

TT No.146: *Justin Holmes* - Sunday 24th January 2010; Falkirk v Dundee United; Scottish Premier League; Venue: Falkirk Stadium, Falkirk; Score 1-4; Admission: £20.00; Programme: £2.50; Attendance: 4,378; Match Rating: 3*.

The second game of my weekend in Scotland took me on a half hour train journey west from Edinburgh to Falkirk for this Premier League game between basement boys Falkirk and Dundee United, pushing hard for the "best of the rest" honours behind Rangers and Celtic. Falkirk Stadium, unsurprisingly for a new stadium opened in 2004, is located on the far edge of town, and is about a half hour walk from Falkirk town centre and Falkirk Grahamston Rail Station. However, trains more frequently serve Falkirk High Station, which I used, and is about a 45-minute walk from the stadium.

Even though the Falkirk Stadium is one of the smaller in the Scottish Premier League, with a capacity of just over 9,000, it certainly looks impressive from a distance, with three modern stands with a curved design. I bought my ticket at the turnstile for an unallocated seat in the South Stand behind one of the goals, which was only opened at the start of this season. Everything about this stand is impressive, the seats were comfortable, plenty of legroom and a large incline between rows ensuring unimpeded views. The opposite North Stand is almost identical, the main West Stand an impressive two-tiered stand with a similar design to the North and South Stand. Unfortunately, the remaining stand is a shallow temporary stand along the length of the pitch, with a red plastic roof that contrasts poorly alongside the other tasteful blue and silver coloured stands.

Dundee United were strong favourites to win today, although Falkirk went into the game knowing a draw would lift them off the bottom of the table and were buoyed by taking away a point from their last league outing at Celtic Park. The game started fairly evenly with both sides having half chances in the opening exchanges. However, Dundee United took the lead on the half-hour thanks to some awful defending, which set the tone for the rest of the game. On the stroke of half time, Dundee United doubled their lead, with the classic long ball upfield from the goalkeeper misjudged dreadfully by the defender and Jon Daly lobbed the keeper with a cool finish. In the second half, Falkirk were truly woeful, with almost all of their players appearing to show an almost total lack of concentration and application. By the last minute of the game, Dundee United had strolled into a deserved four goal lead, with Jon Daly claiming his hat-trick, although Falkirk did pull a goal back deep into injury time.

On the evidence of this game, Dundee United do not appear to be missing their previous manager, Craig Levein, and look well placed to stay in contention for third place. The omens look bleak for Falkirk though after a wretched performance, looking weak and error-prone defensively and barely a threat going forward, apart from their newly signed man mountain of a forward, Enoch

Showumni. But considering they drew at Parkhead the previous week, maybe this was just one of those off-days for Falkirk.

06/20