

TT No.80: *Richard Panter* - Tuesday 4th November 2008; **Kirby Muxloe** v Gedling Town; East Midlands Counties League; Result 2-3; Attendance 72; Entry £3; Programme 20pp £1; Match Rating: 4 stars.

After a day of constant grey drizzle, the evening turned out to be cool and dry if a little misty. The playing surface was wet on the top but firm below, ideal conditions for football.

As I turned up at Kirby's orderly Ratby Lane ground, I noticed they have been busy since taking their place in the level 6 EMC league, a new contest for 2008/09. Their existing breeze block stand has had a coat of brilliant white paint, there are new dug outs opposite this and a new covered area (pic. above) is under construction behind the far goal. Concrete hard standing now encloses the entire pitch. Six floodlight pylons support twelve lamps which provides excellent illumination of the pitch. A power cut left the clubhouse and changing rooms in darkness before kick-off but fortunately, this was resolved by halftime.

Ratby Lane is the ground which is visible from the northbound M1 in the vicinity of junction 21A (A46). A row of deciduous trees and Scots pine separate the ground from the road into the village, the M1 being some 500 meters away, I chose to stand with my back to this tarmac monster and enjoyed the trees opposite in the back light of the floodlights. Three quid got me in and another £1 secured a copy of the clubs colourful, glossy, high quality printed newsy twenty-page programme, a first for me at this Leicestershire club.

Gedling were in second place in the eighteen-team table, their hosts but one behind. Town had scored 33 goals to Kirby's 23. Looking in more detail the table shows that league leaders Borrowash Vics transferred to the EMC from the NCEL division one, as such both they and Gedling are the only members playing this high last season, clearly experience which both clubs have done well to exploit.

Before kick-off I was asked which team were Kirby Muxloe and I replied 'the ones in blue and yellow' an explanation as clear as mud as it turns out. Kirby played in blue shirts with yellow adornments, Gedling sported yellow shirts with contrasting blue flashes, to further muddy the water they both played in blue shorts. In all honesty the players did well to find their own men as their strips were so similar, this was the nearest to a colour clash as I can recall in a competitive match, ah the match...was an absolute corker.

Both sides played tidy flowing football and used the flanks to good effect. Tackles were strong but honest, there was no petulance, diving or cheating, just a good hard fair match. After six minutes it was one all due to exemplary finishing from Jamie Mason for the home team and Ben Allsion for the east Nottingham outfit. Ryan Johnson nudged Town in front and they were able to maintain this advantage until the final whistle. Before that though there was still plenty of action. Shortly after the restart Town's Aaron Large finished off a beautiful flowing move most

emphatically and for many teams that would be the end of the end of the match as a contest. On 66 minutes Stuart Verrall fired home to steal the momentum for Kirby who pressed and pressed and looked to be about to go level in the 70th minute. A penalty for a push was awarded and the usually reliable Mark Schulz (someone I have seen scoring goals since the early nineties) stepped up only to see his spot kick parried by Town's man in orange. Try as they might the equaliser eluded Mark and his team mates meaning the points were taken back to Nottinghamshire on the Gedling Town mini-bus. A point each would have been a fairer reward in my opinion, but to coin a cliché 'non-league football was the winner on the night'.

06/20