

TT No.127: Paul Roth - Sat November 20th 2010; Midland Comb Premier Division; **Heather St John's** v Bolehall Swifts; Res: 3-1; Att: 66; Entry: £5; Programme: 28 pp - £1; Altitude/Location: St. John's Park, Ravenstone Road is 135 m (442.913 ft) above sea level, at a latitude of 52 degrees, 41.8 mins N & longitude of 1 degree, 25.4 mins W; Weather: Grey/gloomy; Club Shop: No, but replica kit etc. from club room; Local MP: Andrew Brigden (Cons).

During the latter part of the summer Channel 5 screened a mini-series entitled 'How to take stunning pictures'. I very much enjoy taking snaps myself but am more than willing to learn, from whatever medium, how to improve and hone my own photographic skills. So, with the prospect of augmenting my knowledge the programmes were duly stored onto our SKY HD Box's hard drive in readiness for viewing at a later date.

However when I did eventually get around to watching the short tutorials my overall impression was one of disappointment - for me they completely lacked any semblance of information regarding technical data which greatly undermined the show's credibility - I wanted erudite chit-chat about the latest gizmos, plus in-depth discussions regarding the finer points of photographic accessories. With a few well-chosen, whispered words in my shell-like about the wonderments of neutral density filters, speed-lite transmitters, Manfrotto Super Clamps and macro rings, and I'd have been in Hasselblad Heaven. God damn it, even the humble f-number didn't get a mention!

Without fail though, every single episode was viewed by my good self from start to finish, and always with expectant relish...why? For the simple reason of catching a fleeting glimpse of the programme's drop-dead gorgeous presenter, Suzi Perry. Every cloud, as they so often say, has a silver lining! It's true, I've the hots for Ms. P, whom I'm at pains to point out is a peerless and award-winning journalist (as you might well imagine, I'm also a devotee of the Gadget Show, despite having absolutely no interest whatsoever in its content), model and world-famous motorcyclist.

Ever so slightly my visit yesterday to Ravenstone Road, the home of Midland Football Combination side Heather St. John's FC, for my 168-hourly football fix, was not entirely dissimilar to the above-mentioned TV series. Yes, unquestionably the host is eminently watchable, veritable 'Eye Candy' in fact, but the overall content of the viewing material, like the above-mentioned show itself, wasn't quite as engaging as I'd perhaps hoped. The veracity is that HSJFC are currently too strong for the MC's Premier Division, as their before-kick-off league record of Pl..12, Won..11, Drawn..1..Lost..0 and a GD of +42 patently demonstrates - on the national stage they're excelling too, having reached the FA Vase 3rd Round Proper for the first time last weekend by virtue of an ill-tempered 3-1 extra time victory at Wednesfield FC. Let me immediately categorically state that the first part of the above statement is in no way meant to detract from the club's meritorious

facilities (St. John's Park's glory is extensively documented in the archive section of this website) and hard-working band of dedicated committee members.

Accompanying me for part of this gloomy, mist-laden day - from Junction 12 of the M1 northwards actually - was my Bengeo-based rapsallion, sidekick and long-time pal Geoffrey Hussingtree Tamworth Seers.

Having taken up his position in my Ford Focus' passenger seat, he instantly assumed the role of co-pilot and with his usual aplomb guided us expeditiously through the byways and back alleys of rural Leicestershire to GBG Arcadia....well, perhaps not quite! Nevertheless, there was one minor hiccup. A diversion sign on the B581 impeded our progress to the Gate Hangs Well at Carlton (according to Geoffers by 11 minutes, 12 seconds!) and then a mist of a different colour descended, as he once more plunged into another of his infamous incandescent rages.

On arrival at the club, and having been furnished with reserved programmes by the club's Events & Bar Manager, Linda Smith, I was then given a pre-match tour of those previously-mentioned esteemed facilities by Financial Director Roger Hayes - Roger simply exudes affection from every pore for his adopted club, and along with the Herculean efforts of other like-minded officers, is the reason why Heather St. John's find themselves in the enviable position they do today.

But back to Linda for a moment: She was the person who had replied to my electronic communication earlier in the week regarding that all-important question of programme availability, and it was she that just happened to be at the turnstile, paper-matter in-hand, who was our initial point of contact upon entry. She very much put me in mind of Lakenheath FC's lovely secretary, Tracey Hannem, and a more likeable and handsome lady it would be nigh-on impossible to meet. Miss Efficiency, and possessing a heart-melting, soft Scottish brogue, Linda is the epitome and embodiment of perfection that is Heather St. John's Football Club.

Now, to try and explain exactly what I meant by the game's un-engaging - somewhat disappointing - content. Sure, the men in yellow and green had lots of possession and did indeed spend the game's initial 20 minutes knocking on their hosts' front door, without ever getting a reply I should add. The homesters' net was never truly threatened and with increasing ease they broke freely upfield, and with alacrity, via the auspices of their wing-backs. Intelligent, fleet-footed inter-passing play between the forwards was a constant headache for the none too 'Swift' defence and with their first menacing exposure to the potent home attack, conceded on 30 minutes.

You didn't need to be Mystic Meg to realise that was effectively game over. Two further post-teatime strikes, from Richard Hanslow and Ashley Spencer respectively, as the November gloaming, gloamed, sealed the Tamworth-based entity's fate. Despite notching a consolation score with a quarter of an hour remaining, the rubber as a contest had long-since ended. Swifts' afternoon was best succinctly summated when their No. 3 was dismissed for a second bookable

offence 10 minutes from time and a free-kick they'd been awarded 25 yards from goal shortly afterwards was summarily so misplaced that Geoff and I imagined it might possibly have landed on Guildhall Lane, in Leicester city centre, adjacent to the Cathedral.....on the full! That's not to take anything away from Heather's performance though - they are an exceptionally gifted footballing outfit.

Well, that's nearly it, but just before I mosey downstairs for pre-prandial Sunday lunchtime Amontillados with my very own inamorata, I'm again going to run the rule over lesson No. 4 - 'How to take stunning sports photography' - purely for research and educational purposes you understand.

It's of course most unlikely I'll ever meet my TV heroine in person, but I count myself fortunate indeed to have spent just a little time in the company of such personable and likeable people as I did yesterday, two of which will live long in the memory. Linda and Heather - It was great meeting you both!

FGIF Star Rating: 5*.

07/20