

**TT No.16: Keith Aslan** - Sat 29th August 2009; **Anstey Nomads** v Blackwell Miners Welfare; East Midlands Counties League; Result: 1-3; Admission: £3.50 including programme; Attendance: 60ish.

A British bank holiday weekend means only one thing, an excuse by the wretched privatised railway companies to run as few trains as they can possibly get away with and the ubiquitous "rail replacement bus", the only means of transport in many areas. Groundhopping is confined to those grounds that still have a train service, so a trip to Anstey Nomads fitted the bill perfectly.

I arrived at St. Pancras to find the 11.25 to Leicester was just a figment of the time-table's imagination leaving the option of taking a slow train or waiting half an hour for the next quickie. I could have spent the wait relaxing in "Europe's biggest champagne bar" whilst enjoying a cheese and pickle sandwich, a snip at £6.50 but thought the slow train to be a better option. Five cars, jam packed solid with people standing thanks to two fifths of the train being first class. The guard, oops I mean train manager, announced that any passenger, wrong again, I mean customer, could get a first-class upgrade for a mere £15. So, having taken out a second mortgage to afford the train fare, the cuddly funsters on Midland trains try to screw you another fifteen quid for a seat.

Arrival at Leicester, and a slow amble across town for the frequent bus to Anstey. 20 minutes after leaving it dropped me off right outside Anstey Nomads delightful home. Fully enclosed, you enter behind a goal with most of the infrastructure along the far touchline. A less than capacious car park is alongside the club house and changing rooms with a small covered stand ad-joining the clubhouse. The whole effect is a bit ramshackle in the nicest possible way, and to my eyes, exactly what a football ground should be. Character is the word we're looking at here, but quite how their record attendance of 4,500 ever fitted in I can't imagine.

Although arriving an hour before kick-off, there was man on the gate with proggies who enquired how far I had come. As I get this at virtually every ground, I go to I assume that whatever a groundhopper looks like, I must be it. After a short chat with Mr. Gateman it's onto the clubhouse, which even at 2 o'clock was in full swing with hot drinks and rolls. Eating is one of my many hobbies and with an 'add your own filling' option from a Tupperware box, I spent the time up to kick off happily feeding my face.

With the manager and most of the players 'doing a runner' before the season started and no pre-season friendlies, Anstey's first game was an 8-0 tonking by Heanor. Since then they've certainly got their act together quickly and results have dramatically improved. They have got together a team of players of the required standard for their debut season in the East Midlands Counties League and have acquired not only a manager and assistant manager, but also the added bonus of a

bloke who stands in the technical area shouting and waving his arms about for no obvious reason.

The match was goalless until half an hour from the end when Blackwell were awarded a tepidly disputed penalty. This was duly despatched and they then added another goal a couple of minutes later. Anstey never gave up and pulled one back three minutes before time leading to a frantic finale but no more goals.

One of the many things that makes me a grumpy old man is late kick offs and games that go on for ever, making me miss my train. So, hats off to K. Allen who started the game punctually, didn't add pointless injury time and got the whole thing over with by 4.43. If only more referees followed his example.

I spent the return journey doing the fascinating anagram quiz in the proggy. Even after an hour I only got Eight out of the Twenty. Well would you get "with nude mates" or "urine detachments"? All in all, another smashing day out at a smashing little club, and the early finish meant I was home in time to see T.V.'s seminal moment when George Clooney returned to E.R.

Oh, and in case you were wondering, the two anagrams were West Ham United and Manchester Utd!

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