

13/12/05 TT No.132: Mick Burt - Crickhowell (Gwent County League Division 3) in GCL Cup round 3

SATURDAY 10 DECEMBER - GWENT COUNTY LEAGUE CUP ROUND THREE;
CRICKHOWELL (1) 1 COED EVA ATHLETIC (2) 3; Attendance: 17; PROGRAMME: 4 pages - free.

On Saturday, Andy Molden and myself along with four other travellers spent a rather bizarre day at "Elvicta", home of Gwent County League Third Division outfit Crickhowell. This is a delightful little town, and on an idyllic day we decided to take in the League Cup Third Round tie against First Division Coed Eva Athletic.

On arriving, I was rather dismayed to see around thirty molehills on the pitch which my driver assured me would present no problems. The other "niggle" I had was that the line markings were rather faint to say the least. "The Mold" was right - I needn't have worried and things began to come together when the home players and official (singular) turned up in the spacious car park an hour before the scheduled 2pm kick-off. Said official sorted out the molehills and carted off the excess earth in a wheelbarrow while one of the players reinforced the pitch markings. The four-page programme duly arrived with the home team's player/manager so with everyone present by 1.30pm we could all relax I thought, but no!

At the scheduled kick-off time the referee asked for three more net pegs which were not forthcoming so he spent five minutes doing the job himself. The game kicked off but after just over a minute had been played a Coed Eva player remarked that the ball was soft! There were plenty of spherical objects on hand but they all needed a good injection of air (my wife said I should have blown into them when I got home!). So, we used a football rota system of sorts in a stop-start first half that lasted 52 minutes and saw one of the home team's substitutes continually pumping air into ailing footballs. Crickhowell took the lead with a really strange goal in keeping with the afternoon. A good ball over the top of the home defence sent Andy Hammett clear and he touched it past the gargantuan Matt Edwards as the visiting 'keeper advanced. It was quite clear from the stand (yes, they have a 66 seated stand while the pitch is fully railed-off) that the ball had crossed the line. The excited striker followed the ball though as all strikers do, and we fully expected him to make the net bulge to make sure. Wrong! I really don't know what he was doing but Hammett somehow hooked the ball away towards the left touchline. This sowed some doubt in the minds of the Coed Eva defence as to whether it had actually crossed the line but the referee correctly allowed the strike to stand.

The visitors gained parity courtesy of the home goalkeeper (and player/manager) who allowed a soft cross to go underneath him leaving Lee Manley a simple task from six inches, and to prove it wasn't his day, the luckless custodian was flattened

going for a right wing corner by a combination of players from both sides and James Bowen's looping header put the visitors in front with my watch (which I stop for injuries and ball pressure nonsense) showing 52:33.

Even the interval produced drama as the referee went onto the pitch without a ball to start the second half saying that none of them were any good. We still had the joker to play I thought as there were two seemingly good ones nestling in the Coed Eva dugout, but the one home club official (who also ran the line) pumped enough air into one of the "flat" ones to send this disjointed affair on its merry way. Extra time may have been difficult to squeeze in but thankfully it wasn't needed - I say thankfully as the second half took another 51 minutes out of our lives. The luckless Alwyn Jones in the home goal injured his left arm as he flung himself at the feet of an oncoming forward and spent the last two minutes as an outfield player with left back Alex Ravetta going in goal. Coed Eva substitute Gareth Pinch then put us all out of our misery with a neat 89th (103rd) minute lob and it was all done and dusted a minute later.

One can't help but feel sorry for the young lads carrying the Crickhowell flag in the Gwent County League. Football stopped in the town for two years after the Foot & Mouth Epidemic of 2001, but they have got a team together and earned promotion via the Gwent Central (or North Gwent?) League into the Gwent County League. Unfortunately, they have no help from the town's "middle age" fraternity to run the show. The basis is there for a decent club - a nice ground in a superb setting, a refreshment lounge which has potential and a degree of enthusiasm (sandwiches were brought to the ground along with cans of beer and platefuls of chips at the final whistle). But these young lads need help with the day to day tasks like supplying decent footballs, a proper first aid kit (the visitors didn't have one at all!), and a supply of those blue plastic drink bottles which all teams seem to have these days but neither of these outfits did. I realise the lower down the scale you go there is more likelihood of these instances happening, but when all is said and done, a football is a rather important ingredient for a football match wouldn't you say?

04/20