

TT No.148: *Justin Holmes* - Sat 30th January 2010; **Ramsgate** v Sittingbourne; Ryman League Division 1 South; Venue: Southwood Stadium, Ramsgate; Score 1-6; Admission: £8.00; Programme: £2.00; Attend: 242; Match Rating: 4*.

Once again today, I ended up at a game that I had not intended to watch at the time of setting out, with the frosty weather game claiming my intended Kent Senior Trophy game at Deal against Sevenoaks, and, once again I ended up watching a high-scoring game with one team on end of a hiding, for my third consecutive game in a week.

On hearing that the game at Deal had been called off whilst already on the train (how did we manage before mobile phones?!), I continued past Deal to Ramsgate to take in the Ryman League Division 1 South game between Ramsgate and Sittingbourne - a fairly local derby, although with nothing like the rivalry compared with Margate. Southwood Stadium is about a 15 minute walk from the train station and it's fair to say that this is a typical old-fashioned lower non-league ground, with shallow banks of terracing at both ends, both with partial covering, and a long covered stand with bench seating, entrance to which costs an additional 50p. The ground is perfectly adequate, although it would benefit from some tidying up. Plus, points for having some character though. The programme is an attractive and well-produced 52-page effort with all the essential information; however, it is advert-heavy for a programme costing £2.

On paper, this game was a classic mid-table tussle, with Ramsgate in 8th place and Sittingbourne just behind in 11th, but having played two games less, and both teams were within touching distance of the play-off positions. On a beautiful winter's day - cold, but with clear blue skies and bright sunshine, this certainly turned out to be a game of two halves, with Ramsgate marginally the better side and certainly having the better chances in the first half and went ahead on 37 minutes thanks to a stonewall penalty which Warren Schulz converted, sending the keeper the wrong way. Just before half time, Sittingbourne scored a controversial equaliser when a scramble in the penalty box resulted in a shot that the Ramsgate keeper, Danny Twyman, saved, but according to the linesman, not before the ball had crossed the line. The Ramsgate players complained vehemently en-masse to the officials, but predictably to no avail.

At half time, there was little indication of who might go on to win this game, and certainly no indication of the landslide that was to follow, particularly as Ramsgate had been marginally the better side. Sittingbourne took the lead a few minutes into the second half, and with Ramsgate looking a very poor shadow of their first half performance, Sittingbourne went on to score four more goals - including an embarrassing moment for the Ramsgate goalkeeper when an attempted clearance hit the Sittingbourne forward and rebounded into the net, although to be fair to the keeper, he clearly demanded the defender to pass the ball back to his left, but the ball was played to his right. The last two goals were excellent long-range

efforts from just outside the box, which the keeper might have done better at keeping out. Ramsgate also had a player sent off for a second yellow card when they were 1-3 down with 20 minutes left, and which killed off any realistic chance of a comeback.

It was just as well that the game was entertaining from a neutral's point of view, as it was very noticeable how sharply the temperatures dropped after half time with the sun setting, making it one of those stereotypical January days watching football when, no matter how much you wear, still your hands, feet and ears feel like ice blocks! Roll on those warm sunny football-watching days in April!

So, a very one-sided score-line to the away team which was harsh on Ramsgate and in truth vastly flattered Sittingbourne, but they took their chances excellently and cashed in as the home side began to throw the towel in. So, in the end, on reflection, the weather was kind to me in diverting me to an alternative game which proved very entertaining and full of goals.

09/20