

TT No.251: Paul Roth - Sat 17th May 2008; Essex Olympian League Division 2; Ramsden FC vs. Shenfield AFC; Res: 5-2; Att: 30 (?); Programme: 32 pages, £2 with admission; Weather: Overcast, drizzling but mild.

It's FA Cup Final day and I have to say I never bother to watch it anymore.

Once upon a time I'd be transfixed from early morning, from clambering into my underwear until leaving the pub at about midnight after enjoying the festivities of the day...the 'Cup Final It's a Knockout', the teams leaving their respective hotels, round at a mate's house with a six-pack etc., etc.

Clubs like Ramsden FC are to blame for my loss of appetite, when it comes to big-time football. Put bluntly, I much prefer to stand on a recreation ground surrounded by trees, then watching overpaid 'prima donnas' dish up mediocrity on the TV, or live, for that matter. We have SKY TV at home, but the last football match I watched in its entirety was the Spanish La Liga championship decider last June between Real Madrid and Real Mallorca. There is too much football on the box nowadays, but that is only my opinion. In days of yore the Cup Final was about the only live club footy on television, and you really looked forward to it.

Back to lovely Ramsden FC. The club is located on the Downham Road, just as one leaves the village of Ramsden Heath, about two miles NE of Billericay. It's an 11am kick off at the Nursery Playing fields and a fair number of 'hoppers are in attendance, on the promise of a programme. When this arrives, it turns out to be a superb 32-pager produced by MK Productions, who 'do' similar for quite a few other Essex club sides.

There's also a warm welcome and a cuppa waiting for each traveller pre-kick off, served in the changing room block cum pavilion. Rolls, sandwiches and other comestibles are on sale here too.

The pitch is fully encircled with rope and the verdant setting makes for a more than pleasant venue. Shame about the drizzle though, which falls continuously throughout proceedings. Shenfield have had a miserable season; actually, this should be their 'home' fixture this morning, but have had to switch to Ramsden to accommodate cricket at their Warley HQ (I somehow don't think so, today!). They have only managed two league points all term and when the home side, or should that be the away team? go two up with a couple of simple tap-in goals, it looks as though the proverbial floodgates are about to open again. A third freak goal (freaky in as much that if the Shenfield 'keeper wasn't so short I'm sure he'd have saved it) sees it 3 zero at the break. Amazingly, Shenfield pull two goals back after the restart but Ramsden reapply the gas and eventually run out comfortable 5-2 winners.

With more effort, this match could conceivably have finished up 12-7, or some score-line equally absurd.

Brian King (Chairman?) had made all visitors welcome to the club this morning and shook my hand as I departed coastward, to watch the FA Cup Final!

YOU MUST BE JOKING!!!! Actually, I spent the time writing this.

FGIF Rating: 5*.

06/20