

**TT No.205: *Mark Farnell*** - Sat 19th March 2011; Alsager Town v Ramsbottom United; North West Counties League Prem; Admission: £5; Programme: £1; Attendance: 81.

With the wife still unable to drive, Saturday's match was chosen for its location on the way to and from horse riding for my youngest. We travelled again up the A50 to Stoke and then on to Alsager home of the 'Bullets' for the Vodkat North West Counties Premier Division fixture.

Taking the route off the internet we found the ground easy enough turning right opposite Twyfords and parking on the main road as there is no parking available at the ground. Lucy and I then travelled through a gully to the Wood Park stadium where I parted with £5 for myself, £2.50 for my daughter and £1 for the programme with a further £5 to cover the cost of the pin badges for Lucy and I.

We then joined a handful of people making their way to the pitch where both sides were warming up and managing to kick the ball over the wall into the adjoining brook. Saturday was a really pleasant March day and the ground was set in woodland backing onto the estate making it pleasing to the eye. At 3pm when Lucy and I had been joined by 79 other folks (plus a dog) the teams kicked off for what was a really close, well fought game which I had expected Ramsbottom to win convincingly.

The Rams (is that their nickname?) took the lead on thirteen minutes when Gary Stopforth rifled in a shot from twenty yards out. But a minute later the Bullets had equalised after Tim Grice was put through in space and rounded the keeper to big cheers from the locals and shouts of despair from the travelling Ramsbottom fans who I had discovered came from somewhere between Bury and Blackburn in Lancashire. Ramsbottom were then forced to make a change when Saunders replaced Shuttleworth with no.11 Dean dropping into defence to cover Shuttleworth's departure. Both sides created half chances but in a near carbon copy of Alsagers first goal, Grice once again found himself in space to round the keeper and give Alsager the lead which they kept until half time. Alsager 2 Ramsbottom 1.

At half time we made our way into the clubhouse for two packets of crisps (one each) and a quick glance at the TV noting that the Baggies were one up against Arsenal. Back out into the sunshine and taking our seats (or benches) we settled down for the second half.

Ramsbottom soon levelled on forty-eight minutes when sub Saunders headed in to square things up at 2-2. Both sides then pressed forwards for a winner with Alsager hitting the post from a free kick and Ramsbottom having a shot touched round the post, also from a free kick. Then on seventy-three minutes Bernard Morley got Ramsbottom's winner after controversially heading in following Alsager's appeal for hand ball which the assistant referee decided was not deliberate. Again, both sides

created chances but the game ended 3-2 in favour of Ramsbottom which was just about the right result. Back to the car and another journey home through Stoke with the news West Brom and Arsenal had drawn, picking up Kath and Jemma en route.

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