

TT No.195: Mike Latham - Sat 4 March: Unibond Premier League: **Shepshed Dynamo** 2-2 Rossendale United. Attendance: 145; Admission: £6; 40pp programme: £1.20; FGIF Match Rating: 4*.

Given the dreadful weather and doubts over many matches the excellence of the Unibond website came in very handy last Saturday. Once bitten, twice shy and after a futile trip to Gala v Spartans two days earlier when, after two 'phone calls gave assurance the game was definitely on the game was called off by the referee at 7.05pm due to a frozen pitch, discretion was the better part of valour. A 340-mile round trip for nothing certainly focuses the mind and makes one appreciate the good times.

The Unibond League website has up-to-date information and puts some other leagues, some higher in the pyramid to shame. With the chosen match, at Crook in the Vase, subject to a late pitch inspection and calls to other Northern League clubs for a back-up getting a 'match off' reply the decision was made to play safe and Shepshed's Dovecote ground was an ideal choice, a friendly voice at the end of the 'phone line assuring all was well.

Within a mile or so of J23 of the M1 the Dovecote is situated at the far end of a pleasant looking village and parking at the adjoining school is the favoured choice if missing out on the small car park inside the ground. A warm welcome at the turnstiles and a superb 40-page programme, at a bargain £1.20, raised the spirits and a quick survey of the well-maintained ground confirmed that the choice of a trip into darkest Leicestershire had been a wise one. They may be something of an outpost of the Unibond but Shepshed add much to the league's charm and rich diversity.

With a pleasant clubhouse inside the ground and an excellent tea bar manned by two very cheerful staff the basic ingredients for a good afternoon were in place and the PA announcer further raised the tone, announcing the two teams slowly and clearly and then advising the spectators to 'sit back on a beautiful afternoon and enjoy the football.'

Most of the spectators gathered down the near side of the ground where a shelter has been erected in front of the club house to the right of the halfway line and players' entrance. A small elevated stand is to the left of the tunnel. On the far side is another covered stand and there is a small stand behind the nearside goal that bears the legend 'Shepshed Dynamo Football Club.' At this end an excellent club shop located in a temporary building, with a wide range of programmes, all neatly catalogued, and a number of other souvenirs did brisk business. There are several good viewing places around the ground.

Shepshed give the impression of being a club where everyone mucks in- with the tea, club house, club shop, programme sellers, turnstile operators and raffle ticket

sellers all pleasant and obviously taking great pride in being involved in a terrific example of a small, community based and well-run club.

Some of the best football I have seen this season has been in the Unibond League and this match lived up to the norm. Shepshed played fluently going forward and created enough chances to win about ten games but had to settle for a draw as Rossendale, whose manager has a UEFA A coaching badge, contributed fully to a fluent game that always held the interest. A visit to the Dovecote comes highly recommended for a stress-free afternoon or evening in pleasant surroundings, excellent facilities and, on the evidence of this game, entertaining football played in good spirit.

04/20