

01/12/05 TT No.122: Rod Grubb - Friar Lane & Epworth (Leicestershire Senior League Premier Division)

FRIARS LANE AND EPWORTH 3 STAPENHILL 3

Saturday 26th November saw me at Leicester Railway Station from where, after a drink in the nearby packed Wetherspoons, I trailed a posse of Police escorting Sheffield United fans to the nearby Leicester City ground. Branching left I then walked down Welford Road and some twenty minutes later I was passing through the car park of the Friars Lane and Epworth F.C. Social Club in Knighton Lane East. Admission to the ground was £3 which included a twenty-page programme.

The floodlights were on from kick-off as the bitterly cold wind brought in sleet showers and most of the sixty strong crowd huddled under the small stand on the half-way line. Hard-standing covered most of that side and behind one goal where a long tea-bar building offered some shelter from the wind and warmth for the insides and was well patronised throughout.

The game itself was superb. The home side kicked against the wind first -half and had swept into a 2-0 lead by half-time with some flowing football with Stapenhill struggling to string two passes together. It was easy to pick out the Lane players as they stay faithful to a squad system of numbering and you just look for the appropriate number in the programme to find the player's name. Whatever was said at half-time did the trick for the visitors as they looked a different team and they cut through the league-leaders with ease with Shailes on the left flank looking unstoppable. Soon it was 2-2 with the home side struggling to stay in the game and then came the goal of the season with Shailes once more going past two tackles on the left touchline before delivering a swinging cross past the far post where it was volleyed back into the far corner. I think the scorer was Marshall but whoever it was disappeared under a sea of bodies as the whole ground erupted. Friars came back into the game as they threw on their subs and they snatched an equalizer with a close-in header from one of their many free-kicks. Near the end Stapenhill should have won the match when Davies found himself clear in front of goal but as he hammered in a shot past Blowfield the goalkeeper somehow kicked back and the ball rebounded out from his leg. It was a remarkable save and probably brought the right result but no doubt Stapenhill would point to a rousing second-half performance as being worthy of all three points. Certainly, it kept the crowd warm!

Walking back, I tagged onto the Sheffield supporters and Police escort and had the luxury of walking straight down the middle of the road and across a busy junction to the Station where our paths parted, a very civilized way to travel!