

TT No.27: Ian Hill - Friday 4th September 2009; **Bohemian FC** v Bray Wanderers; League of Ireland Premier Division; Score: 1-2; Attendance: 2500 approx.; Admission: 15 euros; Programme: 40 pages 3 euros Match rating: 5*.

Sometimes you have a preconceived idea of how you expect a game to pan out. Top of the table Bohemians went into their game against bottom of the table Bray Wanderers looking to extend their lead at the top of the League of Ireland Premier Division. Bray were more concerned with their continuing battle to avoid relegation. The league table showed a points difference of 35 points between the sides with the Bohs only losing one game at home all season and conceding 3 goals. I duly expected a very one-sided game but I, like the rest of the crowd, was in for a big shock as The Wanderers took all three points in a fantastic game played like a cup tie.

It was a short visit to Dublin for this game with a lunchtime flight from Luton on the day of the game and an early morning return for the England v Slovenia game at Wembley. I booked the Sky-lon Hotel on Upper Drumcondra road which is on the main bus route into the city centre from the airport. It also gives the opportunity to do four ground hops on the route - Sporting Fingal, Home Farm, Shelbourne and Croke Park. Unfortunately, I had little time to "hop" except to visit Home Farm which was a 100-yards from the hotel. Unfortunately, Home Farm dropped out of professional football and now only run junior sides. Their ground is a bit basic with the only spectator comforts being a covered stand. The ground though is immaculate but I was a bit worried about the "Trespassers will be prosecuted" sign as you enter the ground. So, it was a very quick visit.

Bohemians Dalymount Park is a classic ground. Easily reached from O'Connell Street it is tucked away between terraced houses and if it were not for the floodlights would be really hard to locate. Entrance to the ground is by a narrow alley which brings you to the back of the main stand. Although new it fits in well with the rest of the ground. The club have a two-tier pricing structure and for this game it was reduced to 15 euros. Once inside the main stand it appears that the facilities underneath the old stand have been retained with the new seating and roof plonked on top. It has narrow low walk way which gives it a lot of character. Programmes are on sale here but due to the current euro rate it is well overpriced at 3 euros. It's not a bad read but the poor-quality paper used lets it down.

Currently two sides of the ground are opened for games with the large terrace behind one goal out of action and the seated terrace opposite the main stand also unused. Bohemians currently have money troubles and are trying to raise enough cash to meet the Irish FA's licensing criteria for next season. Framed photos of Dalymount Park were available for 50 euros each at the front of the stand. The club were also selling "Gold-member" membership packages with which I presume you get a season ticket. These cost 37 euros per week for 2 years which gave you

membership for 10 years. The alternative was a one-off fee of 3600 euros. There must be some rich football supporters in Dublin!

Refreshments and food are supplied by a posh mobile catering outlet which specialises in Fish & Chips etc. The only problem was that a portion of Fish & Chips cost 9.50 euros. It was more expensive than Wembley and that is hard to achieve. A very good club shop is located near by selling a good range of clothing, badges and old programmes. It was well supported as the Bohs supporters certainly wear their colours with pride.

The game started slowly with Bohemians pressing for a goal but due to some poor play from the front two and great goalkeeping by Bray's Stephen Brennan they failed to capitalise on their pressure. It would come back to haunt them later as the game turned dramatically thanks to the intervention of referee Anthony Buttermere. On 20 minutes a Bohs player went into an innocuous tackle which led to Bray's John Flood doing a dive that would have embarrassed Eduardo. According to the local papers the next day the Bohemians player questioned the referee's decision and was given a red card. Cue uproar in the stand - let the party commence. Mr Buttermere then went to pieces which made the home support worse but turned the game into a full-blooded affair. A John Flood reaction to the tackle looked like he had broken his leg. He hobbled along the touchline as if someone had nailed a plank of wood to the back of his leg. As soon as he was back on the pitch, yes, you've guessed it; he was sprinting about like a gazelle. Six minutes later Bray opened the scoring and I don't know why this always happens in football but the pantomime villain always has to score. Flood raced through on goal with only the keeper to beat which he duly did. Not only that he did a massive celebration in front of the home supporters. How he was not lynched I will never know.

Bray held onto their halftime lead. The second half was all about Bohemians trying to press for the equaliser. They just didn't have the luck or the quality to do so and they didn't have to deal with another mad moment from the referee. It was that man again, Flood, chasing a ball into the Bohemians box. The keeper stuck a hand out and down he went as if someone had shot him. Red card for the keeper and penalty dispatched.

It looked all over for Bohemians but they really went for it for the last twenty minutes. They actually ran themselves to a stand-still and had to wait until the 89th minute for Glen Crowe to score to provide the game with an extremely breathless, last few minutes. In-between the sending off and the goal a Bray player committed an absolutely atrocious tackle. A two footed lunge at knee height with the sound of boot on bone ringing around the ground. It was the most blatant red card I had ever seen but obviously not for the referee who only awarded a free kick.

Bray held on for their unexpected win. They battled hard but really, they should have been hammered. John Flood's "gamesmanship" and an awful referee won them the game and if there is any justice they will be relegated. I also expect the

English FA to be zooming over to Ireland to get Anthony Buttermere signed up to referee in the Blue Square North next season - he was that bad.

A great day out at an impressive old ground which comes highly recommended.

06/20