

TT No.222: Mike Latham - Wed 19 Apr 2006: North West Counties League Division 2: **Daisy Hill** 0-3 Ashton Town. Attendance: 30 est.; Admission: £3; no programme; FGIF Match Rating: 1*.

We all have our disappointments on the groundhopping trail we follow and this evening was definitely one of those. The day had been fine in Lancashire after a wet start and it seemed a futile gesture having to ring up to check a fixture. But attempting to tick off Stone Dominoes' ground at Meir KA provided one of those frustrations we all recognise. Two-and-a-half hours on a crowded M6 motorway counted for nothing. Arriving at the ground to find the gates locked was a chastening experience. Apparently, the game had been called off at lunchtime. But when the North West Counties League website is only usually updated once a day the internet has its limitations- the update for this day had been at 8.11am so a quick website check at 4pm was a futile exercise. Pathetic.

It's hard to stick up for the NWCL on nights like this and the decision to re-route to Daisy Hill hardly raised the spirits. Located close to Westhoughton, about two-and-a-half miles from J5 of the M61 and now a sprawling commuter village between Bolton and Leigh, Daisy Hill has changed out of all recognition in the last two decades with so much residential building. In the mid-1970s an unknown 16-year-old Pakistani batsman and leg spinner arrived to play for the neighbouring cricket club in the Bolton Association. Daisy Hill made him famous- two years later, Javed Miandad was on the way to being one of the most instantly recognisable figures in world cricket. A few years later their Pakistani professional bowler, Ehteshamuddin, was plucked out of league cricket to play for his country against England in a test match at Old Trafford.

Daisy Hill FC play at the neighbouring New Sirs ground, reached between two houses up a narrow lane down from the cricket club in the village. There is a decent sized car park, especially for the 'gates' that they attract. To stay in the league Daisy Hill erected floodlights and play their midweek games on a Wednesday evening and so attract a few groundhoppers from around the area but the support from the village is poor.

Sadly, no programme was produced for this local derby and only around 30 people had forsaken attractions elsewhere to attend on a mild and dry evening. Daisy Hill's facilities are mainly at the turnstile end of the ground where a club house, tea bar and small seated stand are to be found. Hot drinks are served in pot mugs and the pies are recommended. Other than a small cover the rest of the ground is open standing and the pitch, which has suffered more than its fair share of postponements this season due to water-logging, was well grassed but bobbly.

Ashton scored the only goal of the first half and added two more soon after the interval. The standard of the match was dire, Daisy Hill missing several chances to get back in the game. Javed Miandad may have gone from Daisy Hill to test match

cricket in no time but few of the players on view this evening looked capable of playing at a higher level. But at least it was better than watching Central Midlands League football on the Easter Saturday of this year's 'hop' even though that is not saying much. Ironically another member of the 'crowd' had attended the hop and was still having nightmares over the dire quality of some of the games on offer, despite the superb organisation of the league and hospitality of the host clubs, with the 0-0 draw at Bolsover Town on the Saturday evening making anything else seem comparatively decent by comparison. So, on that basis this game rates a one star.

04/20