

TT No.180: Paul Roth - Thursday 19th March 2009; **Boodles ISFA Cup Final**; Millfield vs. Hampton; played at Whaddon Road, **Cheltenham Town FC**; Res: 2-0; Att: 2500 (approx.); Programme: 20 pp w/a £5. Weather: A clear and dry evening.

Without doubt, the two best remaining teams have battled their way through to contest the 17th Boodles ISFA Cup final, which is, coincidentally a re-match of the 2005 final, played at the Walker Stadium, Leicester City FC, when Millfield were also victorious on that occasion, by three goals to one.

Whaddon Road, Cheltenham Town FC was the venue last night; as the 7 pm kick-off approached the stadium filled up and a terrific atmosphere was generated by both sets of vociferous supporters, the Hampton contingent outnumbered their Somerset counterparts by about 3 to 1. It was certainly colourful, as nearly every student seemed to have had their face painted in the respective schools' colours.

To underline the importance of tonight's match, the Premier League's senior referee, Howard Webb, took charge of proceedings and ultimately did an outstanding job, along with his more than able assistants, Darren England and Danny Guest.

With two such well-matched teams locking horns the early exchanges were, unsurprisingly, even. Millfield started to get on top after the initial twenty minutes of play, winning a series of free kicks and corners, all dealt with I should add, with consummate ease by either the Hampton defence or 'keeper Alex Williams. On the half hour mark Millfield won another corner but this time Jack Beacher soared skyward, above everyone else in the box, to crash home a powerful header. That's how the score-line remained up to half time.

The second forty minutes started with the SW Londoners pressing for an equaliser; they had a couple of half chances but Millfield remained largely in control, always looking dangerous on the counter attack. On the hour mark, as he ran through the Hampton defence, captain Harrison Dunk was brought down inside the area; Mr. Webb pointed to the spot without hesitation and Dunk dusted himself down to thump the resultant spot kick into the right-hand corner of the net with his trusty left foot. All present knew that ultimately was the winning goal. The Somerset school had claims for another penalty, waved away by the referee, and it was then just a matter of time before the final whistle brought wild scenes of ecstatic joy to those favouring the white and blue colour combination.

Roger Burden, the ISFA's guest of honour on the night, presented both teams with mementos and had great pleasure in handing over the elegant trophy to captain Dunk. That sparked more delirium amongst the west Country faithful; I'm convinced the partying is still carrying on now!

My thanks must go to Mark Dickson of the ISFA, who was instrumental in allowing me to take my own photographs on the night, introducing me to RWT-Photography

(a DVD of the game along with many more images are available from www.rwt-photography.co.uk), who had sole rights to the event. Rob and Julie, the epitome of professionalism, made me not only welcome, but put your trepidatious reporter at such ease that my whole experience was enhanced no end. I also learnt so much myself on the night.

An excellent cup final, a magnificent occasion and a wondrous experience for yours truly.

Congratulations Millfield School.

FGIF Rating: 5*.

06/20