

TT No.68: *Andy Gallon* - Tues 14th September 2010; **Norwich United** v Wroxham; Eastern Counties League Prem Division; Res: 2-3; Att: 119; Admission: £6; Programme: £1 (24pp); FGIF Match Rating: ****.

THE PLACE: Definitely not Norwich, despite the club's (as it turns out) misleading name. United are based in Blofield, a dull commuter village five miles east of the city centre. It's little more than a lay-by on the busy road to Great Yarmouth. Nothing to see or do. For an evening fixture here, you're better off spending the day either in town planning nonsense Norwich, with its bewildering juxtaposition of medieval and modern buildings, or exploring the watery wilderness of the windmill-gilded Broads.

THE GROUND: Neat, tidy set-up, very much in the middle of nowhere. A minor miracle the match went ahead, given the three hours of rain which teemed down mercilessly before kick-off. On our arrival, the gravel car park resembled a swimming pool. The Plantation Park pitch must drain really well because there was scarcely any evidence of surface water either before or during the game. There is a modern, if characterless, clubhouse behind the goal at the west end of a ground the Planters have used since the late 1980s. The sole stand, a simple wooden structure, straddles the southern touchline and offers a mixture of seats and terracing. The aforementioned A47 roars away round the back. Trees and hedges fringe the ground and help give it an enclosed feel. A lovely little arena, with plenty of room for further development. It's difficult, though, to see how crowds can be improved in such an isolated location.

THE GAME: Two of the fancied teams this season in the Premier Division of the Eastern Counties League provided a superb advert for the competition in a pulsating local derby. Thankfully, the rain stopped before the match got under way. French teenager Claudio Langlois (to Wroxham from Paris St Germain via Histon!) back-heeled cleverly to set up Ross Durrant's 17th-minute opener for the visitors. United then pressed constantly and deservedly equalised five minutes before the break when Jordan Blyth forced keeper Scott Howie into slicing a clearance straight to him. Blyth crossed and Andy Key forced the ball home from close range. Two goals in three minutes won it for Wroxham. Gavin Lemmon slid a loose ball into the roof of the net a minute after the restart after keeper Ben Nower had palmed aside a deflected Durrant shot. Danny Self crossed deep to the back post, where Damian Hilton climbed well to bullet home a close-range header, making it 3-1. Norwich paved the way for a tense climax by pulling one back with 19 minutes left. Lee Hunter crowned a superb passing movement from one end of the pitch to the other by rolling an angled shot past Howie, who made a meal of what should have been a straightforward save. The referee added six and a half minutes at the end, but the Planters couldn't prevent the Yachtsmen sailing back to the Broads with the points.

THE PROGRAMME: One from the Barnes Print stable. Blandness personified.

THE VERDICT: Plantation Park is recommended to all, but don't turn up in Blofield too early. You'll be bored to tears.

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