

TT No.39: *Justin Holmes* - Mon 30th August 2010; **Bedfont Sports** v Hayes Gate; Combined Counties League Div. 1; Venue: Bedfont Sports Club, Bedfont; Score: 3-2; Admission: None; Prog: £2.00; Att: 100 (est.); Match Rating: 4*.

Another Bank Holiday and once again the Combined Counties League is the source for the first in a double bill of games for me today. With all of their games kicking off at 11.30, it's the only senior league in the south-east to have morning kick-offs this bank holiday. I chose to head to Bedfont Sports, located little more than a stone's throw away from the perimeter fence of Heathrow Airport - indeed, the loud roar of planes taking off and sight of planes in very close view coming into land was a constant feature throughout the match. The closest tube station to Bedfont Sports Ground is Hatton Cross, about 15 minutes' walk away, however rather than endure the mind crushing experience of a tube journey of almost an hour from central London, I chose to take the train to Feltham, with roughly double the walking distance. The club is located adjacent to The Orchard, formerly home of Bedfont FC but now of Bedfont Town (formerly Bedfont Green) and Feltham.

Today's game was free admission, with programmes available at an inflated £2, although all proceeds from programme sales apparently would be given to the junior section of the club. The programme was of a pretty good standard considering the level, containing a good combination of words and stats to inform the visitor about both clubs and their progress so far this season. Unsurprisingly given that Bedfont Sports are relatively new to Senior football - this being only their second season in the Combined Counties League, facilities are pretty basic, with just hard standing all around the pitch, but with a pleasant open terraced area outside the tea-bar and clubhouse. Seats and benches are also scattered around this length of the pitch. The club has a scent of one that is well-run and organised, with ambitions to progress and improve facilities at a sensible rate - indeed, plans are in place to construct a stand and to fully enclose the ground.

Bedfont Sports went into this game top of the league, having been unbeaten in their first six games and won three of those, although they did lose their latest game at Chobham. Today's visitors Hayes Gate, who have only been in existence for four years, have made a solid start to their first season in senior football, gaining nine points from their opening five games.

This game proved my belief that even at this lowest level of senior football, one can still watch some highly entertaining football with no little skill on display. Both sides deserve considerable credit for this, considering that there was a strong wind blowing throughout the match. The home side took the lead as early as the three minutes when a ball was pumped forward, the keeper shouted "my ball" - inexplicably, as he was nowhere near the ball and the striker headed the ball easily over the onrushing keeper. This seemed to kick Hayes Gate into life, as they went on to dominate the first half with some wonderful fast flowing football. They

equalised on 20 minutes with a strange goal, a free kick was curled fairly weakly into the box along the ground, but defenders and the goalkeeper left clearing the ball to each other, allowing it to trickle into the net. They took a deserved lead on the half hour, which they held until half time. That was as good as it got for the visitors, as Bedford Sports were by far the better side in the second half. On 60 minutes, Bedford Sports were back on level terms when Luke Craig sent the keeper the wrong way from the penalty spot. They went on claim the three points with a quarter of an hour remaining when an awful back-pass was intercepted by Tony Hadley, who poked it past the keeper weakly and the ball just about rolled into the corner of the net before the onrushing defenders could reach it.

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