

TT No.12: *Rob Campion* - Saturday 22nd August 2009; **Shirley Town 3-5 Archdale '73**; Midland Combination Division 1; Admission/programme: none; Attendance: 15-20 (h/c); Match rating: 3*.

After the usual night-shift, I made a point of depriving myself of sleep to make the most of the good weather by getting up at 1pm. I had originally planned to go and watch the Clifton - Basford United match in the Notts Senior League but having already been to two games in Nottinghamshire this season I fancied a change of direction as it were.

The Midland Combination is a league I have a lot of time for so I had a quick check of the fixtures and plumped for this fixture between unbeaten Shirley Town and Archdale '73. Shirley Town play on a small ground on Tilehouse Lane with the entrance opposite Whitlock's End train station. The journey took around an hour from Leicester with the sat nav taking me off the M42 at junction 4 to get to the ground, and I arrived there at around 2.35pm. No admission was charged or programme issued with the attendance varying between 15 and 20 throughout the game. The clubhouse is home to (I believe) an independent café which served an array of hot food which included chips and burgers. The ground is not floodlit and there is a small stand on the far side of the ground which I would guess seats maybe 20.

At the start of play newly promoted Shirley had won their opening three games scoring 16 goals in the process while their visitors from Worcester had obtained seven points from their opening four games, themselves finding the net eleven times. The first half was a half of two halves with the visitors dominating the early proceedings and they hit the post with only two minutes on the clock. Shirley looked disjointed and struggled to get into the game, which I later found out they had all of their first choice back four missing and therefore was understandable that they took time to understand each other. Archdale deservedly took the lead on 19 minutes through a header from a right-hand cross after a corner was not cleared properly. A minute later it was 2-0 though I missed the goal due to making a note of the first goal! A further five minutes passed and it was 3-0 to Archdale when the ball was knocked home from a couple of yards from a corner. Just three minutes later and it was game on - Shirley were awarded a free kick and the ball was bundled in from six yards or so. This gave the home side some impetus and seemed to rattle the visitors who were in complete control at the time. Shirley deservedly got a second four minutes from time when with the best move of the match their number seven beat the keeper at his neat post when a powerful shot went in off the woodwork.

The start of the second half was a bit disjointed with neither side taking control but it was the visitors who struck next through a penalty on 66 minutes. To give the home side credit they did not let their heads go down and scored a third on 70 minutes to make it 3-4 with a header from a left hand cross. Archdale killed the

game off with a fifth three minutes from full time. With the traffic light on the M42 and M6 I was home by 5.40pm and unfortunately had to be back in work for 10pm.

Overall an enjoyable afternoon out in the summer sunshine at a pleasant venue.

06/20