

**TT No. 179: Ian Hill** - Tue 17th March 2009; **Stafford Rangers** v Workington; Blue Square North; Res: 0-0; Att: 377; Admission: £11; Programme: £2.50 (44pp); FGIF Match Rating: 1.

I was really looking forward to my first visit to Stafford Rangers Marston Road ground. A chance to see my club, Workington, at a new ground furthered the appeal but what a let-down.

Let me award a "Destroyer of Football Award" to the Stafford Rangers manager Chris Brindle for sending out a team with the intention of playing "hoof the ball up in the air football". Even worse was the fact that his team didn't even have the ability to do that. I felt sorry for the Stafford supporters having to watch this rubbish every week. They confirmed this when one commented to the small bunch of Workington supporters "At least you don't have to watch this every week".

So not only having to put up with neck ache and temporary blindness from losing the ball in the glare of the floodlights I also had to listen to endless expletives from two Stafford players (No 6 & 3) every time a free kick or throw in was awarded against them. The referee ignored all the abuse until he had a quiet word 10 minutes into the second half. So much for the FA respect campaign, sometimes referees do not help themselves. There is always going to be swearing at football games but this was ridiculous. It would also help if the Stafford "Chuckle Brothers" actually understood the rule that if the ball hits your body and goes out of play you do not receive a throw in.

A smaller than normal crowd meant absolutely no atmosphere in the ground except for the swearing idiots and the Stafford "chavs" brainless taunts at the Workington players. It was actually Rangers lowest crowd of the season and if they keep on churning up this rubbish then it will be no surprise if the crowds drop even further.

The ground is a bit of mix and match. The narrow but tall main stand dominates the ground with terracing on one side of it. The other side has an unusual disabled stand wrapped around a mobile phone mast. It looks like a cheap bandstand. Also here are the dressing rooms, food stall, a small club shop and a shed selling matchday programmes. The programme cost £2.50 and is a nice colourful glossy issue which is dominated by adverts with very little to read. Not value for money.

There was also a first for me. It's the first time I have ever thrown a burger away at a football match. The fare on offer was extremely dodgy with a very odd taste. A couple of bites and straight in the bin.

Opposite the main stand is an old covered terrace. Behind one goal is a large temporary grandstand. Similar to those seen at a lot of Rugby Union grounds. At the other end of the ground is a covered terrace that would have many Health & Safety officer closing it down within seconds. The cover is made out of scaffolding poles, tarpaulin, string and a thin green mesh fabric. The terracing is made out of

scaffolding and steel plates. It also has a walkway behind it made out of similar material.

The entertainment (ha ha) consisted of Stafford having to decent efforts to score and Workington four in the second half. There is nothing else to say about the game it was that bad.

06/20