

10/12/05 TT No.128: Mike Latham - Connahs Quay Nomads (Welsh Premier League)

Fri 9 Dec 2005, Welsh Premier League, Connah's Quay Nomads 1-0 Newi Cefn Druids (att.- 175); 40pp programme- £1; Admission- £6; FGIF Match rating: 2*.

With a sudden rush of form the Nomads look like rescuing a season that appeared to be going down the pan. Their third successive league win lifted them off the bottom of the WPL for the first time this season. After they had gained only two points from their opening eleven games, they now have eleven from fourteen.

The Nomads play at the Deeside Stadium, a large athletics complex adjoined to Deeside College and a world away from their idiosyncratic and atmospheric old ground behind the nearby Halfway House public house. The ground is easy to find, about ten minutes from the end of the M56 and five minutes-drive from Queensferry and there is plenty of well-lit parking in the college grounds.

Admission is £6 adults and a decent 40-page programme sold for only £1. Though dominated by adverts (which account for 23 full pages) there is a fair amount of editorial and interesting statistics and its compiler, David Rapson, deserves huge credit for the efforts he makes on slender resources.

The ground is dominated by a large elevated main stand which gives a good view of the pitch. The rest of the ground is open standing apart from a small covered standing area to the left of the main stand. On the far side is a small metal building that appears to house the committee room and the television gantry. With an eight-lane running track round the pitch the atmosphere inevitably suffers and anyone standing in front of the main stand has their view spoiled by the two large dug-outs either side of the halfway line. The floodlights are excellent and the pitch, despite recent rain, was in good condition.

There is a crackling 'tannoy' system and only one attempt is made to give out at the team line-ups- at a breakneck speed that would test the best shorthand. Apart from a small refreshment kiosk that served a small variety of hot and old drinks and hot dogs there are no other facilities at the stadium and no obvious welcome to supporters.

With so much discussion on the future of the WPL recently, highlighted by concerns by the Bangor City chairman, the game served to show that standards, particularly at the bottom of the league, are not very high. The visitors were left bottom of the table after this defeat and the wasteful finishing of their strikers must have left manager Dixie McNeil, a great striker in his days at Wrexham, in despair. The home side won a scrappy game with a goal on the half-hour. The scorer might have had a hat-trick inside five minutes or so had he not been so profligate.

On a dry and reasonably mild winter's night the attendance was only 175, this for a local derby match with no obvious counter-attractions. And the frustrations of a

league that continually changes its fixtures were there again. Already this season TNS, for example, have rescheduled back to Saturdays all the games they had earmarked for Sunday afternoon kick-offs frustrating traveller's plans. And the programme showed that the Nomads' visit to Cardiff Grange Quins, scheduled for Sun 18 Dec, will now be played on the Saturday even though the unofficial Welsh Premier League site still has the fixture in the old date. With some clubs still not having even a rudimentary website or keeping details up-to-date, trying to find out fixture news or find out if games are on or off can be a very frustrating business and probably not worth the effort. In short, the WPL seems to a league going backwards.

04/20