

TT No.50: *Justin Holmes* - Sat 10th October 2009; **Tonbridge Angels** v Bromley; FA Cup 3rd Qualifying Round; Venue: Longmead Stadium, Tonbridge; Score 0-2; Admission: £10.00; Programme: £2.00; Att: 944; Match Rating: 2.

This game had all the ingredients to be a real cracker. It was FA Cup day, the teams now just two rounds away from the dream of facing a league club, and a much larger crowd than usual was certain for this local(ish) derby between two Kent teams and with the home side (from the Ryman Premier) having a real opportunity of creating an upset against higher league opposition (from the Blue Square South). Sadly, this game turned out to be a real damp squib, with little of the anticipated competitiveness.

Longmead Stadium is a pleasant venue for one that has no real history nor charm. It is a very airy, spacious ground, with two covered terrace areas behind both goals and a seated stand running almost the length of one side of the ground. There is copious free parking available on-site, and the walk from the train station takes around half an hour, or buses are available if preferred/required. As always, Tonbridge produce an excellent 48-page programme with plenty of information on the home and away teams.

The game started fairly evenly but was brought to an abrupt half with just 7 minutes on the clock, when the referee had to be helped off the pitch with a hamstring injury which also caused back spasms. So, after a twenty-minute delay with one of the linesmen becoming the referee and a (qualified) volunteer from the crowd running the line, the game continued. It does have to be said that certain sections of the Tonbridge fans should be ashamed of the way they barracked and regularly shouted obscenities at the volunteer linesman particularly during the second half. Truly baffling - without him, the game may well have been postponed.

The extended break seemed to kill the game, with the first half lacking any real quality but with Bromley going into half time with a one goal lead thanks to a sublime volley from just outside the area. It was expected that the second half would be a much more competitive affair with FA Cup progress and prize money at stake, as well as local bragging rights. However, strangely, the second half was similar to the first, played with little real urgency and although Tonbridge shaded possession and played well in the middle of the pitch, they seemed strangely reluctant to make forward passes into the box and create real chances. They did have numerous corners, all of which barely threatened the goalkeeper. Bromley always looked comfortable without ever looking particularly strong themselves, but put the game out of sight three minutes from time when a ball whipped in from the touchline was nodded in at the far post.

And so it was Bromley who advanced to the final qualifying round of this season's FA Cup, no doubt hoping they can avoid a Blue Square Premier side (or at least,

get a home tie) to give themselves the best chance of being in the draw with the possibility of a lucrative trip to Elland Road or The Valley in the following round.

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