

TT No. 1: *Justin Holmes* - Sat 10th July 2010; **AFC Wimbledon** v Charlton Athletic; Pre-season Friendly; Venue: Kingsmeadow, Kingston-upon-Thames; Result: 2-0; Admission: £10.00; Prog: £2.00; Att: 1,417; Match Rating: 3.

It's fair to say I'm not normally a fan of pre-season friendlies, and certainly not this early in pre-season, with players having only returned to training a few days previously and even the World Cup final still yet to be played, however on a gloriously hot summer's day (bordering on being too hot admittedly with temperatures above 30 degrees C), an opportunity to visit a new ground that I have been wanting to visit for some time, and to watch Charlton without the usual feelings of depression, frustration and anger that I experience during the league season, I decided to make the trip to south-west London for this game.

Kingsmeadow is located less than ten-minute's walk, from Norbiton train station and is quite a typical modern leading non-league stadium. Quite unremarkable, but well maintained. All four sides are covered, but with seating only available in one main stand along one of the touchlines. It is always difficult to judge a club's programme on a pre-season friendly edition, however today's edition, which covered three of their home pre-season friendlies was a good effort with a glossy hardened cover, with interesting features on past meetings between the clubs, and with the team line-ups containing most of the triallists for both of today's clubs, which I found quite unusual and impressive.

It would always be difficult to read too much into today's game. Charlton fielded two almost completely separate teams in each half. In the first half there were four triallists amongst a sprinkling of first team players, whilst the second half was almost entirely a run out for the youth/reserve team members. AFC Wimbledon also took the opportunity to field several triallists, the most exotic of whom was a South Korean by the name of Tae Hun Kim, who apparently does not speak a word of English. Maybe this hindered him today, as he would do little to impress in this game.

Charlton's team in the first half looked far stronger than that in the second half, and the game reflected this. Charlton looked quite lively in attack in the opening half, with their triallist forward pairing of the Spaniard, Guillem Bauza and the Iceland international, Gunnar Thorvaldsson, combining reasonably well to fashion several good chances. AFC Wimbledon rarely ventured forward, although Jon Main had a chance acrobatically cleared off the line by Grant Basey after his shot was palmed into the air by the keeper Rob Elliott.

In the second half, Wimbledon took complete control of the game and did most of the attacking, and the surprisingly limp performance by the Charlton youngsters did not suggest they would be knocking on the door of the first team any time soon. Wimbledon opened the scoring on 50 minutes when Javon Molley thumped home after Elliott saved well from Ismail Yakubu's shot. Wimbledon almost doubled

their lead moments later, when Lee Minshull headed onto the bar. Minshull would get on the scoresheet 8 minutes from time after a superb driving run from deep by Andre Blackman put the ball on a plate for Minshull. Charlton had a good chance at the death to get a consolation goal when the young Tamer Tuna couldn't control the ball sufficiently to get a convincing shot in on target.

So, Wimbledon earned a well-deserved victory, although of course results mean almost nothing at this stage. On a day when it was bordering on being too hot to watch a game of football, well done to the players for playing, and at a decent pace, and all in all, this was one of the more enjoyable friendlies with a nice, relaxed atmosphere around the ground.

07/20