

**TT No.214: Keith Aslan** - Sat 10th April 2010 ko 15.05; **Southall** v Willesden Constantine; Middlesex County League Premier Division; Result: 0-5; Admission: Free; Programme: £1; Attendance: 14 (8 home; 2 away & 4 neutral).

Wishing to see the FA Cup Semi Final in the evening meant a local trip for me today, and no matter how many new grounds I visit, the transient nature of the Middlesex League means new venues keep cropping up just a few tube stations away from my Hammersmith penthouse.

Having been ejected from their home a few hundred yards down the road due to 'vandalism', Southall were playing their second home game at the Ealing Central Sports Club, easy-peasy to get to with the entrance being opposite Perivale tube station. If, like me, you arrive early, I can recommend a stroll up nearby Horsenden Hill, the view from the summit encompasses almost all of Russell Grant Country and the effort of wheezing my way to the top was well rewarded. Also, just north of the station, I can recommend the coffee at the Christian Cafe, a concept I haven't come across before.

Ealing Central Sports Ground has four pitches dotted about a very large area, and in the middle are the changing rooms and a very comfortable clubhouse in which I enjoyed lashings of Fosters while watching Sky sports. Southall played on the pitch furthest from the changing rooms, which they had roped off and also supplied their own corner flags in club colours. On the next pitch North Kensington Reserves were in action. I had always wondered with the first team dropping out mid-season through not having a ground, why they didn't just take over the reserves pitch. The answer came in the Southall programme, with Ealing council closing the ground to football from April 18th, meaning this was the last chance to tick it off this season.

Southall's original opponents for today should have been Broadfields, but, as with most Saturdays, cup duty intervened. Broadfields have turned fixture congestion into an art form and as of mid-April, still have over half of their league fixtures to play. They did come up with a novel way of clearing them on Easter Monday by playing two games on the same day, away to Copland and away to Willesden Constantine, both of which resulted in creditable draws. It was Constantine who stepped into the breach this afternoon, and an awful first half was played out ending 0-0 which looked like being the final score, but Southall had other ideas and totally capitulated in the second half to run out 5-0 losers. A fitness trainer would be a very useful signing for the homesters.

This is the first of four home games at four different venues for the reds, April 24th at Brunel University is probably the one of most interest to hoppers. Geoff Harrison the secretary cum programme editor cum webmaster cum everything else missed this one as he was in America for his son's wedding (any old excuse!). But before he went, he edited the usual delicious paper accompaniment, an issue which is to most programmes what Lionel Messi is to Stockport County!! It is quite

magnificent for this or any other level. Two pages of general non-league news; three pages of very witty match reports; two pages on the visitors with a colour photograph; a club history; a 'What happened on this Day' page; a fascinating article on the truncated 1939 season; results, fixtures, tables, and the most detailed directions I've ever seen to the return fixture at Willesden this Wednesday - it's bus stop 'C' if you're going from Ealing Broadway! This must take hours to compile, and to produce something of this magnitude while making preparations for a visit to the colonies really does deserve some kind of award. As the front of the programme proudly states: 'MCFL Programme of the Year 2009' (and it will be in 2010 as well) but somehow that just doesn't seem to fully cover it.

It's been said before, but worth repeating, you don't have to travel very far to enjoy the full groundhopping experience. Oh, and the Cup semi-final was rather pleasing as well.

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