

TT No.13: Paul Roth - Sat 22nd August 2009; Middlesex County League Prem Division; **Broadfields United** vs. Southall; Res: 3-3; Att: 25; Programme: 12 pp free of charge, as was entry; Weather: Warm and sunny; Altitude: Broadfields Country Club is 56 metres above sea level.

Picture the scene; you're at your chosen match and have just met up with a fellow 'hopper; after exchanging pleasantries, the conversation inevitably turns to such matters as...where you've been to recently, was it any good, where are you going next, who is issuing programmes and who isn't. In essence, general footballing gossip.

Eventually, the most pertinent of questions is broached. "What altitude are we at?"

I've long been interested in the subject of how the human body reacts to differing levels of elevation. My own personal zenith and nadir were experienced respectively on a train somewhere between Juliaca and Cuzco, in the Andean mountains of Peru, at just over 16,000 feet and whilst floating upon the Dead Sea at Suweimeh, in the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, almost 1200 feet below the level of the sea.

The human body reacts in different ways, as I've just mentioned, to such extremes. Significantly, being below sea level can cause depression and increased levels of anxiety, whilst being exposed to extreme altitude can herald the onset of hypoxia and perversely, this in turn greatly increases sexual stimulation. Ask anybody who has summited Mount Everest and they will tell you it's not only their national flag they want to hoist when they're reach the top of the world!

Arriving at the Broadfields Country Club, located off and at the northern extremity of Headstone Lane, which is at an elevation of 56 meters, or 183.727 feet to be more precise, 11.51 am, I immediately retraced my route and walked back to the railway station there, to catch the bullet train into Watford, to visit some GBG pubs.

The most interesting venue was undoubtedly the West Herts. Sports & Social club, on Park Avenue, which not only sold a varied range of quality Real Ales, but was also once the home of Watford FC, before they decamped along the way to their current ground at Vicarage Road way back in 1922. Alighting at Watford High Street station, I'd circumvented the town, colourfully awash today with Watford and Blackpool fans anticipating their imminent Football League Championship match later that afternoon, returning to Headstone Lane via the Watford Junction railhead and was back at Broadfields by 14.08 hrs.

This is the arena used by Hellenic League South Kilburn last term and the various railed pitches here are to be used by multifarious Middlesex County League clubs this season. Unfortunately, the main pitch, which lies in front of the well-appointed and large social club, was out of action today, as it is still in the process

of being re-seeded. No matter, as the alternative was also railed-off and just as delightful. Club secretary Chris Webster had furnished me with the bright yellow, 12-page matchday programme; this was handed to me free of charge; incidentally, no gate monies were taken either.

For my very first football match of the new season, in my beloved Middlesex County League, a competition I deem to be one of the best in the country, a real feast of entertainment was dished up that contained almost everything a football lover could ever want. Southall, that famous old club from west London, playing in colours akin to the Argentine national team, had worked their socks off to establish a two-goal lead with just a minute remaining before the teatime interval, when a couple of moments of aberration in their defence gifted Broadfields United parity.

The second half was just as competitive and intriguing with both sides' goal lines under constant threat from the eager and rampaging attacking offences. The visitors appeared to have sealed victory when Orin Fredericks lashed home a third for the men in blue, only for another lapse at the back, in injury time, handed a deserved point to the grateful homesters.

At the dizzying height of just 56 meters above sea level, this was never going to be the erection-inducing experience that a euphoric and oxygen starved mountaineer might encounter; nonetheless, I was thoroughly captivated by this sensational 'MCL' match, not to mention my brief but enlightening stay in delightful Hertfordshire.

FGIF Star Rating...5*.

06/20