

TT No.22: Ian Hill - Saturday 29th August 2009; **Workington Reds** v Northwich Victoria; Blue Square North; Score: 0-1; Attendance: 471; Admission: £10; Programme 48 pages £2.00 Match rating: 2*.

My first Reds game of the season and I was really looking forward to it. Unfortunately, it turned out to be a really depressing afternoon so don't expect an impartial "Travellers Tale" here.

Borough Park is and always will be my favourite football ground. Unfortunately, it is starting to show its age but it is filled with lots of character. Saying that, the ground has had a good coat of paint, the pitch is in excellent condition and we now have a big red fence at the Derwent end of the ground to stop people slipping or tripping on dangerous grass. I do love these FA ground graders. What a pathetic bunch of jobs' worth's they are.

The question of the new stadium is still to be resolved. A council task group was set up to decide what would happen to £18 million Tesco have paid for a piece of land on the Cloffocks which is next to Borough Park. Originally, they decided to build a new Sports Centre and a 10,000-seater stadium for the football club and Workington Town RLFC but excluded the Workington Comets speedway side. This would mean Borough Park and Derwent Park being demolished. The proposed stadium was then reduced in size to 6000 places. They then decided that they would retain Derwent Park for speedway with the Reds and Town relocated to the new stadium. Accusations of council favouritism towards the Rugby League Club prevail as they appear to have "the ear" of the people in power. Basically, they want a new stadium the Reds don't. The main reason for the Reds opposition is that no one has told the football club how much rent they will pay, what are the operating costs and will they receive income from the bars/catering/advertising boards etc.

The Reds have requested £2 million to refurbish Borough Park and a similar amount for the Rugby League club. The Reds also have the Darlington's old floodlights waiting to be erected in storage as the council will not give them planning permission to put them up. Recently a new council leader has been appointed and feels that the new stadium should not be built in the current economic climate. In all this has been a very poor public relations exercise by the council who appear to have some officers not up to the job and poor leadership has been displayed at the top. This has resulted in a split in the sporting public in Workington with lots of people usually supporting both clubs.

Northwich Victoria were the visitors and it was nice to see them bring some travelling support. Before the game they were bottom of the league due to a point's deduction for going into administration I believe. The Board of Directors run a very tight ship at Workington. Sometimes to the annoyance of the supporters who would like to see them invest more money in the side. On the other hand, it

doesn't seem fair that some clubs can run up large debts "chasing the dream" and wipe them off by going into administration. Should Northwich be playing Blue Square North this season? In my opinion no and by the look of the squad they have assembled it looks like their wage bill will be considerably larger than the Reds one this season.

Sometimes you really have to wonder about FA initiatives. Today the "Respect" one was thrown out of the window by some of the Northwich players and also by the referee and one of his Assistants. Why should players be punished when officials will not enforce the laws of the game. In the first half one of the Northwich players used the "F" word 5 times in repeated succession at the referee who ignored him. Subsequently the assistant is abused by a Northwich player (with the worst 80's style highlights you will ever see on a football pitch) of cheating. Any action taken - no. We then have a Workington player fouled continually throughout the game - no action taken. Frustration takes hold and in the second half two Workington Players are sent off. The game is ruined for the spectators and gamesmanship wins the day. A dive by a Northwich player, more an impression of an out of control jelly, resulted in one red card.

Northwich won the game thanks to a deflected free kick which was given after a Workington player was sent off. The Reds actually played better with nine men and you have got to ask questions of the Northwich Management who were ranting and raving at their players on the touchline - the Chuckle Brothers you are. It summed up their behaviour when one of them called one of their players that four-letter word that women hate for miss controlling a ball. I'm sure Northwich are all geared up for promotion but there seems to be something really grubby about this fine club at present.

So, a poor day and a poor game. On a brighter note the Workington programme is much improved this season so it was not all doom and gloom.

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