

TT No.268: Paul Roth - Tues 22nd May 2007; Middlesex C L Prem Division; **Bedfont Sports** vs. Sport London East Benfica; Result: 2-3; Attendance: approx. 137; Programme: 12 pages, free with entrance.

Another lettuce for you all...A Little Gem!

For once something other than football had taken me up to town today but being one never to miss an opportunity, I was able to combine my appointment in East London with GBG pubs and, of course, some Groundhopping.

The last time I saw Benfica play was when we were on holiday in Lisbon and later Oporto, when that famous club played the 'Central Sporting Klub of the Army from Sofia' in an early round of the UEFA Cup [res:3-1]. Oddly, that was an afternoon game to accommodate Portuguese TV as Sporting had a more appealing game to the TV company anyway, broadcasted live later that night.

The Middlesex County League is an eclectic affair with ex-pats from all over the world burgeoning new clubs in an attempt to recreate their soccer dreams as they might recall them back home in their respective lands. So, we find clubs with wondrous names such as Brazilian, SLE Benfica, Deportivo Galicia and Mauritius Sports within its ranks.

A few beers around the Waterloo area, a proper kebab in a small restaurant in Arcola Street and I was off on the Piccadilly line out to Hatton Cross (50 mins to be exact) followed by a half mile walk along Hatton Lane to the ground, situated at the back of Bedfont FC. What a find when on arrival awaits the 'Hopper! A fantastic clubhouse and entrance led to the fully posted and railed-off playing field, an absolute delight this evening in the warmth of a late Spring day. The pitch, amazingly, looks more akin to the start of the season than the end! A well-stocked tea hut was up and running long before kick-off was due and free programmes into the bargain were available from here. 12 pages this one with, to be honest, quite a few 'typos' but a welcome production nonetheless. Even the clock atop the pavilion has the club insignia upon it! The whole place is vibrant and I was not surprised to learn the club has been promoted to the Combined Counties League, passing that leagues' inspections last week.

The match was a humdinger from start to finish with both sides holding second and third places respectively in the league and it is testament to the Lisboans that they won the match by the odd goal in five, after having not really played that well. A sign of a good side, as they say. The last few weeks I've been watching games with as little as 10 or less souls present, so it was a pleasure to see such a great turn out for this important fixture. There was even chanting - was there any at Wembley a few weeks ago? Just like Bedfont FC next door, entertainment value is augmented by the landing of huge aeroplanes as they touch down at Heathrow Airport, just a mile distant. They were using runway 5-niner this evening, I believe!

A successful day out in the 'Smoke', my glass eye fitted [see if you can spot which eye the next time you see me], a few beers, gorgeous proper food [not Donkey meat] and a great evening at the football. What more could you want? Well maybe a trip on one of those lovely aeroplanes, I've been espying, throughout the whole of the evening.

FGIF Rating: 5*.

06/20