

TT No.55: *Mike Latham* - Sat 4 October 2008: Scottish Cup 1st Round Replay - Coldstream 2-2 Selkirk (aet); Selkirk won 3-2 on pens; Attendance: 120 (h/c); Admission: £5; No programme; FGIF Match Rating: 4*.

The rain is bucketing down on the A7 from Carlisle through Border country towards Hawick and parts of the road are flooded, but a check call to the destination this Saturday afternoon quells fears of a postponement. The park at Coldstream, the secretary cheerfully informs, is “fine” and he’s engaged in putting up the nets.

Sure enough, as the Border town of Coldstream is eventually reached after a hazardous journey through Hawick and Kelso, the sun is threatening to break out from behind the glowering black clouds and the playing pitch at Coldstream’s Home Park ground looks a picture.

Coldstream is a historic village, situated on the north bank of the River Tweed that forms the boundary with England. With the Cheviot Hills as a backdrop and some impressive stone buildings Coldstream, a tiny place with a population of less than 2,000 looks an idyllic place to spend an afternoon.

The football club has been going since 1895 and has fought many battles in the Scottish Cup- this replay is important to both clubs with the lure of a trip to fellow East of Scotland side Dalbeattie Star in the next round and then the prospect of a lucrative tie against a league club in round three.

Home Park, where the Streamers play, is a public park and the main pitch occupies an elevated position above two smaller pitches that are used for junior games and training. Just a stone’s throw from the main street it has little in the way of spectator comforts on a rainy afternoon but the welcome is warm and the views simply magnificent.

Two club officials have set up tables by the entrance to collect gate money and the locals begin to trickle in. Sadly, there are no programmes on sale - a real surprise this given the club has an excellent, updated website that is way above the norm for this level of football. Officials are keen to chat about their club and clearly have a great deal of pride in the way they have kept the soccer flag flying in an area dominated by rugby union.

A new clubhouse was built here in 1991 and it is a splendid facility, housing the dressing rooms, club official’s rooms, a small bar and a superb tea bar where Scotch pies, newly baked in the oven, are welcome on a chilly afternoon.

There’s time for a quick stroll into the main street before kick-off and to pick up several leaflets about the history of Coldstream from a splendidly appointed coffee house. Best known as the home of the Coldstream Guards and the site of several battles over the centuries, Coldstream was also home to a former Prime Minister, Sir Alex Douglas Home.

Confusingly, Coldstream play in all red strip and their opponents in blue and black stripes, despite the corner flags being blue and all the photos of past teams on the clubhouse wall showing all blue attired teams.

By kick-off time more than one hundred spectators have gathered, their loyalties roughly split between the sides. Most shelter from the biting wind and occasional rain flurries in front of the club house behind the nearside goal where the views across to the Cheviots, which keep disappearing from sight in the scudding low clouds, are spectacular. Many others huddle against the touchline wall that forms the barrier with the former junior school, built in 1900 and now converted into business units. Only a few brave soul's man the far touchline which is really open to the elements.

The game begins in a fast and frenzied manner, the home side having the best chances until Selkirk take the lead midway through the first half. When they add a second early in the second half the visitors look safe but the Streamers keep on going and, in a grandstand finish, score two goals in the last five minutes to take the tie into extra time.

A further thirty minutes of hectic action fails to produce a breakthrough so the tie is decided by kicks taken from the penalty mark in front of the clubhouse. The visiting goalkeeper pulls off three fine saves and Selkirk keep their nerve to go through to the next round.

Coldstream's cup dream is over for another year but they are stoic and phlegmatic people in this part of the world and they'll be back trying to progress again next year. A visit to Home Park comes highly recommended.

06/20