

TT No.242: Steve Ayre - Wed 12th May 2010; **Arsenal Ladies** v Leeds Carnegie Ladies; FA Women's Premier League; Venue: The Emirates; Result: 3-0; Attendance: 3572; Programme: £1; Match Rating: 5*.

Well one ground in the Football and Premier Leagues that always looks good but normally out of my price range is the Emirates Stadium. With Arsenal changing a ladies' fixture to be played there, and with admission (even including booking fees) at less than £5, it just had to be done. Since moving over from coaching girl's football to becoming the club secretary, a training night could be missed for only the second time in 3 1/2 seasons.

On the way I elected to walk from Highbury and Islington and it was some time before I caught a glimpse of the stadium. Almost like the space craft from Close Encounters, suddenly it was there. Wow! I have to confess that in order to keep the price down I bought my chips outside but the wait was worth it. OK if you look too closely it is a concrete bowl with seats. But it was an impressive concrete bowl and whilst the pitch at a certain other location in North London is a tale of woe, this was something else. Lush grass was not the word I can tell you.

The ladies then proceeded to play some magnificent stuff - a ten yard back heeled pass was my favourite move. Definitely the best player on show was Arsenal's Kim Little, not only short in stature but also fantastic to watch having great pace and not scared to cut in from the wing or cross.

With only £1 for a programme as well, what better way could you spend a May evening? The League trophy and medals were also given out at the end (the title having been secured last Sunday), and nice to see the Leeds players and match officials remaining on the pitch and applauding cup final style. Even the reserves had got to get their rewards at half time.

The only thing Arsenal got wrong related to the electronic scoreboard. The home team were listed from numbers 1 to 11, not by squad numbers. Even so the attendance of 3572 people did not care. I suspect that the proud dad sitting next to me with his six-year-old daughter (and who was busily marking his match programme with the team changes) will go back again. Whilst I believe there is too much money in top class football, you have to hand it to Arsenal for the way in which they market their brand very effectively. It seems that ladies' football and Arsenal ladies are now just interchangeable names.

A dash to Arsenal tube station and I nearly made it to Euston for the 21:20 (after the 19:00 Kick-Off). Still you can't have everything, can you?