

TT No.89: Paul Roth - Sat 15th November 2008; Hellenic League Div1 East; **Launton Sports v Ascot Utd Res: 1-3**; Att: 30; Programme: 40 pages, £2 which included entry; Weather: Mild and overcast.

Woody Guthrie, Bob Dylan and the Beautiful South are my chosen musical companions today for my 150-mile drive to Oxfordshire. Their varying styles of musicality all have a similar effect, and so after a two-and-a-half-hour journey around the M25 and along the M40 I'm suitably depressed and ready for a beer or two.

Of the five GBG pubs I seek out, in the rolling, sunlit, Autumnal countryside the George and Dragon at Quanton, actually in Buckinghamshire, was without doubt my favourite.

On arrival at the club my car is positioned in the club's modest but ample car park and I avail myself of the surprisingly readable 40-page programme, which costs £2 and includes entry to the entire match. The highlight therein, for me anyway, being the complete draw for the 2008/09 Oxfordshire Senior Cup, a competition I have long dreamt of seeing a game in. The magazine is a very informative read.

I'm probably one of the last few dedicated 'hoppers not to have visited Launton Sports FC before; they featured during the last August Bank Holiday Hellenic Hop, way back in the blistering heat of the Summer.

I won't waste my time therefore in telling you what the venue holds in store for the weary traveller, as you all already know!

Normally I would now give a brief description of the match action, but instead I'm going to paint a picture that best describes the mood of the two sets of players as they take the field of play, or should I say the 'battlefield' of play? Niggly, nasty, vitriolic, acrimonious, hostile, petty, determined, violent, smouldering, physical, rumbustious, angry...I could go on and on, but I think you get the picture.

A simmering first half saw basement club Launton deservedly in front; they also missed a penalty kick!

Title chasing Ascot Utd, admittedly without a few key players today, was always second best in those opening forty-five minutes and their frustrations were coming to the boil as the half time whistle approached. They remained on the pitch during the interval and came tearing out of the blocks for the second period but couldn't force an equaliser, until that is, they were awarded a very dubious penalty on the hour mark.

They equalised, and that lit the blue touch-paper for tempers to explode. Ten minutes later the homesters were down to nine men, having two players red-carded for second bookable offences and when their No. 4 called the referee's assistant a f***** cheat (I'd already nicknamed this elderly official "The Dowager",

'cos of his "Dowager's hump") I thought the match was in danger of being abandoned.

Law suits and the Police were threatened, but luckily the game somehow reached its finale with the Berkshire side running out easy 3-1 winners, as Sports rarely crossed into the opposition's half during a very one-sided second half. At the conclusion of hostilities "The Dowager" had to be escorted from the field with the aegis of his two colleagues.

All in all, a match played at a high-octane intensity usually reserved for the British Gas Business Southern League Division 1 South and West, but a game that will live long in my memory.

FGIF Rating: A crackling 4*.

06/20