

TT No.207: Paul Roth - Monday 13th April 2009; Surrey Elite Intermediate Football League; **WOODMANSTERNE HYDE FC** vs. REIGATE PRIORY FC; Res: 0-1; Att: 25 (?); Entry: N/A; Prog: 8 pp, free; Weather: Overcast to begin with, then warm and sunny; French Onion Soup: None!

I'm afraid that is totally anathema to me, my tawdry friend".

The exact words my great pal, Bob Honeyball, uttered after confessing to him that today was my third game within four days that I had witnessed, that had kicked-off before midday, and more alarmingly from his point of view that my old mucker almost considered it heresy, without myself having even had one pint of beer prior to play!

Sober as a judge I might have been, but the welcome afforded to me upon arrival at Woodmansterne Hyde FC yesterday was anything but sober-sides. In fact, nearly every home player greeted me with an 'Hello'; John Minnett, the club's assistant manager, made me a cup of tea and Dave Pryor, the secretary-cum-programme-editor-cum-groundsman furnished me with a free copy of the club's impressive, 8-page, colour, matchday magazine. This is an excellent production and included today an amusing article regarding how to spot us Groundhoppers.....I had a good look at myself in the mirror when I got home, I can tell you! I'm off to Debenhams tomorrow!

Located on Woodmansterne Street, near Chipstead, in leafy Surrey, the club's Recreation Ground headquarters are surprisingly impressive for the level the team currently find themselves operating at. There's a large clubhouse that adjoins a sizeable car park, where teas and coffees can be obtained; beer later, I think. The field of play itself lies about 60 yards hence and was fully roped, with a smattering of advertising hoardings breaking that monotony. The changing rooms are, quirkily, back and across the road. Amber and black goal nets, the teams' colours, adorn the goal frames. Impressive canvas dugouts lie alongside one another, on the left side as you approach from the pavilion.

It was explained to me that the club has formed its own limited company and has taken over the upkeep and maintenance of the grounds, from the local council. A grant, in excess of half a million pounds, for a new clubhouse/changing rooms block, has been obtained and work on this project is just getting underway. More permanent plastic-type-railings will soon encircle the playing area and will be augmented with better dugouts; I should also mention here, that the Rec is also the home of WHCC. It was nice to catch up with and chat to the Reigate Priory secretary, Simon Avery, too, whom I'd met just a few weeks previously, whilst visiting that club.

With four teams being relegated (actually, now it's just the bottom 3, as Hollands Sports FC have resigned from the SEFL) and both today's adversaries occupying one of those spots, this match was a real "six-pointer".

Neither team were at full strength this morning, but with 'Hyde coming into this encounter on the back of three straight wins, I guessed it was advantage Woodmansterne. Like so often is the case with your correspondent, I was incorrect, yet again.

RP started the brighter, and remained so throughout the entire ninety minutes; WH seemed a little overawed, almost scared by the magnitude of the fixture and only rarely threatened the visitors' goal. The only score came midway through the first half, when Chris Page pounced on a dreadful blunder by home 'stopper Moncrieffe, to bundle the ball home and secure all the three points on offer. Late on, they also had a goal disallowed for offside. Overall, the visitors, playing in their famous colours, harried and hustled the better and fully deserved their narrow victory.

Alas, despite still having home fixtures to fulfil, cricket now takes precedence at the Rec, so there are no more 'home' matches for 'hoppers to attend; that fact notwithstanding, whatever you do, do not miss out on a visit to Woodmansterne Hyde FC next season, as you will adore it; It was patently obvious to me, that all associated with the club are proud to be involved; I can well see why. Take a look at the WHFC website and you'll see what I mean

(www.woodmansternehydefc.co.uk).

Naturally, this being an 11 am start, I easily had time to get another match in during the afternoon.

But, following my excesses down in Devon and Cornwall, and there were a lot of them, I promise you, plus TV programmes to catch up on, on our SKY+ player, it was a straight choice for me between a visit to Eltham Palace FC or to rush home to watch last Wednesday's edition of 'Desperate Housewives'.

So, here's the question - Who would you rather spend the afternoon watching? The foul-mouthed EPFC or Marcia Cross, Felicity Huffman, Eva Longoria Parker, Nicolette Sheridan, Dana Delany, Brenda Strong and Teri Hatcher & Co?

It's a no-brainer!

FGIF Star rating: 5*.

06/20