

TT No. 128: Ian Hill - Saturday 17 November 2007; Blue Square North; **Hinckley United** 2-1 Workington; Att: 555; Admission: £9; Programme, £2.00 (44 pp); FGIF Match rating: 1*.

Sometimes you can be watching a match and you wonder to yourself: "What am I doing here?". This game "ticked all the boxes" to fall into that category.

The Marstons Stadium (sponsored name) is relatively new. The ground is dominated by a main stand and complemented by two covered terraces. The fourth side of the ground is flat uncovered standing. At the opposite end of the ground is a large clubhouse/function area. Everything is neat and tidy. Basically, this ground is boring.

The ground is located on the outskirts of the town next to Hinckley Rugby Club. A large rough car park offers plenty of parking outside and is well marshalled by stewards. The downside is you have to pay to use it.

Hinckley are sponsored by Triumph Motorcycles and one is displayed, in what looks like a shop window, at the front of the clubhouse. The turnstiles are located either side of the large clubhouse. Four on each side. Today Hinckley decide to open only three - one for normal admissions, one for concessions, and the other for complimentary tickets and season tickets. So, it takes about 10 minutes to get into the ground due to the queue.

This was my third visit to the Marstons Stadium and the same thing has happened on all three occasions - they ran out of programmes before the kick off. Credit to Hinckley though as they print the programmes "in house". So, when they run out, they print some more. Talking to the locals, this is a regular occurrence and they were not happy. A line of disgruntled programme buyers waited patiently for the new batch to arrive. When they did a little bit of pushing and shoving ensued but I'm sure everyone got what they wanted. Talking about "hot off the press" these certainly were as they were warm after just being printed.

The Match Officials for the day were quite outstanding. So, if you see this trio (Ref Hobbis, Lockett & Steward) trot out at a game then watch out. They were outstandingly bad. The referee made so many errors it was quite embarrassing. You know he was having a bad game when both sets of supporters started singing "You don't know what you're doing". Foul and abusive language was directed at him by the players for the duration of the game and he just stood there with a glazed expression. We also had the comedy duo on the touch lines who were so unfit neither could keep up with play. Numerous incorrect offside decisions were given in what turned out to be a frustrating day for all concerned.

The referee made his mark early in the game as he sent off Workington's Graham Anthony after seven minutes for hand ball on the goal line. Bottom of the table Hinckley's nightmare start to the season continued as they missed the subsequent

penalty. Workington reverted to a 4-4-1 after the sending off in what turned out to be a dour first half with Hinckley taking a 1-0 half time lead.

The half time food at Hinckley is very good. There is a good selection and the canteen is well staffed. Likewise, the club-shop is neat, tidy and well organised. Are there any non-league eccentricities at this club? Well yes! Official jars of Hinckley United FC Pickled Onions on sale in the club-shop - fantastic.

Being a goal down Workington decided to be a little bit adventurous in the second half as both sides huffed and puffed for a goal. Hinckley looked like they had wrapped the game up as they added a second goal mid-way through the second half. The game was dominated by a lot of silence in the ground which was usually interrupted by the Hinckley manager using numerous expletives at his players. Things started to get a bit more interesting as Workington hit back with their centre forward neatly "nutmegging" the Hinckley keeper. At last we had a bit of a game but with a few minutes to go the match officials again influenced the outcome.

A ball was crossed into the Hinckley area and after a scramble went over the line. The Workington players and supporters celebrated the equaliser but unfortunately the referee and his assistant were not up with play. The goal was not given. Another embarrassing mistake!

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