

TT No.60: Paul Roth - Saturday 11th October 2008; **Blackheath United** vs. Metrogas; West Kent Challenge Shield Round 1; Res: 4-7; Att: 6; Programme/Entry: N/A; Weather: Bloomin' wonderful!

The only occasions I've ever been through Bellingham, located in SE London before, is when travelling on the 'bullet train' from Margate, when track maintenance has necessitated a diversion through this small suburban town. At 135 MPH it's all been a bit of blur before.

I'd been eagerly awaiting this fixture since the draw was announced some weeks earlier, and as this tie kicked off was at 1 pm, that suited me right down to the ground. A few nearby GBG pubs slaked my thirst beforehand, and I was parked up next to the Bellingham Leisure Centre 30 minutes prior to the start.

Blackheath United are the re-incarnation of Groundhoppers FC, who used to play at the Ladywell arena in nearby Catford. This is their first season in the KCL, in their new guise. Their present surroundings are modest...grass, goalposts & nets, four corner flags and a football, constitutes the set up, but on this warm, leafy autumnal afternoon those five commodities were to provide me with an unforgettable game of football.

The 22 players played their part too!

No programme is issued by the club at present, unlike their predecessors, but secretary Lance Roberts informs me that a monthly news bulletin is in the pipeline and should be up and running shortly. Keep an eye on the club's excellent website.

To get pitch-side, just walk through the leisure centre itself, situated on Randlesdown Road and opposite the railway station, and out onto the playing fields and espy the lads warming up in black and white striped shirts and black shorts...now you've then found where Blackheath Unite FC play!

The wondrously named Metrogas go in 2 up at the break and there is little to suggest what the second half has in store. It all been too easy for the team from the Western division above. BU instantly get one back at the re-commencement of play only for 'Gas to storm up the other end and restore their two-goal advantage. Scoring then goes 2-3, 2-4, 3-4, 3-5, 3-6, 4-6 and finally 4-7. Sounds more like a tennis match rather than a football score. I can't keep up! Note also, more goals than spectators!

Okay, both defences went AWOL today, but goals are what we all want to see, don't we? What caught my eye as much as the free scoring, was the great spirit in which this cup tie was played, and I even shook hands with the home 'keeper at the conclusion of the ninety minutes, who freely admitted he was to blame with three of Metrogas' scores. Sportsmanship, as well as goals were to the fore here today. Even referee Barry Jeal had a blinder! Metrogas may have won the tie but football won the day.

The early start meant I had time to purchase our weekend's vegetables at the Macknade Farm Shop, in Faversham, en-route home, and was back indoors to watch the day's main event in its entirety. Oh, how we both do love Strictly Come Dancing.

MARVELLOUS!

FGIF Rating: 11*, no? Alright then, 5*.

06/20