

TT No.142: *Leon Gladwell* - Saturday 31st January 2009; **Met Police Bushey v Bedmond Sports & Social**; Herts County Senior League Premier Division; Result: 21-1; Admission: N/A; Prog: Free; Match rating: 5*.

I chose this game expecting to see a few goals. On the previous two occasions I had seen Bedmond this season I had witnessed twenty-one goals...all against. Like most, I'm fond of witnessing high scoring matches although a football sadist I am not - I headed off to Bushey today genuinely hoping to see an improved Bedmond as their recent results had suggested an upturn in form. A brisk twenty-minute walk up Aldenham Road from Bushey station brought me to the gates of the Met Police club, a vast, ageing complex with hallucinogenic floral Wilton carpets in the lobby and décor throughout which harks back to an era when the police actually had a little respect from the public. The small canteen was excellent however and the Shepherd's Pie at £4 was almost worth the journey alone. From here I also picked up a neat little programme free of charge although this was the only copy, I saw during the whole afternoon.

Fifteen minutes to go until kick-off and Bedmond hadn't turned up. I made a quick call to Amersham Town who confirmed their match was on headed towards the car park where two school kids were getting out of a beat up Micra followed by a burly bald-headed fellow who looked familiar. Then it clicked - the Bedmond player coach and what must be his two young sons. Ten minutes later and the majority of the Bedmond side had arrived and were soon kitted out and ready to go. Game on. After all the waiting around, the Bedmond boys were actually first out of the changing rooms and promptly took up position on a pitch where another team (Hemel Rovers I believe) were awaiting their own opposition. As they kicked the ball around to keep warm, it was left to me to have a word with coach and tell him that their game versus Met would be taking place on the pitch next door - the one with the pitch barrier, dug outs and small stand.

As it turned out, the two fourteen-year olds I had seen with the coach were in the side today with one at left back and the other playing in central midfield. Up against them were a talented team of PCs, DIs and DC's who were looking a good bet to win the Herts County League this season. When Jamie Derby opened the scoring in the 4th minute and the Bedmond keeper, the most senior player in their side, was carried off injured, things looked bleak. Equally worrying was the fact that the grounds' staff had performed wonders on the pitch which was the best I had seen at this stage in the season for many years - perfect for a side like Met Police who were skilled in keeping the ball on the deck and playing it around.

And so, it was that Police scored six first half goals. The Bedmond youngsters chased them earnestly around the pitch but lacked the positional awareness needed at this level. They also failed to put in a single significant tackle during the entire match. Don't get me wrong, these boys deserve medals for turning up each week, keeping the club alive in doing so but knowing that a hefty defeat is 90

minutes away. I was told by their coach that they turn up simply because they want to play - hearing things like this is enough to renew my faith in the game. When Alex Cain scored within four seconds of the restart, the proverbial stuffing was knocked out of Bedmond. Any thoughts of keeping the score down and avoiding another humiliating defeat was instantly dashed and you could feel any post half-time talk enthusiasm dwindle away. Cain, signed only 24 hours before the game as cover from Welwyn Garden City went on to score seven goals; the league's leading scorer Derby scored five whilst Courtnage may have only scored four but he assisted almost half the twenty-one goals Met racked up. The goal Bedmond did score was an own goal.

From a personal point of view, this was the largest margin of victory I have ever seen. Whilst it was not as enjoyable as, say, the Spurs v Arsenal four-all draw I saw earlier in the season, I was impressed by Met Police for their commitment and lack of arrogance. They needed a big win today as their rivals Codicote and London Lions had both hit big scores against Bedmond and by scoring as many goals as they did, they now lead the goals for column in the table. How crucial this will prove to be come May we will see. As for Bedmond, the very fact that they defied the odds again and raised a team was a small victory in itself. Let's hope they continue to do so and hang in there until the end of the season.

06/20