

TT No. 156: *Ian Hill* - Fri 5th February 2010; **FC Den Bosch** v BV Veendam; The Netherlands Jupiler League; Res: 2-2; Att: 3597; Admission: 10.50 euros; Programme: Free (16pp); FGIF Match Rating: **.

An early morning start from Stansted was brightened by those lovely air stewardesses of Ryanair. Now I know it was early in the morning but just a tiny smile would have been appreciated. How they perked up when they tried to flog their commission-based goods!

I had originally planned to watch the FC Eindhoven v Haarlem FC game. Unfortunately, Haarlem went bankrupt the week before so a change of venue was required. The obvious choices were either Helmond Sports which is 10 minutes by train from Eindhoven or FC Den Bosch at s- Hertogenbosch which is a slightly longer 30 minutes away. Eventually I plumped for Den Bosch and armed with a return ticket my destination was the s- Hertogenbosch oost railway station. Basically, it is a platform with no amenities. As you get off the train you walk down a flight of stairs turn left and the ground is a 10-15 minutes-walk away. As most games take place on a Friday evening the floodlights were on and are clearly visible. Although you can see the lights in the distance it's difficult to judge which direction to take. Luckily, I kept to the right of the railway line and it was the correct choice to make. The 9000 seated, De Vliert, looks quite large from a distance and I was really looking forward to a bit of liquid refreshment before the game.

I arrived 1 hour before kick-off and the place looked deserted. The ticket sales windows were open and there were two other spectators in attendance - the place gave off a dreary atmosphere. Tickets are bought from a portable building and I purchased a very reasonably priced 10.50 euros seat behind one of the goals. The lady selling the tickets had a large pile of programmes beside here. Unfortunately, my request for a programme was turned down as they "were for her" I decided to have a look for a bar. Unfortunately, as it was dark the ground appears to be in the middle of nowhere and surrounded by various roads. Even worse there is no bar outside the ground. Underneath the stands the space has been rented out to various businesses - a bank, various offices, a dry indoor ski slope, a fitness studio and a garage. Thoroughly depressing. The only signs that the club played here were an entrance to an executive area which seemed to be used by most people except myself and a very small club shop. Some programmes were free of charge in the shop although the shop assistant was not too pleased that I helped myself and did not buy anything.

I made my way to my seat behind the goal and managed to get a beer from a stall at underneath the stand. I'm sure it had a low alcohol content. Looking around there were no programmes at the turnstile where I entered. At the opposite end of the stand is another turnstile where a large pile of programmes had been abandoned to the rain. The pre match entertainment was terrible. Half an hour of "Euro pop" followed by the usual club sing-a-long as the teams ran out.

The problem with a lot of stadiums in the Netherlands second division is that they all look the same. The De Vliert was built in 1951 and although it has been modernised one of the stands does have an old look about it. Four office blocks have been used to fill in the four corners and even though the ground was nearly half full it still seemed empty.

BV Veendam is another club who are fighting off bankruptcy and they put in a good performance in difficult circumstances. Despite Den Bosch taking the lead twice they battled back to secure a draw. Another disappointing feature was the lack of noise when Den Bosch scored. The Veendam supporters were quiet but there again they only numbered 11 so you couldn't expect anything else.

Overall, I felt a bit let down by the visit and to sum things up Den Bosch are sponsored by a company called "Brain Wash". After a visit to De Vliert I felt that I had experienced the same.

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