

TT No.234: Justin Holmes - Sat 1st May 2010; **Boreham Wood** v Kingstonian; Ryman League Prem Division Play Off Final; Venue: Meadow Park, Borehamwood; Score: 2-0; Admission: £10.00; Programme: £2.00; Att: 1,102; Match Rating: 3.

For today's action, I decided to take in an end of season play-off final, to see who would be the second team promoted alongside runaway champions Dartford from the Ryman League to the Blue Square South. I have a strange mixture of feelings towards the play-offs, that are probably very similar to those that most other people have that it is a most unsatisfactory way of deciding which team gets promoted, when twists of fate on the day can determine whether a team reaches the promised land or not, and indeed neither the second nor third placed teams after 42 league games made it to today's final. Yet there's no doubt that play-offs keep the season alive for many more teams than if just the top two were to be promoted, and it generates an excitement, level support and an occasion with so much riding on 90 minutes of football that rarely occurs at this level.

Meadow Park home of Borehamwood, is about a 20-minute walk from Elstree & Borehamwood train station via Borehamwood town centre, and is a quite unremarkable ground. It has one modern all-seater stand - where I was sat - stretching most of the length of one side, along the opposite length is a covered terrace, and behind either goal is open terracing. A very neat, well-maintained ground it's fair to say, that would easily accommodate a higher level of football. Segregation was in place today, which it would turn out was a very wise move. A hike of a pound on the admission for today's game was quite a surprise, and the programme followed the apparent trend at this level - glossy, in colour and looks good, but 28 pages, 10 pages of which are advertising, and the content of which is digested pretty quickly does seem overpriced at £2.

Judging by the previous season, both clubs have done extremely well to be in a position to win promotion to the Blue Square South. For the previous two seasons, Boreham Wood have battled to avoid relegation, finishing in 18th and 19th places, and this season looked like going the same way as they lost three of their first four games, but since the turn of the year have been around the play-off positions. On the face of it, they have been a team that has efficiently ground out their good results, conceding the second fewest goals in the league, but had only scored 54 goals from their 42 games, the sixth lowest in the league. Kingstonian were promoted into this league as Champions of the Ryman League Division 1 South and have had a steady season to claim the final play-off berth, and did excellently to go to well-fancied Sutton United and win 4-2 in the play-off semi-final.

The game itself was quite typical for one having so much riding on it. Very competitive, players hurried into mistakes, and few clear goalscoring opportunities, and it was no surprise that the score-line was goalless at half time. Boreham Wood took the lead on 69 minutes, slightly against the run of play, when a free kick close to the corner flag was nodded in from close range at the far post

by Ryan Moran. Also, unsurprisingly, this opened up the game, with Kingstonian carving some good chances, but with Boreham Wood always looking threatening on the break. Two minutes from time, the game was won by a sublime shot by Dewayne Clark from 20 yards out wide of the penalty area which gave the goalkeeper absolutely no chance. A wonderful finish that would have had the Sky TV commentators drooling if it were a Premiership game, and that sealed Boreham Wood's promotion to Conference football for the first time in their history, which rightly sparked joyous celebrations at the final whistle.

It will be interesting to see how Boreham Wood fare in the Blue Square South. It could be debateable whether they have the level of support to sustain that level of football. Today, the vast majority of the support were from Kingstonian (full credit by the way to their fantastic, colourful and vociferous support), and Boreham Wood's average attendance this season has been the second lowest in the whole league at 162. Unfortunately it should also be reported that there was a sizeable minority of people from Boreham Wood who did their best to spoil what was probably the most wonderful day in the football club's history, culminating in one "person" from behind the goal leapt over the fence and ran on to the pitch to strike the Kingstonian captain, Francis Duku, in the face, before being led away by the police to hopefully face at the very, very least a banning order and hopefully face criminal assault (amongst other possible) charges. Aside from that, I also heard many reports of locals trying to goad the Kingstonian fans, who to their immense credit took defeat very well - in the truer non-league spirit. Hopefully, those unpleasant locals will not be interested in the more run-of-the-mill fixtures, where presumably the club will be less successful in the higher league, that will be played at Meadow Park.

06/20