

TT No.99: *Ian Hill* - Sun 23rd November 2008; **St Elooïs Winkel Sport** v RES Couvin Mariembourg; Belgian Promotion Division "A"; Res: Match Abandoned; Att: 200 (h/c); Admission: 7.5 euros; FGIF Match Rating: *.

On the "spur of the moment" I decided a Sunday day trip was in order to watch a couple of games in Belgium. How I wish I hadn't had that moment! The plan was to take in the St Elooïs Winkel Sport v Couvin Mariembourg game at 3.00pm on the outskirts of Kortrijk followed by KV Kortrijk v Zulte Waregem at 6.00pm.

A nice crossing, thanks to Norfolk Lines, allowed just about enough time to make the kick off at Winkel. Unfortunately, at about 2.50pm it started to snow and it did with a vengeance. Within 5 minutes the roads were treacherous as I skidded my way through St Elooïs towards the ground. I really thought the game would be cancelled as the floodlights were turned off but as I walked towards the pay booth, I could see that the game had started. I missed the first five minutes but paid my 7.50 euros entry fee and popped into the clubhouse to watch the game in the warmth and have a look for a programme. No programmes but I did pick up a discarded team sheet, which, was better than nothing.

The players were certainly struggling and after 5 minutes the referee took the teams off and an army of pensioners started sweeping the pitch markings. They made little impression and the referee abandoned the game.

For the record - the ground has two stands running along the sides of the pitch. Also, along one side is a small clubhouse with a small changing block behind one goal and the other hard standing. It was difficult to get a good impression of the ground due to the snow.

I did have a back-up plan to go to SW Harelbeke on the other side of Kortrijk. After 30 seconds of driving I knew that this would not happen. After sliding sideways around a round-about I decided I would head for KV Kortrijk instead. This took quite a while to do as no road gritters were to be seen and the roads turned into an ice rink.

I was about one mile from the ground and decided to park up and walk instead. I wasn't sure what would happen with this game as the snow had stopped and had begun, to melt. As I approached the ground, an hour before kick-off, things looked good. The police and stewards were in place and the floodlights were on. I tried to exchange my match ticket voucher for the real thing but a friendly steward decided that I should be classed as a member of the press. I made my way into the ground to see snow on the pitch and some supporters in the ground. After I walked into the VIP section, I picked up some match programmes (A4 12 pages - free of charge) and waited to see what would happen. Fifteen minutes later an announcement was made and half the floodlights were switched off - match abandoned. Oh dear - what a day!

