

TT No.189: *Richard Panter* - Sunday 25th March 2007; **Northwich Victoria v Cambridge United**; Conference; Result: 0 - 4; Attendance: 1156; Entry: £12; Programme: £2, 44 pages; Match rating: * * *.

I have been banging on for a few years about Sunday football. Primarily from a purely selfish perspective as it gives me the opportunity to watch two matches over the weekend. I argue that the home club also benefits by a larger than usual attendance and this certainly was the case at the Victoria Ground as 1,156 clicks were heard from the turnstiles, well in excess of the usual average of 717. As is often the case when a larger than average crowd is present the home team isn't!

The 'U's' ex Cambridge City striker, Robbie Simpson took home the match ball (now a metaphor in these multi-ball times) after scoring three top quality goals and helping his team mate Dan Chillingworth to also net one. The points took Cambridge out of the relegation places, leapfrogging the Vic's and Tamworth in the process. On this showing Northwich look doomed, they were lifeless, lacked fight, lacked guile, and veteran John McCarthy and late substitute James Dean apart, showed no desire to actually have the ball. Clearly, I caught the home team on a bad day and the visitors on a good one. The Vic's forthcoming visit to Tamworth at the Lamb is a relegation scrap, and having recently watched Tamworth they will need to be up for the fight in Staffordshire. The plentiful travelling support from the east had a good vociferous afternoon in the Cheshire sun.

Quite why United chose a two-tone blue strip in place of their traditional gold and black one was a mystery the answer to which was probably known only by their marketing department. Am I the only one irritated by this practice of change for changes sake?

The Victoria Stadium is a very new ground, sparkingly new in fact. Following the current fashion, it is located on a characterless industrial estate to the north of the town. The surroundings are less than salubrious as one would expect. However, an easy to find out of town location and plenty of parking in part compensate for this. The areas behind each goal are flat open standing, the segregated west side for away fans along with part of the covered terrace. Said covered terrace is pillarless and spans the entire length of the pitch. Named the Dane Bank it is tall and has plenty of crush barriers painted in the club's green. An impressive structure indeed. A friendly chap, who was the golden goal ticket seller, informed me that it came from their former home, the Drill Field, but looking at pictures of the old Dane Bank I think he meant just the name. The main stand is also a cantilever construction. NVFC is picked out in yellow among plastic green seats. It houses the offices, changing rooms, bar, restaurant and club shop. The architects also allowed spaces either side of the tunnel for the two teams management, coaching and, additional playing staff in lieu of dug-outs.

Now call me a dinosaur but I like to be able to see two opposing gangs located in, on or around dug-outs. The added entertainment from the banter and gesticulations between the two side-lined teams can sometimes add a certain something to a match. When placed in the body of a stand this element is taken away from the fan as it is difficult to spot the teams from the supporters. I fully accept that it is not good for those in the stand, who paid £2 extra, to have dug-outs plonked right in front of their field of vision, but in a new ground the opportunity is there to build sunken continental type ones, such as those at Solihull Borough. Burton Albion have successfully managed to incorporate these into the design of a new stand so perhaps dug-outs are not consigned to the past. I for one hope so.

06/20