

TT No.185: Paul Roth - Sat 21st March 2009; Kent County League Division 2 W; **Fleetdown United** vs. Eltham Palace; Res: 2-1; Att: fluctuating; Entry: N/A; Prog:12 pp monthly bulletin free from the bar; Weather: Warm and sunny; French Onion Soup: None!

Never have I known the Springtime turn so quickly into Autumn! Such can be said for the staggering difference in venues from the majesty that was Sloane FC earlier in the morning to the jejunity of Fleetdown United's Heath Lane (lower) ground located within the Dartford suburbs. From where I'd parked up at Farningham, it was a 6.458 kilometres drive to their modest ground.

Look, perhaps I'm being a little unkind here, but let's put it another way. I would've well understood if today's referee Pat Murphy, an absolute ringer for the late, great Ted Mould, had on seeing the place committed suicide, just like the famous Everest Double Glazing exponent, who so tragically shot himself as long ago as 1986.

Does anyone reading this recall the episode of 'MINDER', when Arthur Daley was desperately trying to quit smoking and turn his back on his beloved cigars? He employed a hypnotherapist to help him and was 'instructed' that whenever he craved his favourite cheroot it would taste insipidly of rubber. The closing line of the show, unforgettably, had our hero by then extolling the virtues of the taste of that Vulcanised medium!

A large car park leads to a rather soulless (jejune) pavilion-cum-changing room block, and in turn that leads out onto the field of play proper, which is set in a bowl at its nearest end, which completely levels out at the furthest. An artificial, floodlit 5-a-side pitch lies next to the aforementioned drab-looking edifice. In another bowl, way to the left, the reserve pitch can just about be espied.

There is nothing else here, except for the prerequisite requirements of our beautiful game, those being grass, goal furniture and flags; the addition of players and a football ball(!) certainly helped. It's the sort of venue people describe as being 'best visited on a clement day'. Well, my friends, let me say here and now, today was more than clement but I was still wondering what on earth I was doing here!

Stop, desist! Actually, there are positives: for one, the club produce a neat 12-page programme, which is in reality a monthly club bulletin, but nonetheless resembles a matchday magazine in every other respect and is a decent read. You can get a copy, free, from the bar or, alternatively, you can download one from the club's impressive website.

Next, the only club official I spoke to was incredibly friendly and insisted I stop and have a beer with the team afterwards in the bar, an offer I regrettably had to decline, as the wife and I were off to see 'BJORN AGAIN' at the Winter Gardens

theatre later in the evening (My wife adores; no, is fanatical-nuts-loopy about Abba and even has a picture of Bjorn Ulvaeus on her bedside table, which irritatingly she sometimes pats and utters "good night darling" to at days end).

Also, on the plus side, the match proper is ever so entertaining. Lying in 8th and 7th places respectively in Division 2 West of the KCL, positions reversed after this 2-1 home win, I'd have been forgiven for thinking that this fixture was a bit of a dead rubber (that word again).

Oh no, no, no! Both teams went hammer and tong at each other on another typical arid, dusty, end-of-season surface. EP took an early lead with a magnificent move that culminated in a cross that was lashed home by striker Danny Williams. A few minutes later, a spectacular own goal levelled matters. Fortuitously, my camera was right in front of it; even if I do say so myself, which perhaps I oughtn't to, it does make for a reasonable action photograph. Teatime was reached with this one all parity prevailing.

The second period was no less frenetic, United eventually securing their 7th league win of the campaign with a carbon copy of Palaces' opening strike. Dave Wardle, this time being the marksman on hand to caress the ball home.

By 16.30 hrs, and just like the eponymous character in that famous 1980's TV show, I was rather acquiring a liking for jejunity, as did Arthur for his beloved "rubber" cigars!

FGIF Rating: my PC is stuck on 5*.

06/20