

**TT No.77: Richard Panter** - Tues 2nd October 2007; **Romulus** v Barton Rovers; Southern League - Midland Division; Score: 1-1; Entry: £5; Att: 104; Programme: 36pp, Free (usu. £1); Match Rating: 3\*.

The peripatetic Romulus are currently tenants at Sutton Coldfield Town's Coles Lane home. Most people I talk to are divided into two camps - those who like the ground and those who think it is a dump. I fall firmly into the former group. With its much-photographed quirky original main stand, which has had a face lift in recent times, and two lots of covered standing areas and a refurbished open terrace, the ground for me has a distinct character. I would concede that it does look far more enticing under the glare of floodlights, though of course, this is the case for most venues. The clubhouse shows canvas photographs of some famous faces who may, or may not, have played at Coles Lane in the past, there are pictures of the Charlton brothers, the first footballing Beatle Georgie B as he would be called now and, The Beatles. Clearly, further research is needed to clarify this point!

One thing I am certain of is that Romulus have launched the careers of England internationals, Darius Vassell and Zat Knight amongst others. This is a quite remarkable achievement considering the club were formed as recently as 1979 and have been playing senior football on Saturdays for less than a decade.

As a club I feel hard pressed to suggest a more friendly bunch both on and off the field. Having previously chatted to the Chairman at various venues about the future I have always been impressed by his attitude which sees ambition firmly linked to the playing enjoyment of all of the club's teams from the highest to the lowest levels, or rather from the youngest team to the first team. Unity seems to be the key.

We rolled up at around seven o'clock and went to the gate and were charged a fiver and given a programme. The club official told us they were not expecting much of a crowd so we were welcome to a free programme. They also had some well- designed enamel badges for sale.

We took station on the halfway line and anticipated a goal-fest, then we waited, and waited, and waited until the thirty-first minute until the visitors opened the scoring. Dean Brennan hit a beautiful volley from the edge of the home box to put his side in front. They fully deserved this for their attacking exploits and by dint of some fine goal keeping. Steve Graham in the Rovers goal is built for comfort, not speed in rather the same way as I am in fact. However, he was off his line like a greyhound a few times to thwart the two 'Romulan' strikers. These being the redoubtable and much coveted Tyrone Fagan and his quicksilver partner, Leon Mitchell. The half was made note-able, for the rash of bookings which befell Barton. It took the officials seven minutes to notice that a Rovers player had no number on his back so he was booked for this monumentally awful offence! He

should have been proudly displaying the number 5 so what the referee wrote in his little book is anyone's guess. Two others saw yellow for fouls and another for dissent. I have to say that Barton Rovers were on at the referee a lot in the first half prompting Romulus captain, Jason Lanns to quip to one of his opponents 'have you come all this way to moan'.

Rovers quietened down in the second half as the game settled into a pattern of end to end attacking and a rash of substitutions. As it transpired, it was the tenants who scored the only goal of the period after a bit of a scramble. A corner was cleared for another one by the punching Steve Graham who managed to clear this but the ball was lobbed back in and Leon Mitchell nodded home. This led to a joyous chase of the scorer by his team-mates who were delighted to have equalised. This was the end of the scoring and was on reflection a fair result as both teams played some decent football and to their credit both went hell for leather after all three points. A point leaves them both well placed in the league table.

This was an unusual match for Romulus as firstly Tyrone Fagan didn't find the back of the net and his team came from behind. I will qualify this statement. Earlier in the season the club were forced into an FA Cup replay at Coles Lane by their landlords. According to my source, the man on the turnstile, they raced into a seemingly impregnable four one lead but were eventually to blow this and be dumped out on penalties. This I can quite believe, as my best match last season saw the boys in red & white romp to a three-goal lead at Loughborough Dynamo only to be pegged back level by the final whistle. There is never a dull moment around this mob, miss them at your peril.

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