

TT No.26: *Stephen Harris* - Wed 22 August 2007; Middlesex County League; **Bethnal Green Utd v Brazilian FC**. Res: 0-1; Att: c.45. Admission: free; Programme: issued; FGIF Match rating: 3*.

Football facilities in the East End of London are few and far between, so when a new club comes along, playing at a new venue, it is a rare event indeed. Bethnal Green United were formed in 2000 and have played in the Bangla League and the London Intermediate League, before making the step up to the Middlesex County League for this season. They are nothing if not ambitious and have a stated aim of developing their facilities and eventually bringing professional football to Bethnal Green. Four teams currently represent the club in various age groups. Brazilian FC are also a club with ambitions and they are seeking a regular home venue on their home patch of Willesden, having played all over the capital in recent seasons.

A lot of work has been put in at Meath Gardens to bring it up to standard for this league. Powerful floodlights have been erected, there is a new-looking changing room block and the pitch was flat and well-drained. Although the ground has quite an enclosed feel, spectator facilities as yet are sparse; but the pitch was surrounded by a rope (allegedly only purchased just in time for this game) and benches were put out for the substitutes. Conveniently situated between the Palm Tree pub and Robin's Pie & Mash shop, this would not be a bad place to watch football given better weather. A crowd of between 50 and 100 had been anticipated last night, but very heavy rain as kick-off approached put paid to that and the actual turn out of around 45 included as many groundhoppers as locals. Refreshments were available from the back of a van, but hot soup would have been more appropriate than the cold drinks, crisps and chocs on offer.

Skill levels in the game belied the conditions and the lowly status of this league, but two good goalkeepers kept the game goalless until late on. Bethnal Green had edged the match up to that point, but it was Brazilian who scored a fine late goal to win the game. Slightly harsh on the home side I thought and I would expect Bethnal Green to do well this season. Personally, I have deep family roots in Bethnal Green and I hope to see the club progress.

A basic black and white, photocopied match programme was plentifully and freely available. A deluxe colour version was also available in small numbers if you asked the right official.