

TT No. 157: Ian Hill - Fri 5th February 2010; **RRC Peruwelz** v Excelsior Veldwezelt; Belgian Division 3 B; Res: 1-0; Att: 200 (est.); Admission: 8 euros; Programme: None; FGIF Match Rating: ***.

Royal Racing Club Peruwelz came onto the radar as part of a day trip to a game at FC Valenciennes in France. Peruwelz is across the border in Belgium and about a 30-minutes journey by car from Valenciennes. With the VFC game kicking off at 5.00pm I was looking for a game to fill the afternoon and the 2.30pm kick off fitted perfectly.

I knew very little about RRC as they are known and even a look on Wikipedia revealed very little except to say they were formed in 1921 and were playing at their highest level in the Belgian leagues. The pictures of their ground revealed very little. What I did see was a very small ground that would be lucky to get them into the United Counties League in England. I was a bit worried that the game might be cancelled as there was a lot of snow in the fields as I made my way to Peruwelz. The journey also became a bit stressful as I got lost in the suburbs of Lille for an hour. Eventually I made it to the sleepy town and easily located the Stade de la Verte Chasse. The ground is signposted in the centre of the town and I came to a sliding halt in the snow-covered club car park.

Now this is what I call a very laid-back club. How they have got to this level of Belgian football is quite remarkable. No corporate meals, large advertisement boards and souvenir shops here. Home-made knitted scarves are the order of the day and it is like going back in time. A white wall surrounds the car park side of the ground. The brick built pay window has been abandoned and money is taken inside the ground at a small table. The pitch was also white as was the flat standing around the ground. Well done to the club - no messing about with Health & Safety here - game on!

Although it isn't the best ground in the world it is very quirky and well worth a visit. As per usual in Belgium the obligatory clubhouse is located behind one of the goals. It is quite small and a bit of a dump. Everyone was jolly inside as the beer flowed. Outside is the smelliest toilet block in the world. It's a run in and hold your breath for as long as you can job. The pitch slopes from left to right and the rest of the facilities are along one side of the ground. Behind two portable buildings, which are used as the changing rooms, is an old changing room block and secretary's office. Further along is a homemade low brick and wooden stand which looks like it was built in the 1930's but I believe it is quite new and there is also a small garden shed with a veranda for four people. The ground is fitted with training floodlights in the form of eight poles with a lamp on top.

I made my way to the Secretary's office; he was identified by a journalist who requested a team sheet. This didn't go down too well as it interrupted his conversation with a young couple. I tried my luck and requested one which also

went down like a lead balloon. Eventually he relented but was not happy bunny despite the fact that he had a photocopier in there.

The game itself was quite good despite the snow with RRC looking the better side for most of the game. It was a credit that both teams got on and played the game.

Since my visit the news has emerged that Peruwelz will be merging with Excelsior Mouscron who went out of business earlier this season to form a new club FC Mouscron - Peruwelz. I would imagine the club will play at Mouscron's ground and Peruwelz are scheduled to play a game there this weekend. So, it looks like this will be your last chance to watch RRC play at the Verte Chasse. I would highly recommend it.

06/20