

**28/09/05 TT No.57: Mike Latham - Blackpool Mechanics (NWCL)**

Tues 27 Sep 2005, NWCLD2, Blackpool Mechanics 2-2 Holker Old Boys (att. - 30)

Blackpool Mechanics play at a well-appointed small ground next to Blackpool Airport and about two-and-a-half miles from J4 of the M55 motorway. The journey down Common Edge Road takes the traveller past the grounds of Squires Gate (NWCLD1) and Wren Rovers (West Lancashire League) into Jepson Way where the Mechanics ground awaits.

Named after Mechanics' long-serving late secretary and founder member Walter Jepson, Jepson Way also allows access to a nearby industrial site and a sprawling estate of modern housing.

There is plenty of parking for the size of crowds that Mechanics attract, despite their closed season merger with Lytham St Annes of the West Lancashire League. Your correspondent arrived ten minutes late after hold-ups on the motorway but was told by the friendly gate steward that his £3 entrance fee had pushed the receipts over the £20 mark. A rather basic 24-page programme was an additional £1 with good histories of Mechanics and their visitors from Barrow-in-Furness the highlights.

Blackpool Gladiators RLFC (who began as Blackpool Borough) played out their existence at the Mechanics ground in the early 1990s before leaving the senior Rugby League in 1993 and finally folding in 1997 following several years in the amateur ranks. The ground had changed little since that time and the welcome was still warm and welcoming.

With cover on all four sides the ground is one of the best in the league and the playing pitch was in excellent condition and perfectly flat. There are two small seated areas down both sides and small covered standing areas behind both goals. The clubhouse is situated next to the dressing rooms at the entrance and there were good bar facilities and a small tea bar that dispensed hot drinks and pie and peas at cheerful prices.

The floodlights were of excellent quality and the action on the pitch was lively and entertaining, despite the driving cross-wind and occasional torrential rain showers straight off the Irish Sea. Mechanics took the lead with a 'route one goal' and secured a draw with a scrambled late equaliser after the visitors had scored two fine goals from sweeping moves.

A visit to Jepson Way is a stress-free and rewarding experience - the traveller is afforded a friendly welcome and the facilities are above the standard expected at this level. FGIF Game rating: 3\*.

