

TT No.63: Mark Rose - Saturday Double - Saturday 11th October 2008; 11-30am - **Leicester City U18** v Tottenham Hotspur U18 (Premier Academy League) at the Walkers Stadium, Leicester and 5-15pm - **England** v Kazakhstan (2010 World Cup Qualifier Group 6) at Wembley Stadium.

A different style of report as intended for a different audience, with the exact timings a self-parody (as some think I'm quite particular with the time! (Mark).

Match 1 - Saturday 11th October 2008; **Leicester City U18** v Tottenham Hotspur U18 (Premier Academy League); Result: 3-4; Walker's Stadium, Leicester.

The day started at 0730 when I left my house and caught the 0740 train. Changing at West Ham at 0803 (slow running because of engineering works) I caught two tubes to St. Pancras arriving early at 0830. Upon browsing in WH Smith I noticed the England programme and so, having caught the 0855 to Leicester, I had finished reading it upon arrival at 1017. I waited for the others whose train was just behind and then we all walked into town and caught the 85 bus past Welford Road (home of Leicester Tigers rugby club) and the Walker Stadium to Leicester's training ground in Aylestone.

We positioned ourselves level with the halfway line and the sun beat down at the game kicked off at 11.32 (two minutes late because the Leicester players had to be dragged out of their changing room which is the same thing that Reading did in our home youth game last week). In a sign of things to come City hit the post from close range while we had numerous chances but spurned them high or wide. During the first half Townsend was fouled just outside the area, or so we thought. However, the referee gave a penalty much to the annoyance of the home support (which numbered 150). Justice was perhaps done when the keeper dived full length to his left to deny Mason's spot kick. However, minutes later it was Spurs who were celebrating as Kasim, a midfielder who rarely shot at goal let alone score, ran down the left, found himself some space, and unleashed a spectacular left foot shot that hit the inside of the right-hand post and went in. A brilliant goal and a 1-0 half-time lead. This could have been doubled on the stroke of half-time when Townsend did well to turn the defender and get in a shot only for it to strike the left-hand post.

Half-time was precisely fifteen minutes during which I just managed to finish my lunch (two sandwiches, crisps, a soft drink and a chocolate bar).

The second half kicked off and Spurs continued to dominate possession and chances, hitting the right-hand post from close range and missing other close-range chances. Obika then found himself some space just to the right of the penalty area. He looked up to shoot and I noticed that the goalkeeper had come out and that if he aimed for the top left-hand corner, he may have a chance. That is precisely what our striker did with a wonderful curling shot that beat the keeper and our lead was doubled with a second wonder goal. Two minutes later and a

great through ball saw Obika one on one with Leicester's out rushing keeper. Obika controlled the ball well and tapped it beyond Leicester's number 1 to give Spurs a 3-0 lead.

We looked comfortable but a slip from Butcher on the edge of the area enabled City to get a shot in. Butler, who was out of position in goal and, like Butcher in central defence had a poor game, got his hand to the ball but it squirmed under his body and Leicester had a goal back. Almost straight from the kick-off City attacked again and this time unleashed a belter themselves, a strike from right on the edge of the area that beat Butler and put City right back in the game. Leicester were now full of confidence and for the next ten minutes Spurs struggled. Leicester attacked again and a rush of blood from Butler saw him come out and trip a Leicester player who surely would have rounded him and scored. A stone wall penalty then and Butler was lucky not to see red. Thoughts of our missed penalty in the first half came back to haunt us as Leicester's forward put it away with aplomb to make it 3-3.

At this stage visions went through my head of the Man City FA Cup game. Leicester controlled possession well for the next few minutes. However, with ten minutes left, Smith, our right-back who had a good game, went on a marauding run down the right. He cut inside and from the edge of the area unleashed a shot with the outside of his foot that curled past the keeper and into the top left-hand corner of the net. Our third wonder goal of the game and it sparked delirium on the sidelines. Leicester were stunned and this time Spurs did not let it slip controlling possession well at the end. City did have one final chance but a free header from a corner in injury time was put wide and Spurs were the victors by four goals to three. Good performances from Obika and Mason were a bonus although Bostock and Parrett (booked needlessly again for a rash challenge in the second half) still have a lot to learn.

Spurs Under-18's: Butler; Byrne, Butcher, Caulker, Smith; Townsend, Kasim, Parrett, Bostock; Mason, Obika.

Match 2 - Saturday 11th October 2008 (5-15pm); **England** v Kazakhstan (2010 World Cup Qualifier Group 6); Wembley Stadium.

We walked out of the training ground and caught a bus at 1332 back into town. We got off the bus at 1345 and the other three, who don't follow England, went off to do their own thing. I had 45 minutes to spare though and so went into the nearest pub to Leicester stadium, a pub in the Good Beer Guide, and had two pints of splendid ale.

