

TT No.134: *Stephen Harris* - Tuesday 30 January 2007; Combined Counties Premier; **Ash United 2-0** Chessington & Hook. Att: c56; Admission: £5; Programme issued; FGIF Match Rating: 3*.

The strengthened Combined Counties League is enjoying something of a renaissance this season with the (admittedly small anyway) attendances up almost all around and several clubs having invested in their facilities - at least in part spending the admission money gained from AFC Wimbledon's participation in this league. Ash United are one such club, with an improved ground and more punters through the gate - although this game attracted just about the smallest crowd of the season so far.

The ground lies in a small public park, but well enclosed by a thick hedge, just ten minutes-walk from Ash station. It is entered through a single turnstile at the north end, beside a modern clubhouse and dressing room block. This block has a substantial lean-to cover at the front and the remainder of the end is also covered with a new-ish wooden roof in a rather individual style. The rest of the pitch is fully encircled by a sturdy rail and a concrete walkway. The west side has the dugouts and also has, rather off-centre, three Arena Seating units pushed together to create a small stand with 155 red plastic seats under a green cladding roof. This suffers from being placed on an un-raised concrete base and so provides a rather low view of the action.

The atmosphere at the ground was very welcoming and the club gets a lot of the basics right. Teams were listed on a blackboard and a clearly-spoken announcer read out programme changes at a slow speed where even I was able to note them down. The tea bar provided sausage sandwiches and pasties, making a pleasant change from the ubiquitous, inedible burgers available at all-too-many grounds. There were litter bins about the place and clear signs to clean toilets. Simple stuff, but absent from many grounds.

The game was pretty competitive and the best team won. Chessington have shipped a lot of goals this season and I could see why in their muddled defending. Ash failed to take their chances really and should have won by a bigger margin. Quite an enjoyable game though on a mild evening.

A thin match programme was issued for £1. This covered two home games and much of the content was out of date - disappointing. But then I noticed an appeal inside for a volunteer to come forward to edit the programme - so I guess its poor quality was excusable.