

TT No.225: Mike Latham - Mon 24 Apr 2006: Midland Alliance. **Chasetown 2-0** Westfields. Attendance: 314. Admission: £4; 44pp programme: £1; FGIF Match Rating: 2*.

Chasetown are clearly a club on the up and their 2-0 win here took them back to the top of the Midland Alliance with two games to go.

Their FA Cup run earlier in the season put the club on the map- their first-round tie against Oldham Athletic being televised by the BBC. A crowd of 1,997 saw a 0-0 draw with Chasetown losing the replay 0-4. In the previous round a crowd of 2,134 saw the home win over Blyth Spartans so clearly there is a considerable groundswell of support in this part of Staffordshire.

Situated close to the A5 that runs from J12 of the M6 motorway north of Walsall and close to Burntwood, The Scholars ground can take some finding as some of the geography of the area has changed since the construction of the M6 toll road. Cunningly the signs back to the M6 north take the driver on to the toll road rather than back to the M6 along the A5, necessitating a £3.50 toll fee for just a few miles of travel.

There is quite a big car park at The Scholars ground, located down a small road by the side of the church in the centre of town and more road-side parking as well. There is a large club house where the bar staff dispense a friendly welcome and the place was buzzing with expectant home fans at least a half-hour before kick-off on a mild and dry evening.

The football ground, bordered by mature woodland on two sides has had tasteful new fencing erected around its perimeter and, inside, the ground is neat and spacious with plenty of room for expansion. There is a small seated stand in front of the club house and a very small cover behind one of the goals. The rest of the ground is open standing though the construction of three large, well glazed dug-outs on the far side obscures the view for anyone standing twenty yards either side of the halfway line on the small grassed bank.

The programme contained an extensive array of statistics on the club and the league and was good value for £1. In the modern custom, though, the teams were listed as squads and any attempt to write down the teams from the 'tannoy' system failed as the announcer rushed through the line-ups at breakneck speed without seemingly drawing breath.

The playing pitch is flat and well grassed and Chasetown, using the width of the pitch well, soon settled their nerves with a well-constructed move that ended in their prolific striker Lee Bullimore heading home from close range. Westfields offered little in attack and the home goalkeeper could have been provided with a deck chair such was his level of inactivity in proceedings.

To their credit though the visitors did dig in and defend stoutly when at times they looked likely to be over-run. A scrambled second goal early in the second half effectively killed the game as a contest and the last half-hour was dull and uninspiring with Chasetown never looking in danger. Their manager must have one of the loudest voices in the non-league circuit, his constant urgings ringing around the ground. Chasetown are the second highest supported club in the MA behind Leamington and the attendance was well above the previous seasonal average of 207. They gave the impression on and off the field of being a club capable of going considerably higher in the football pyramid.

The only catering was provided by a mobile catering van to the side of the club house.

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