

TT No. 160: *Justin Holmes* - Sat 13th February 2010; **Yate** v AFC Totton; Southern League South & West Division; Score: 3-2; Venue: Lodge Road, Yate; Admission: £7.00; Programme: £1.50; Attendance: 147; Match Rating: 5.

As has been commonplace for me in recent weeks, today I ended up at a game which was about third or fourth choice at the time of setting out, but it turned out that I would watch a real cracker of a game with plenty of goals at a very pleasant rural venue.

When I booked my Megabus tickets to Bristol a few months ago, the intention was to watch the team I support, Charlton Athletic, at Bristol Rovers, however, subsequently that game was put back to the Monday as Sky chose this game for their televised fare. Luckily, Bristol has a plethora of non-league clubs in and around the city and so finding an alternative was never going to be a problem. I had still not made my mind up which game to go to on the coach journey down to Bristol - the very local derby at Longwell Green Sports against Brislington in the Western League was tempting, however I finally decided upon watching another Western League game, last year's champions, Bitton, at home to this year's high-flyers, Ilfracombe Town. On arrival at Bristol bus station, this plan and the back-up were both ruined as the bus I needed to catch to get to either game was seriously delayed due to breaking down on a previous journey. So instead, I embarked on a 45-minute bus journey, northwards into Gloucestershire, to watch the Zamaretto League encounter between Yate Town and AFC Totton.

The home of Yate Town, Lodge Road, is about a 20-minute walk from Yate train station, and is an attractive setting for football, with two sides of the pitch closely surrounded by trees. Facilities are somewhat basic for an established Southern League club that was in the Premier Division up to last season, with one small seated stand along one touchline and a covered stand of terracing behind one of the goals, but the ground is neat and tidy and adequate for the modest level of support that Yate attract. The programme was reasonable although probably more comparable with County League efforts than other Southern/Isthmian clubs. Nevertheless, it had enough information and statistics to be a decent read and provided a good background to today's game.

Going into today's game, Yate were on a good run, having won three of their last four games and having only lost twice in the league since mid-November. A poor early part of the season means they languished in 11th place. AFC Totton would surely be tough opponents however, up in second place in the league, and having played at least three games fewer than all those around them in the league. Although there is seemingly little chance of pushing for the championship - unbeaten Windsor and Eton are 12 points clear, a play-off berth looks a very real possibility for Totton.

On another bitterly cold afternoon, this was probably the most entertaining game I have watched all season, full of attacking endeavour, chances galore and only close misses and inspired goalkeeping kept the score down. Totton took the lead on the stroke of half time, although how on earth only one goal was scored was a complete mystery, Totton being particularly unlucky not to score more, finding the Yate goalkeeper in inspired form, although Yate also had plenty of clear opportunities to score. In the second half, Yate turned the game on its head as they took advantage of some very average Totton defending to take the lead within 13 minutes of the restart. Yate extended their lead to 3-1 with 12 minutes remaining to seemingly secure the three points. Totton ensured a tense finale by pulling a goal back a few minutes from time, however Yate held on for a win they may have just about deserved, however a high scoring draw might have been the fairest reflection of a highly entertaining game in which both teams played a full part.

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