I left the pub at 1425 and caught the 1430 (which left at 1437) back to St. Pancras. I fell asleep and the next thing I knew the train was pulling into London, on time, at 1552. I got off the train and walked to the Tube entrance and, as planned, met my Arsenal supporting mate there at 1600. We caught a Metropolitan Tube straight away and arrived at Wembley Park station at 1620. We took a slow walk into the ground and chatted away before taking our seats (handily placed right next to the exit) at 1705 for the 1715 kick-off.

The first forty-five minutes were some of the worst I've had to endure all season and were in complete contrast to the quality on show a few hours earlier. I'd like to see a replay of the game to confirm but I counted approximately fourteen misplaced passes from central midfield all of which went straight out of play. Gerrard and Lampard, at fault for a lot of them, just cannot play together and why successive England managers insist on playing them together is a complete mystery. Barry was poor too and half-time didn't come quickly enough.

At the break there was a penalty shoot-out competition between three members of the public. In keeping with what had gone on before the penalties were dreadful and, after ten minutes, and with the second half about to start, the award (a signed England shirt) was given to the goalkeeper.

The second half kicked off and Kazakhstan took the game to England, perhaps sensing that they may be able to get something out of the game. Against the run of play however England won a corner. Kazakhstan's goalkeeper came out but ran into the back of his own defender and so Ferdinand was left unmarked to head the ball home. Harsh on the opposition but also the weakness was spotted; Kazakhstan could not defend from set-pieces or crosses. A few minutes later and an in-swinging free-kick saw the ball deflect off the back of Rooney's head past the keeper's hand to double the lead. This was harsh on Kazakhstan and, when Cole stupidly played a back-pass straight to their excellent number 7, justice was done when he controlled the ball and put it past a stunned James to halve the deficit. The crowd blamed Cole, who was subsequently booed, but the whole England team looked lacklustre and for the next few minutes the game was in the balance.

Perhaps under instruction from Capello England changed their tactics and a wonderful cross from Brown on the right enabled Rooney to head home a third goal. Kazakhstan just couldn't defend from headers and the game was over. To our left in the crowd two England fans, dressed just in orange manikins (a la Borat) celebrated with gusto and the crowd laughed. Kazakhstan's heads dropped and Rooney put in a fourth goal from another set-piece, this time by Beckham. However, all our goals had come from crosses or set-pieces and it wasn't until the final minute of the goal when we actually showed a moment of genuine quality; a wonderful through ball from Heskey enabled Defoe, on as a late substitute, to slot the ball home. 5-1 the final score may have been but it couldn't mask the poor performance and it perhaps showed that the Croatia game was just a flash in the pan.

England: James; Cole, Upson, Ferdinand, Brown; Barry, Gerrard, Lampard, Walcott; Rooney, Heskey.

We left the game dead on the final whistle which helped as we went through the Wembley Park crowd quickly and were on a train at 1925. We got off at Euston Square at 1945 and were in a pub by 1955. Not just any old pub though. Armed with the Good Beer Guide 2009 we picked the best real ale pubs in the area. After a wonderful dark fruity beer in the first we had a neutral red beer in the second. We had a meal and I had gorgeous lamb's liver with onion gravy, bacon and

mashed potato. In the third pub we had a pint of Bishop's Finger, one of my favourite rich beers with a coffee after taste and in the fourth we had Fuller's London Porter, a gorgeous dark malty beer. We still had time to spend before our last train and so went back to the first pub, the Bree Louise near Euston Square station. The owner, who was off his face, came and spoke to us and we tried some Australian bottled ale from a small brewery which he had only got in a few days earlier. I first had a 6.7 vintage creamy gorgeous beer and then had a porter which was also rich and dark. The owner was very knowledgeable about his beer and, before I knew it, my mate had left to catch his last train, the pub was locked, and the other staff were waiting to go. I made my excuses and left. However, I feel I need to mention the quality of this pub for real ale enthusiasts. There were five handpumps and five gravity pumps although the owner said he would soon change to ten gravity pumps. There were fifteen different types of bottled cider and lots of bottled ales from obscure breweries. They sold a variety of pies (recommended in the Good Beer Guide) and the owner explained that he would be happy to actually put on any ale that a customer recommends giving a few days' notice. A real gem of a pub and well worth a visit for anyone that is around Euston station.

I caught a train back to Tower Hill but unfortunately missed my 0010 from Fenchurch Street. I got on the 0040 at 0020 and chatted to some England fans before falling asleep, luckily waking up just before my stop at 0110. I arrived home at 0115 and went straight to bed. Indeed, I woke up a short while ago at which point, I started typing this report.

06/20