

11/07/05 TT No.2: Stephen Harris - Cirencester Town (SL)

Saturday 9 July 2005; Cirencester Town 1-6 Leyton Orient; Friendly; Att: c. 320 programme issued; Admission £5.

Whilst several of my friends have been attending summer tournaments in Holland (FIFA Youth Championships) Germany (Confederations Cup) I have actually had a few weeks off, so it was nice to get back into action on Saturday at this unexpectedly competitive warm-up game. O's manager Martin Ling retains west country connections dating from his time at Swindon Town and this has led to recent pre-season fixtures at Bath City and Swindon Supermarine; this year it was the turn of Cirencester and a near full-strength squad travelled down from east London. I confess that this was the first time I have ever set foot in Cirencester, and a pretty little town it is too with a first-class lunch venue in the Twelve Bells on Lewis Lane.

The Corinium Stadium is a modern (2001 vintage somebody said) out-of-town ground. So out of town that it is a bit of a trial getting there on foot from the town centre. We followed the directions given on the Cirencester website, along the Swindon Road and up Kingshill Lane. But this turned out to be an unpleasant and dangerous experience with fast traffic and not an inch of pavement along the way. I'm sure there are safer routes, but I would recommend a taxi for anyone thinking of going there.

An 8-page black and white programme was issued for 50p, but these were in desperately short supply and many people seemed to have been disappointed. I was lucky enough to scrounge one off a player. The best feature of the ground is the modern and spacious bar area which was well frequented. Facilities otherwise consist of two covered stands facing each other across the halfway line. The one in front of the clubhouse is rather small and was mostly filled with officials, but the stand opposite is more spacious and housed a large proportion of the crowd, taking advantage of the shade it offered on a hot afternoon.

Orient, in their revived 70s braces/kit, fielded different 11s in each half and made a lively start dominated from the off. Young striker Efe Echanomi impressed, scoring a hat-trick in a 4-0 half time lead. The pace eased a little in the second half and we saw a bit more of the home side as they were able to get forward a little more often. Indeed, it was Cirencester who scored the pick of the goals, their consolation coming from a beautifully taken 30-yard free kick. Star of the game was young O's left back Jason Demetriou, a name to watch out for.

Full marks too to the O's fan who arrived with a gallon of 7% local farmhouse perry, which certainly helped the atmosphere in the second half.