

**TT No.4: *Dean McClean*** - Thursday 27th July 2006. Llanelli v Gefle IF; UEFA Cup; 0-0 Agg: 2-1. Att: 2000; Programme: £2 44pp. FGIF Match Rating 2\*.

After eight solid weeks of watching cricket I made the decision to exit my summer shell and make the long trip to South Wales for Llanelli's UEFA Cup tie against Swedish side Gefle IF.

The only reason why I, and so many other travellers, ventured down to deepest Wales was the marvellous decision by Llanelli to stage this game at Stradey Park, home of Llanelli Scarlets RUFC. As was proved at Barrow Raiders' before Christmas, a rare (football) match played on a ground used primarily for Rugby will act as magnet for our fellow brethren.

Situated around a half a mile west of Llanelli town centre, Stradey Park is a very traditional and atmospheric venue. Terracing is provided behind each goal, with one end covered and the other not. Running the full length of each touchline are two stands of moderate size, which provide the seating and cover for spectators. Due to UEFA regulations only the seated parts of the stadium were used, with the said regulations being stringently enforced by over-zealous stewards. The general organisation of the whole event was reasonably poor as large queues formed outside both the ticket office and the turnstiles (or should I say solitary turnstile) where my traveller friend and I were trying to enter. Many spectators were still funnelling into the stadium around 15 minutes after kick-off.

The poor organisation apart, the whole evening was a great success for Llanelli and the League of Wales in general. Although the majority of people would consider Llanelli to be a weaker opposition than the Swedes, it is worth remembering that it's the Reds that are the full-time team, not the Swedes.

This was a game of two very different halves. The first excellent, the second dire. Llanelli set off like a train with their Spanish maestro (Luis Garcia look-a-like) Miglorance giving a master-class in everything apart from goal scoring. The Reds should have been 3 or 4 goals to the good, such was their dominance in the first half, but somehow the score remained 0-0. The second half was a non-event, as my fellow traveller grew more anxious at the prospect of a re-visit (should a soccer match ever take place here again), Llanelli grew more cautious and held on for the draw with ease.

Plans were made to host the next round (against OB Odense) at Stradey Park too, but unfortunately UEFA regulations disallow the venue and Llanelli have had to move out of the town to Swansea City, who have kindly allowed the match to take place at the Liberty Stadium.