break but had to settle for a draw in the end as County had the better of the second half. Both goals came within three minutes near the midway point of the first half. Now run by a supporters' trust County need to act quickly to halt their on-field decline but off it they remain a friendly club that is a pleasure to visit.

Sun 13 Nov 2005, League One, **Blackpool** 5-2 Scunthorpe United (att.- 6,016) Match rating: 4*.

With this Sky game kicking-off at 4pm a quiet motorway system allowed a relatively easy journey to the seaside just in time to see Tommy Wright give Blackpool the lead for the first time in a fluctuating contest. 3-2 ahead at the break, the Seasiders went onto score two more goals in the second half against a Scunthorpe side reduced to ten men.

After a traumatic week, which saw manager Colin Hendry effectively suspended following the 1-4 defeat at Doncaster in the FA Cup, Blackpool, under caretaker manager Simon Grayson, got just the win they needed.

Bloomfield Road has been drastically developed in recent years with two sides, the north and west stands most impressive constructions. The away fans, though, are located on temporary seating on the east paddock and open to the elements in the event of rain. The south stand remains a derelict building site following the demolition of the old south stand.

Easily reached by car just five minutes or so down Seaside Way from the ends of the M55 motorway, Bloomfield Road has an abundance of pay-and-display car parks close to the ground and is also well situated for the town centre. The home fans certainly made lots of noise and their favourites took advantage of their numerical advantage to earn a much-needed win.

A 68-page programme full of colour pictures and several interesting articles was £2.50.

04/20