

**TT No.69: Paul Roth** - Saturday 24th October 2009; Anagram Records Capital Counties Feeder Leagues Trophy 1st Round; **KENT ATHLETIC (LUTON) FC** vs. **BROADFIELDS UNITED FC**; Res: 3-4, aet; Att: 20; Programme and entry: N/A; Weather: Torrential rain, then bright sunshine! Altitude: The Kent Social Club sports ground is 129 metres above sea level.

It sounds like a quiz question, doesn't it, but when would I ever drive 120 miles from my home in Kent to watch Kent?

For a cricket match perhaps? No, the answer is when going to watch Kent Athletic (Luton) FC, as I did on Saturday, to witness their 1st round Anagram Records Capital Feeder Leagues Trophy tie versus Broadfields United FC.

Cross-border and cross-league showdowns can be spicy affairs. Barcelona vs. AC Milan, Kent League club vs. Sussex County League club, Liverpool vs. Celtic, Northern Irish League club vs. Republic of Ireland League club; such encounters have that certain 'Je-ne-sais-quoi' and somehow always manage to capture the public's imagination and make the participating players try just that little bit harder.

In my humble opinion though, nothing is quite as eye-catching as Molten Spartans South Midlands League club vs. Middlesex County League club. It's the stuff of dreams! Like an expectant child awaiting Santa Claus' arrival on Christmas Eve, I hardly slept a wink on Friday night, such was my expectancy and anticipation of such an enthralling and mouth-watering encounter.

Let's not beat about the bush, Luton isn't my favourite destination but this seemed as good a time as any to 'tick' Kent Athletic FC off that all-time 1,000 club-to-visit list; now I've been, I'm wondering why on earth I procrastinated for so long; their Tenby Drive ground is a truly cracking venue. The lack of a matchday programme, I'm ashamed to admit, had previously rendered myself over-reticent.

Laying 129 meters (423.228 ft.) above sea level, about a mile east of junction 11 off the M1 and surrounded by residential dwellings, the venue boasts a cavernous and envious social club (constructed for the employees of the former water meter manufacturing company, from which the club derives its name).

The playing area is fully enclosed by neat white posts and rails, has covered shelter in the form of a lean-to at the social club end with a brace of splendid brick-built dugouts in situ on the right-hand side upon entry. Worry and muttered imprecations initially courted your correspondent upon stepping inside the pavilion, as the only two souls present were frantically telephoning players in a desperate attempt to raise an eleven. Glances were even thrown my way.....No way, Jose!!

Luckily, the men in black and white took to the field with a full complement and even had the temerity to take the lead.

In a match I imagined the Middlesex County leaguers would win at a canter, the reality was nothing of the sort. 1-0 at teatime, in the pouring rain, soon became 2-2 shortly after the restart, in glorious sunshine; and so, this pulsating cup tie inevitably entered a phase of extra time. Dave Turney seemed to have won it for Kent with a wonder strike just before half time in the additional half hour, only for Broadfields United to break away twice themselves to land their own Coup de Grace with two late strikes in the 117th & 119th minutes, ultimately breaking the homesters' hearts.

Without any shadow of a doubt, this was the best game of football I'd seen all week and at its conclusion concede I felt physically and mentally drained from all the excitement. That said, I was still back in Thanet in time to accompany my beloved to the 5th, annual Birchington-On-Sea and St. Nicholas-At-Wade hoedown for the homeless!

FGIF Star Rating: 5\*.

06/20