

TT No.236: Keith Aslan - Mon 3rd May 2010; Ash Green v Real Man Of Kent; Everden Hospital C-Final @ Guru Nanak FC; Kick-Off: 15.04; Result: 4- 3aet; Admission: £2; Team-sheet: Free; Attendance: 105 (31 - A.G; 70 - R.M.O.K; 4 neutral).

Kent County League Guru Nanak's ground is situated in the southern suburbs of Gravesend and involves a non, too salubrious 40 minute walk from the station, although there is a bus stop five minutes from the ground which I assume would offer a service for the Saturday traveller, but this being a Bank Holiday, buses were pretty thin on the ground.

As I entered, I had a conversation with the very friendly League officials on the gate. They were stunned somebody had come from London and cheerfully told me that the game wouldn't be much good (it was). All the infrastructure is on the side of the ground as you enter. A large car park, changing rooms, function hall and a club house, in front of which is hard standing and a rope. The other three sides have nothing.

'Taters' (from cockney rhyming slang for 'taiters in the mould') would be the best way to describe the climate and I was grateful to spend the pre match build up consuming gallons of coffee in the warm club house watching a Sky Sports channel anchored by a Nigella Lawson lookalike which made it difficult to concentrate on anything else that came on the screen.

Reading the team-sheet I was surprised to see that last season this cup generated £1300 for local charities which did make me wonder where all the money came from. The delightfully named Real Man of Kent got their name when they had a falling out with their landlord who registered another team called Man of Kent with the league, in their place. Undaunted, the originals kept going, and added the prefix 'Real' all very strange when people round these parts are known as 'Kentish Man' a difference local's take very seriously.

The game was a cracker, both sides giving it their all, not a single bad foul, and after a tardy start, well officiated with plenty of goals and goalmouth action. Ash Green, clear favourites according to the team sheet, went one up inside five minutes; their opponents made it two-one, including a goal straight from a corner, and at half time it was 2-2. RMOK went 3-2 up and Ash Green spent most of the second half peppering the goal until eventually equalising 10 minutes from time. With the last minute of the ninety Green had a breakaway and the nearside linesman was clenching his fists shouting 'Go on, score'. This was not due to any partisan-ship but, like everybody else, he didn't want extra time. Hypothermia was a very real danger in these temperatures. There was of course, extra time. Ash Green scored what proved to be the winning goal, early on, and the second period was all Real Man of Kent desperately striving for an equalizer spurred on vociferously, by the majority of the good-natured crowd. But it was not to be, and

so ended a highly enjoyable, if cold, afternoon. Oh, and the train back from Gravesend to St. Pancras took 23 minutes. Not bad eh?

06/20