

TT No.151: *Justin Holmes* - Saturday 8th January 2011; **Huddersfield Town v Dover Athletic**; FA Cup 3rd Round; Venue: Galpharm Stadium, Huddersfield; Score: 2-0; Admn: £15.00; Prog: £2.00; Att: 7894; Match Rating: 3.

FA Cup action today and a long journey north to follow the lowest ranked team still left in the competition, and a team that I have always had a soft spot for, Dover Athletic. It's probably fair to say that a trip to the Galpharm Stadium was not quite the glamour tie that Dover would have hope for when awaiting the draw for the third round, however it still represented a trip to a famous, traditional league club and to play in an impressive modern stadium which is a different world from the stadia usually encountered in the Blue Square South. It certainly caught the imagination of Dover supporters, with over 1,500 fans estimated to make the trip from the Kent coast northwards - considerably more than usually flow through the turnstiles at the Crabble, it has to be said.

The uniquely designed arches of each stand of the Galpharm Stadium stand out impressively as one approaches Huddersfield on the train from Leeds, and the stadium is about a quarter of an hour walk from the station. For this game, tickets were available at the turnstiles for a discounted £15.00, and I took my seat in the South Stand behind one of the goals, which today, as always, was for away fans. The stand behind the other goal was closed for today's game. All four stands have a similar curved design, a pleasing on the eye and refreshingly unique design, which softens the boredom that one usually experiences at recently built stadia. Programmes were on sale for £2.00, clearly a reduced version of Huddersfield's normal programme. It still contained everything it needed to with plenty to read, but didn't seem to have the usual level of professionalism that one usually encounters at League matches.

Both teams lay in fourth place in their respecting leagues - Huddersfield in League 1, Dover Athletic three leagues below in the Blue Square South. The achievement of Dover reaching the Third Round is further enhanced when one considers that today was their sixth tie in the competition, starting out at Erith Town of the Kent League, and most recently Gillingham and Aldershot were comfortably dispatched. Their hopes of claiming a shock result could well have hinge would surely hinge on Adam Birchall, who has scored a quite remarkable 29 goals in 25 games this season, and has scored in every round of their FA Cup run, 11 goals in total. As for Huddersfield, they reached this round by squeezing past Cambridge United 2-1 at home in a replay, before overwhelming Macclesfield 6-0, also at home.

If Dover were to have any chance of causing an upset, they would have needed to keep things tight at the start and hope for large helpings of lady luck along the way. They started brightly in the opening exchanges, however by the eighth minute, the game was already as good as over, as Huddersfield scored twice within a minute thanks to some rather poor defending. The first was scored by Scott Arfield with a tap in from close range after excellent work from Lee Novak, then

Gary Roberts shot home after more good work from Novak. For the rest of the first half, Huddersfield were in total control of the game, with the speed of play and thought much quicker than their non-league opponents, and although Huddersfield rarely looked like scoring, they always had the air of a team that could go up several gears should they need to. Credit though to Dover who battled gamely and did have a goal-bound shot cleared. The second half was much more even, but Dover never really looked like they could get back into the match until the final ten minutes, when they really did give it a go and could consider themselves extremely unlucky to not score a goal, thwarted by increasingly desperate blocks.

However, 2-0 it ended, with there never really being a threat of a romantic upset. Not that the Dover fans let the result spoil their day as they fully appreciated the efforts of an only occasionally outclassed team. The constant loud support from the 1534 Dover fans was mightily impressive, but now Dover must go back to the bread and butter of league football, hoping their will not be any hangover from their FA Cup run as they pursue a return to Conference National football.

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