

20/09/05 TT No.50: Mike Latham - Ashton United (Unibond Premier)

Mon 19 Sep 2005, Unibond Premier, Ashton United 3-1 Leek Town (att. - 233)

Ashton United may be struggling on the field but off it they continue to set the standards with a standard of catering and programme of excellent quality.

Pie and peas from the Hurst Cross tea room has got to be one of the top delicacies of the Unibond League and the 44-page programme, also costing only £1.20, is an outstanding effort.

Packed with information and updated for games played just two days previously, the programme has some great features, including an informative view from the boardroom, detailed match reports, excellent statistics (including details of the home club's players, former clubs and career records), two historical articles, an A to Z of last season, round-ups of other leagues and detailed information on the visitors.

No hint of bias either - the recent home defeat to Burscough is reported as 'it could have been ten' while individual players don't escape criticism. A quality effort - easily the best I've seen this season. And how do they produce it for the price? Programme editor Ken Lee deserves a heap of accolades for what is clearly a labour of love.

Hurst Cross is an atmospheric ground, hemmed in by terraced houses, and not the easiest to find though a detailed road map helps the journey from J23 of the M60 through the centre of Ashton-u-Lyne and out onto the Mossley road take about ten minutes.

The club is building up its collection of flags and a dozen proudly waved in the late summer breeze of a mild evening. With a small main stand, a cover opposite and two uncovered ends, Hurst Cross is an excellent viewing ground and the club helpfully post a team-sheet by the entrance for spectators to note down both teams - an excellent service that many others should seek to emulate. Simple but effective.

Starting the game bottom of the table after relegation from Conference North last season, Ashton built on their 1-1 draw at BPA last Saturday, with a good victory in an entertaining game. I have seen a few games at Unibond level this season so far and the standard in each has been very good. Leek at one stage put together a 30-man passing move but they lacked sharpness in front of goal and paid for defensive errors at the back.

A visit to Hurst Cross comes highly recommended and, playing their midweek games on a Monday night means there are plenty of opportunities for travellers to fit in a visit.

Match rating: 3*.

