

**26/12/05 TT No.144: Paul Roth - Wellingborough Whitworths (United Counties League Division 1)**

Wellingborough Whitworths vs. Wellingborough 2004, UCL Div. 1, Sat 24/12/05, 11am ko, entry £3 including 24-page programme. Res: 1-2, Attendance: 1150

Standing on the touchline for this UCL match I realised I was witnessing something I had not seen all season...a huge crowd! I had e-mailed the Whitworth secretary earlier in the week and he had advised me to arrive early as interest in this local derby was huge. Whitworths ground stands behind Wellingborough's well-appointed stadium, itself standing behind the Dog & Duck pub on the London road at the southernmost edge of the town. Paying my £3 admission I was handed the excellent 24 page programme.....a glossy covered tome this, full of up-to-date info and the league's latest news bulletin....and retreated to the car to digest its contents with a coffee bought from a huge burger van brought in just for this fixture, I would guess.

The ground is an old-fashioned affair with a tiny stand to the left as one enters and an atmospheric covered area behind and to the right of the far goal. The pitch is completely railed off but there is only a small piece of hard standing adjoining the small stand on the left.

The match itself got off to an exciting start as the visitors scored after 45 seconds and added another 20 mins later via a tap in following a good run down the righthand wing. Against the run of play Whitworths pulled one back through that rarest of occurrences.....a goal scored direct from an in-swinging corner. That is in fact how the match ended but Whitworths could count themselves unfortunate not to come away with a point, as they had nearly all the play in the second half but couldn't find their range with either shots or headers and, in truth, the Town goalkeeper was untroubled.

With Wellingborough reforming in 2004 and with lofty ambitions to attain their former status, spice was added to the fixture as a member of the home board told me they (Wellingborough 2004) wanted the two clubs to merge and hopefully that way become a major force within soccer in Northamptonshire once more. Whitworths think such a merger would be the end of their club and in no way want to be part of it. I don't blame them but it does seem a little daft having two senior clubs so close to each other. It all reminded me of the sagas of Margate and Ramsgate football clubs when there was mention of amalgamations back in the 1980's. None of the local fans here wanted that.

Sitting in the car after the final whistle, waiting to get away, I was immobilised as the crowd funnelled past me for a good 10 mins and it was then I realised what a massive attendance there had been for this local derby.

The early ko enabled me to get back to Margate in time to stuff the goose and await the arrival of the fat fella and his reindeer. A highly enjoyable day out in the glorious Northants sunshine.

God bless you all and happy 'hopping in 2006.

04/20