

21/11/05 TT No. 115: Mick Burt - Buckland Athletic (Devon League)

DEVON LEAGUE; BUCKLAND ATHLETIC (1) 4 HOLSWORTHY (2) 5; ATTENDANCE: 50; ADMISSION: £3.50 INCLUDING PROGRAMME.

Plans to visit one of the home clubs in the Birmingham Vase were ditched following a "fog forecast" for the West Midlands although the targeted matches at AFC Wulfrunians and Coton Green did go ahead.

I decided to play safe therefore, and head for the milder climes of Devon where Buckland Athletic were entertaining Holsworthy in a Devon League match. The train from Reading to Newton Abbot ran 30 minutes late and was crammed with Plymouth-bound QPR fans who were not the brightest collection of individuals I have come across but were Mensa candidates compared with the Grays' fans who boarded on the return journey!

Now 6th v 14th didn't suggest a classic encounter but how wrong can you be as I witnessed a simply fantastic game that will remain in the memory forever.

It was a lively start with the visitors, pointless on their travels thus far, taking a 12th minute lead through Spencer Dennis. The Bucks were soon level when Greg Wilson converted a penalty but Holsworthy were back in front before the break when Mark Bettis clinically finished off a fine move. I remarked in the excellent clubhouse at half time that there could be a few more goals. Profound words indeed and seven minutes into the second half Holsworthy skipper Darren Polhill extended his side's lead. A clumsy and rather needless challenge by Holsworthy's Simon Veal enabled Wilson to net again from the spot, but the visitors edged 4-2 ahead when Home skipper Davis sliced a right-wing cross into his own net. Following this, Holsworthy's Jason Rees beat Sharples in the home goal with a Beckham-esque 45-yard lob, the ball came off the bar to Ian Rowe but somehow Sharples recovered magnificently to block the striker's effort from the rebound. Buckland were not finished though and the elusive Mark Dyson, a nippy little striker with "good feet", worked his way through the Magpies' defence to pull it back to 4-3. Holsworthy striker Ian Rowe had caused Buckland problems all afternoon and he did so again before laying on a second goal for Bettis but almost immediately Rob Law struck for Buckland with a looping header to make it 4-5 with five minutes left. There were in fact no more goals but one tremendous game it had been and played in a good spirit too.

Buckland's new ground (they moved there last summer) finished the league off for me and the "champagne job" could not have been achieved in more dramatic fashion. Buckland are a very friendly, superbly run club and the new ground, which has plenty of scope for expansion, is a real credit to all involved. Time to form a second division perhaps? (Only joking Mr Hiscox!).

