

**TT No.94: Ian Hill** - Saturday 17th October 2009; **Shamrock Rovers** v Drogheda United; League of Ireland Premier Division; Score: 2 - 0; Attendance: 2500 (estimate); Admission: 15 euros; Programme 56 pages 4 euros Match rating: 2\*.

A trip to the new home of Shamrock Rovers, Tallaght Stadium, was my destination for the second game of my trip to Dublin. Earlier in the day I went on the Croke Park Museum and Stadium Tour. I would highly recommend a visit although there is a slightly romanticised view of the GAA and no mention of the previous foreign sports ban! The tour guide was very good and excellent with a group of youngsters who were awe struck by the place. It's an impressive stadium and I didn't realise how big a Gaelic Football pitch was until I saw the football equivalent marked out on the turf.

The afternoon was spent watching a Rugby Union match between Bective Rangers and Ballymena. This cup tie was played at Donnybrook the former home of the Leinster Rugby Union side. The ground is shared by two clubs - Bective and Old Wesley with each club having its clubhouse at the opposite ends of the ground. The game was an AIB cup game with free admission and free programme it seemed to be an attractive proposition. The programme was excellent - an A5 60-page shell in full colour included a four-page insert featuring the game. I picked mine up in the clubhouse but there were not many about only the insert pages. Did the people of Dublin know something I didn't? This game was terrible and really painful to watch. Things were made even worse when my half time pint cost 5 euros!

Tallaght Stadium is easy to reach using the Luis (tram) system and is at the end of the line. Tickets can be bought from machines next to the stops. I caught one near O'Connell Street and it was smooth journey out to South Dublin. All the information you need to know is on the club's website. Tallaght itself is a new build of shops and apartments. Built during the Irish economic boom it looks a bit forlorn as quite a few shops and apartments are empty and the place has an unfinished look about it. The Rovers Stadium is about 5-10 minutes-walk from the Luis stop. Entrance for the home areas of the ground is at one corner and it was quite congested before kick-off. Currently three sides of the ground are open to the public. Two seated stands run along both sides of the pitch with flat standing on tarmac an option behind one goal. It is here that there are a number of different outlets to buy food. Seating is unreserved and I tried to sit in the new seated stand although a lot of people stood up and this was also the case of people standing in gangways etc so be prepared to stand.

The Rovers crowd is a very mixed one and a bit of a youth club as there was a high proportion of youngsters in attendance. The under 10's appear to be tanked up on "e" numbers from fizzy drinks and ran around the place non-stop for 90 minutes. The teenagers appeared to be on a dating mission. Therefore, the place is a bit frantic to say the least.

Rovers went into the game looking for a win in their battle with Dublin rivals Bohemians for the league title. They set off at a frantic pace and it looked like Drogheda were going to be in for a bit of a hiding. Rovers opened the scoring after 7 minutes and the Drogs then had a man sent off. They battled back although Rovers increased their lead on 32 minutes. These were the only goals before half time and no further goals in a dour second half took Shamrock back to the top of the table.

There is a club shop outside the ground and programmes are sold inside the stadium. It is supposed to be the best programme in Ireland and was quite good although there were a few standard features you would expect to see missing. It was a double issue and consisted of 56 pages but the price of 4 euros made it a rip off.

My views on the Tallaght Stadium are mixed. It's great that the Rovers now have their own home ground but the modern design doesn't inspire. Give me Dalymount or Tolka any day.

06/20