

TT No.114: Paul Roth - Sat 27th December 2008; Essex Olympian League Division 2; **Springfield FC** vs. Shenfield AFC; Res: 0-5; Att: 30 (?); Programme: 28 pages, Free; Weather: Bitterly cold but dry.

When the Earth's tectonic plates grinded against one another millions of years ago forming the topography of this country as we find it today, wouldn't it have been useful if an isthmus, a strip of land or causeway, had been created that linked the Isle of Thanet to Essex? Well it would've been useful for me, at least.

Instead, the gauntlet of the M2 and M25 motorways have to be run by your correspondent and with the holiday hoards out in their droves today, the highway wasn't the most pleasant of places to be. Nonetheless, my arrival in Chelmsford (I seem to gravitate back to the Essex county town at least once a year for one reason or another) was far too early.

Parking up, by the Endeavour pub, I walked into the city and polished off the few GBG listed pubs I'd not visited previously. The Cricketers in Moulsham Street, perhaps being my favourite today.

By 1.30 pm I'd driven along Arun Close and into the huge car park of Springfield FC. From here-on, in the day was to be one surprise after another, all of which being good. A modern pavilion, which houses the changing rooms and well-appointed club bar, is adorned by a huge blue and black sign, the clubs' colours, welcoming you to Springfield FC.

Inside, and upon every table is a copy of the club's free, 28-page programme; and what a fantastic thing of beauty it is too. Produced throughout on glossy paper and in full colour, it is the work of Nigel from 'The Design & Print Partnership'. I had e-mailed him earlier in the week and he had confirmed they would be issuing for today's game. By the way, the club produces a programme for reserve team matches also! The club bar, although the epitome of modernity, has been decorated tastefully with old club photos and mementos giving it a homely and loved feel.

Outside, the pitch is fully enclosed with roping set on new plastic poling and although there are lots of other pitches roundabouts, none encroach giving the venue a 'Park'-feel. What I also like, just like Lemsford FC last Saturday, is that the pavilion is set below the playing surface, the players having thus to ascend a short flight of steps to access the field.

Camera to the ready, yours truly located himself behind the visitor's goal net, as the league table suggested that's where most of the action would be headed; Shenfield AFC again being the league's whipping boys this term and winless up this juncture in the season. An even first half saw them shade things with a fortunate goal that seemed to be more a cross than a shot, but however clipped the inside of the home post and went in. Teatime brought a welcome break to icy proceedings

and although I could have purchased my cuppa from the tea hatch pitch-side, I opted to take my hot beverage inside, where Nigel filled me in more thoroughly about the club's history.

The latter 45 minutes totally belied the visitor's league status and after scoring a second spectacular goal from a wondrous scissor kick, went on to romp home by five goals to nil. The Shenfield 'keeper explained to me that the club has had a change of personnel during the week; obviously the new lads had done the trick!

Friendly, with amazingly good facilities and hopefully on the way up, despite this rather disastrous defeat, Springfield FC is a club all Groundhoppers will undoubtedly adore. I did!

The only down part of the day was my journey home; After joining the London Orbital road, the traffic was queuing from the A12 Brentwood turn off to cross the QE2 bridge. Oh, for an Isthmus!!

Finally, I hope all FGIF readers, wherever you might be, enjoyed a merry isthmus yourselves and I wish each and every one of you, health and wealth come the New Year.

FGIF Rating: 5*.

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