

TT No.167: Mike Latham - Sat 3 March 2007: Welsh Cup 5th Round - **Carmarthen Town** 1-1 Porthmadog (aet, Carmarthen won 4-3 on penalties). Attendance: 226; Admission: £6: 52pp programme: £1; FGIF Match Rating: 3*.

Initial plans to take in Llanelli's Welsh Cup tie against Connah's Quay Nomads were shelved after an 8am pitch inspection led to that game being postponed but a 'phone call to the friendly Carmarthen secretary confirmed there were no problems at Richmond Park and that this tie would take place.

A town centre ground in the pleasant south west Wales town, Richmond Park is somewhat hard to find until you get your bearings. With double yellow lines everywhere, there is no choice but to use a public car park next to the ground, up by the side of the Toyota Garage. If this is full there is a larger one nearby, a fee of £1.50 securing three hours' parking- just enough as things transpired.

On a sunny, crisp afternoon the town was busy with shoppers but cup fever was not exactly prevalent. For a game of this importance the attendance of 226 was very disappointing, especially as that number included a good following from Porthmadog, their good humour and support helping create something of an atmosphere.

Richmond Park, Carmarthen's home since 1952, is a pleasant, well-appointed venue with a superb cantilevered stand on the far side, with 500 seats, the main feature. On the main entrance off Priory Road is a club house also incorporating the dressing rooms. There is a good tea bar and club shop behind the near-side goal with open standing freely available all around the well-grassed pitch. With its elevated position, the ground affords some good views across to the town on one side and to distant hills on the other and is overlooked by houses steeply built on the hill-side.

With plenty of room to move around, Richmond Park makes for a stress-free afternoon's viewing, especially as the locals are friendly and the simple but effective initiative of pinning up the line-ups by the entrance gives a customer service often overlooked elsewhere. Judging by the number of spectators scribbling the team changes in their programmes this is something much appreciated.

The programme is half in Welsh, half in English and the tannoy announcements are also given out in both languages. The programme, in the All Gold club colours, is an excellent effort, particularly with its statistical features and is fine value for £1.

Portmadog had knocked out favourites The New Saints on penalties in the previous round but exited the competition in a similar manner. The game was well contested and played in a good spirit though the home side had to play half of the 120 minutes with ten men after their midfielder, Sasha Walters, was sent-off for

stamping. After taking the lead with a free-kick early on, Carmarthen were pegged level by Les Davies' equaliser in the 71st minute. Extra time failed to separate the sides, though Carmarthen did miss a penalty. The shoot-out took 16 penalties before a winner emerged, home goalkeeper Neil Thomas distinguishing himself with some fine saves.

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