

30/01/06 TT No.169: Mick Burt - Faces (Essex Olympian League Division Two)

The evening of Friday 27 January did not get off to the best of starts with the first three calls to club secretaries resulting in the glorious response of "answerphones". With the weather seemingly going to be OK (although a few matches did bite the dust due to frozen pitches") I decided that the first "definitely OK, yes we are issuing a programme" response would get my custom the following day.

The lucky club to benefit from mine and Nigel Roe's attendance was FACES of the Essex Olympian League Second Division. The promotion-chasing nightclub outfit (that's a first for me - I thought I'd completely ditched nightclubs years ago) were hosting Sandon Royals in a league game. Unfortunately, a very poor game ensued and the 0-0 score-line was never really in doubt. However, in reality this was a "curate's egg" of a day.

Despite a goalless game, the plus factors were several really. The Ford Sports Ground is easy to get to (10 mins walk from Newbury Park station on the Central Line), the pitch was excellent being very flat, finely manicured and fully roped-off whilst running widthways only a few yards from the dressing rooms/clubhouse, and the off-field facilities are superb. The clubhouse incorporates two bars/lounges with hot meals available too prior to the match! An excellent 16-page full colour programme was given away, and club officials actually ask any "strangers" if they want a copy! Moreover, in the programme under the listed home squad you are actually invited to ask any home official as to what numbers the players are wearing. The general atmosphere is one of enthusiasm and professionalism with all players turning up in club leisurewear, warming up in club tracksuit tops, and around half a dozen of their followers wearing Faces FC woolly hats although I don't think it's stretching a point to suggest that these chaps don't patronise the nightclub!

Apart from the 0-0 draw which none of us really like (and brought my run of 87 without one to a shuddering halt), the only other thing travellers won't take to is that this is such a large sports ground with five other pitches and a rugby pitch. This meant that the chilly wind got right "in yer face" but on a day that produced wall to wall sunshine it didn't really matter - rain would have been another matter.

I had to laugh at a pre-match comment from one of the Faces FC committee men who said "The way we're playing we won't be able to hold onto one or two of these lads as the bigger clubs will snap 'em up. We'll have to start payin' 'em some wonga next season". Not on this form you won't chum! What I would say though is that is a well-run club and if the weather is set fair you may well enjoy a visit.