

TT No.246: *Stephen Harris* - Thursday 4 May 2007; CoCo Div 1; **Crescent Rovers** 0-1 Warlingham. Att: c.40; Admission: £2.30; Programme issued; FGIF Match Rating: 2*.

Whilst the early kick-offs for midweek games at obscure clubs at this stage of the season are a boon for many groundhoppers, they don't do me many favours as I work in central London and it can be a struggle to get to grounds in time for the start of the game. Last night presented my first opportunity for such a game this spring and by 6.30pm I was at Crescent Rovers' Wallington Sports & Social Club ground, a short but fraught bus ride from Croydon East station.

This is a small sports ground in an area full of sports grounds. It has two football pitches overlapping two cricket pitches and is dominated by the large and rather dilapidated pavilion just inside the entrance. This houses the dressing rooms, a function room and a small bar area. All along the front is an overhang which would make for good match viewing if it were not so far from the pitch. The game was played on the nearer of the two pitches, which was loosely roped-off along the two sides. Both ends come up tightly against thick hedgerows and do not provide any spectator options. Two battered plastic dugouts were carried out and put in place by home team players just before kick-off and most of the 40 or so spectators gathered close to one or other of these, showing their club allegiances.

Warlingham were the better side by some considerable distance, overcoming the serious obstacle of a very hard and bumpy pitch to play some decent football. Their approach play was faultless but, oh dear, the shooting was woeful. Actually, some credit must go to the home 'keeper who made several saves and was a little unlucky with the goal when it finally came. In fact, Crescent almost scored an unlikely equaliser towards the end.

Hot drinks and filled rolls are provided in the clubhouse for Saturday games, but not tonight and the 4 to 5-minute half-time break provided barely enough time to walk to the bar and back again. Crescent have been notorious amongst the London non-league circuit over the elusiveness of their match programme. So, it's good to be able to report that these were in plentiful supply last night from one of the long-serving club officials. They will not be winning any prizes for the programme, but it's always nice to get one when you make a first visit to a club about which you know little. In fact, the club issues for all first team and reserve home matches and the Secretary says he is always happy to send copies out to collectors who contact him.