

TT No.75: Keith Aslan - Sat 31st October 2009 (kick-off: 14.34); **Faces** v Frenford Senior; Essex Olympian League Senior Division; Result: 0 - 3; Admission: Free; Programme: 12pages, free; Attendance: 18 (9 away, 8 home & 1 neutral).

With fiscal constraints dictating low mileage there was a plethora of programme producers to choose from, all accessible with an oyster card and after much thought, I opted for the 'second v top' Essex Olympian clash at Westhamians. Also, I found out that England's number one celebrity groundhopper would be present and maybe, just by attending the same match, some of his charisma might rub off on me.

With such a short journey I was able to spend the morning enjoying a leisurely croissant at my favourite bistro in Hammersmith's famous Latin Quarter. Suitably sustained I took the cross-town tube journey to Newbury Park where I was going to check out the rumour that Faces were issuing again this season. Met another hopper on the station, also destined for Westhamians, who joined me on my quest for paper production.

Arriving at Faces, an enquiry not only produced a programme for their afternoon's match against Frenford, but also a separate 12 pager for the Reserve match against Canning Town being played on an adjacent pitch. To the serious programme groupie this was akin to winning the lottery and all thoughts of continuing to Westhamians disappeared. Faces was the only place to be this afternoon. My fellow hopper's body language suggested he too would like to stay, but having told England's number one celebrity hopper that he would join him at Westhamians, he didn't feel he could let him down. He made his way north while I settled down in the very large club house to watch Arsenal destroy Spurs, with an added bonus, that everybody watching supported Spurs. Don't get me wrong here, I have no love for Finsbury Park's finest, but my dislike of Tottenham is on a completely different level since I was traumatised as a schoolboy when they beat Chelsea in the 1967 cup final.

Speaking to one of the Faces players before the game he was amazed that I had come from the other side of London to watch them. He couldn't understand why anybody would travel so far. I would love to know his reaction when he comes across some northern based hoppers.

Faces has at least four full sized pitches with the first team playing on the one nearest the clubhouse, the only one roped off. Now the professional groundhopper, having got a programme for the reserve match, would have done the second pitch with them and returned to do the main pitch. I'm 100% amateur and I just watched the first team game with no thoughts of returning, what would England's number one celebrity hopper think of me?

The first half was even stevens and at half time a swift walk to the local shops produced a large portion of chicken and chips for a credit-crunch busting £1.99.

The second half saw Frenford take an early lead and Faces never recovered, eventually going down three to nil. As the programme freely admits, Faces aren't doing very well at the moment, and this defeat, coupled with Galleywood's victory, leaves them bottom of the table. But they weren't really all that bad, and for over half of the game there was nothing to choose between the two sides - Faces just didn't have any response when they went a goal down.

Had a conversation near the end with Paul Baker who is Faces Director of Football and also joint programme editor. He seemed really pleased that I appreciated the programmes and said they hope to issue for the foreseeable future. He missed much of the second half organizing everything for the end of the match with the words "Director of Football" having completely different connotations at this level than in football's higher echelons. Can't imagine Sven sorting out the post-match food.

Lovely club, lovely people, let's hope Faces start climbing up the league sometime soon. As always, a super trip proving you don't have to journey very far to enjoy the groundhopping experience, and Westhamians is still there for another day.

06/20