

TT No.240: *Justin Holmes* - Saturday 8th May 2010; **Sligo Rovers** v Bohemians; League of Ireland Premier Division; Venue: The Showgrounds, Sligo; Score: 1-2; Admission: €15.00; Programme: €4.00; Att: 2,200; Match Rating: 4.

A trip to the Republic of Ireland for this weekend's entertainment, once again made possible by Ryanair's ridiculously cheap ticket prices. Living outside of Ireland, without taking time off from work, it is quite difficult to take in a League of Ireland game generally, as nearly all games are played on Friday evenings. Happily, this season Sligo Rovers are playing their games on Saturday evenings, and so I flew into Knock airport on Saturday morning and then made the 45-minute coach journey up to Sligo close to the north west coast of Ireland. Sligo is a pleasant town to spend a weekend, and as this was a warm and sunny day, I made my way to nearby Strandhill for a very relaxing afternoon on a very peaceful sandy beach before the game.

On returning to Sligo, I made my way to The Showgrounds, which is about a ten-minute walk away from the train and bus stations. The Showgrounds is certainly one of the nicer stadia I have visited this season, boasts some glorious background scenery looking from the large modern all seater main stand, with mountains visible in the distance and with Sligo Cathedral closer behind a smaller, rather old fashioned all seater stand. Behind one of the goals is a shallow bank of terracing, and behind the other just hard standing. The programme was an excellent effort, printed on high quality paper and all in colour and with more than enough information about both teams and how they have been doing so far this season. At €4 this seemed expensive to me, but then most things seem expensive in Ireland to an Englishman...

Both sides have had a rather disappointing season so far. Going into this round of games, Sligo Rovers were down in eighth place in the ten-team league, and had scored just once in their last four games. Bohemians, champions of Ireland for the last two seasons, have so far found the going a little tougher this season, finding themselves down in 5th place, 6 points off of the top two, although with a strong looking squad, it is surely only a matter of time before the Bohemians juggernaut clicks into gear.

On a gorgeously sunny evening - certainly an attractive argument in favour of the football season being played over the summer months - Sligo certainly had more of the attacking play, but too many times their play seemed to fall apart as they approached the penalty area, often seeming to want to take unnecessary touches and sideways passes instead of taking a shot or making an incisive pass. Bohemians always looked more composed and more of a direct threat and it was no surprise when they took the lead just after the half hour when Jason Byrne converted Paul Keegan's cross into the net.

The rest of the half was played out without major incident, but after the break Sligo were a transformed side, showing much more threat and the former Cameroon international, Joseph Ndo, creating most of the home side's chances from the wing. Indeed, Ndo claimed the assist for Sligo's equaliser on 58 minutes, when his corner was met perfectly by a Matthew Blinkhorn header. Sligo then continued to push hard and had three or four gilt edged chances to score, including hitting the crossbar, but as the game wore on, it looked like Sligo would have to settle for a draw. In the end, they didn't even get that, when a rare second half foray forward resulted in the winning goal for Bohemians, when Aaron Greene crossed the ball from one side of the pitch to the other, and Mark Quigley rifled home a good finish.

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