

TT No.33: *Justin Holmes* - Sat 19th September 2009; **Norwich City** v Charlton Athletic; Football League 1; Venue: Carrow Road, Norwich; Admission: £22.00 (Away Fans); Programme: £3.00; FGIF Match Rating: 4*.

As 'Away-Days' go in the Football League, a trip to Norwich certainly rates as one of the better, with the city as well as the stadium itself very pleasant. After arriving in Norwich a couple of hours early to tour around the many historic buildings and lanes of the city, not least the splendid Norwich Cathedral which is well worth a visit, I made my way to Carrow Road (which is located about a 10 minute walk away from the train station) to support my team, Charlton. Away fans are housed towards one end of the Jarrold (South) Stand, with an unobstructed view from the newest stand of the stadium.

Considering their catastrophic previous season, which saw them comfortably finish bottom of the Championship, Charlton had somewhat surprisingly made an electric start to the season, piling up 19 points from a possible 21 and sitting proudly at the top of the table, whereas Norwich had a mixed start to the season and lay firmly in mid-table. Norwich is usually a tough place to visit (forgetting the 1-7 thrashing that Colchester handed out to them at the start of the season) and so a close game which could go either way was anticipated.

It turned out to be very much a game of two halves, with Charlton looking every bit the league leaders as they cruised into a two-goal lead with 40 minutes on the clock after good headers from Deon Burton and Jonjo Shelvey. At this stage, it looked like a comfortable stroll for Charlton to maintain their lead at the top of League 1, however Norwich got a goal back on the stroke of half time when a quick throw in caught Charlton napping for Wes Hoolahan to beat Robbie Elliott at his near post.

The second half was all Norwich, who had most of the possession and goal scoring opportunities and confined Charlton to the odd chance on the break. It looked like Charlton would hold out until the third minute of added time with a controversial goal when Grant Holt barged into the Charlton keeper Robbie Elliott and the ball spun up and into the empty net. Week in week out the referee would blow up for a foul in favour of the keeper but it was not to be, and the draw was definitely a fair reflection of the game - it would have been very harsh if Norwich had lost considering they had dominated the second half. At the final whistle, rarely has a home team celebrated a draw so much. Unfortunately, such emotion provoked some crowd violence with Norwich fans goading the away fans both inside and outside of the ground. A slightly sour end to a pulsating game, and such things make me prefer, in some respects, the whole atmosphere of non-league games.