

**TT No.27: Richard Panter** - Wed 22nd August 2007; **Coventry Sphinx** v Teversal; FA Cup EP Rd replay; Result: 2-2 AET - Teversal won 6-5 on penalties; Att: 112; Entry: £5; Prog: 40pp, £1.50; Match Rating: 4\*.

Beware of Greeks baring gifts, advice ignored on this blustery evening by the men from North Nottinghamshire. On Saturday, legend has it that Tevvie (NCEL division one, level 6) let a two-goal lead slip, hence their mid-week trek to Coventry Sphinx (MFA level 5). On this evening they let a two-goal lead slip, hence the need for a penalty shoot-out which they eventually won 6-5 after a whopping nine attempts for each team. Spectacular entertainment for nearly three windswept hours was provided by both sides virtually non-stop.

In the first minute Teversal saw their thirty-yard free kick well parried by the Sphinx 'keeper but an opponent knocked it home. Then for the next twenty minutes Coventry ran their visitors ragged. Pace, skill and movement were of a very high standard, almost poetic in fact. Sadly, their finishing was woefully inadequate both in terms of accuracy and power, fourteen... yes, fourteen, good opportunities came and went. It was frustrating for a neutral so goodness only knows how those supporting the home boys felt. It seems almost superfluous to mention what happened next, predictably, Teversal outran the Sphinx rear-guard and scored. Two goals in two attempts. But still the boys in sky blue poured forward and still chances slipped away. Halftime came and went and Coventry changed tactics. The ball was launched forward for their diminutive yet determined strikers to chase: this resulted in two goals in five minutes and finally saw them level. From this point on in it was anyone's match.

Extra time saw some good chances for both sides, but both goalies were up to the challenge and so we reached the two-hour mark level at two all. By now it was well after ten o'clock and the referee to his credit really sorted out the penalty contest rapidly, a good job he did as a total of eighteen kicks were needed to separate the rivals. Teversal missed their second attempt leaving Coventry the relatively easy task of bagging their fifth in succession, needless to say this is not what happened. Two more Teversal misses were bettered by one by Sphinx and the boys from greater Mansfield roared into the next round. Tevvie were outplayed for much of the match but they were determined and resilient and hung around long enough to go through, fair play to them. In their first ever FA Cup tie Coventry Sphinx played some lovely football but without a definite end product clearly did not progress, such is football.

I took the A46 Coventry by-pass up to the A428 and followed this for around three miles to Bulls Head Lane -Sphinx Drive is down there somewhere in the middle of a fifties housing estate.

The large clubhouse looks ugly on the outside, all sixties squares and oblongs and barely any windows. Inside however it is clean, tidy and welcoming. The changing

rooms are on the first floor and players reach the field through a long wire mesh alley way. The only cover pitch-side is the quaint 'Willie Knibbs Memorial stand' which offers seating and standing for around 100 punters. Hard standing is on three sides, the fourth is out of bounds owing to the site of a cricket pitch. There is also bowls and tennis here. The east goal line is dominantly overlooked by a Marconi office block and a sinister looking radio mast; it looks like something out of the X-Files. This side apart the whole area is lushly green, vast and when the wind blows from the north a bit chilly. It was cold on an August evening so I would urge the use of long-johns in the winter!

06/20