

TT0910-93

TT No: 93: Justin Holmes - Sat 14th November 2009; **Wales** v Scotland; International Friendly; Venue: **Cardiff City Stadium**, Cardiff; Score 3-0; Admission: £20.00; Prog: £2.00; Attendance: 13,844; Match Rating: 4*.

International football for me today and a trip to the newly opened Cardiff City Stadium for this international friendly between two home nations who have fallen on hard times in recent years. Having taken the National Express coach from London to Cardiff, I arrived a couple of hours early to wander around the very pleasant, bustling and charming streets of central Cardiff. As a Swansea boy at heart, that is praise indeed for the other major city in Wales.

The weather today ahead of kick off was some of the worst I can remember in a long time, with frequent heavy downpours mixed in with violent gale force winds making it difficult to walk in a straight line. Despite the conditions, I made the 20-minute walk from the city centre to the new Cardiff City Stadium, which is located over the road from Ninian Park, the former home stadium of Cardiff City, which currently stands half demolished. Now, I very much mourn the old-fashioned atmospheric stadia being consigned to history in favour of the new soulless identikit stadia popping up across the country, however Ninian Park is probably one stadium that I was quite happy to see the back of. But then, football is a game of opinions...having been a regular at the Vetch Field in the past, it still disappoints me now that the most atmospheric and passionate stadium I have experienced no longer is the home stadium of Swansea City. More so that it is still standing and becoming ever more overgrown over four years since Swansea moved to the unremarkable Liberty Stadium. It is true though that many other people were very glad to see the back of the Vetch, too!

Returning to the new Cardiff City Stadium, whilst it is very spacious, well laid out and with comfortable seats, it has very little character or anything to set it apart from the other new stadia that have recently been built. Programmes were a bargain £2 for this match for a very decent 40-page glossy publication full of interesting facts and information. For the first half, I took my seat next to the dugouts in the grandstand, and considering that Wales had lost most of their top players thanks to the usual dodgy friendly international withdrawals and Scotland was a team that, despite their obvious limitations against the better nations, were packed with experienced players, I fancied Scotland to win this game quite comfortably. Indeed, that's exactly how this game looked like heading in the first ten minutes, as Scotland dominated the open exchanges and had a couple of glorious chances to take the lead. However, Wales took the lead on 17 minutes with an excellent finish from David Edwards after excellent approach play by Aaron Ramsey. From that point on, Wales completely dominated the game, inspired by the Arsenal youngster Ramsey who went on to set up another goal and score a wonderful solo goal to put the game beyond Scotland's reach with just 35 minutes on the clock. Wales were playing superbly well, although it was quite shocking how

poor Scotland were, who seemingly couldn't defend for their lives and looked impotent going forward. The second half was unsurprisingly an anti-climax with the inevitable many substitutions spoiling the flow of the game, although Scotland improved in the second half and had a few good chances to reduce the arrears. It must also be said that Wales could also have scored a couple more themselves though.

So, Wales were comprehensive winners although it was surprising that this battle of two British Celtic nations did not capture the imagination of the Welsh more though, with a crowd of just 13844 being supplemented by over 4000 passionate Scottish supporters who deserved much more from their sluggish, seemingly disinterested team.

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