

TT No.7: *Justin Holmes* - Sat 24th July 2010; **Chelmsford City** v Bradford City; Pre-Season Friendly; Venue: Melbourne Park, Chelmsford; Score: 0-3; Admission: £7.00; Programme: £1.50; Att: 380; Match Rating: 3.

The latest temptation to lead me away from my natural instinct to give pre-season matches a swerve was this interesting looking, and slightly unusual, match between Chelmsford City, of the Blue Square South, against Bradford City, of League 2. The fixture was made possible by Bradford's manager, Peter Taylor, taking the club back to his Essex roots, this game being the last of a short mini tour of Essex, and indeed, Taylor had a short spell with Chelmsford as player/coach.

Melbourne Park is a brisk half hour walk north westwards from Chelmsford train station, and is situated in a park area and adjacent to a sports centre. Whilst the ground is very spacious and excellently maintained, it is unremarkable with several detractors. As Melbourne Park doubles as an athletics stadium, there is a running track separating the pitch from the spectators, the view being particularly distant from the main stand. Covered seating is also available on the opposite side of the pitch, backing onto the wall of the sports centre. To further inhibit the generation of a good atmosphere, music is apparently not allowed to be played at Melbourne Park as a condition of the local Council allowing football to be played here. Having said all of that, at least Chelmsford are now able to play in their home town (interesting to note that Chelmsford is a town, not a city as the football club's name would suggest), something that their fans must have wondered would ever happen again during their nine years in exile at Maldon and later Billericay around the turn of the millennium.

Credit should go to Chelmsford for keeping admission prices at a reasonable £7 for today's game against attractive opponents, and therefore the low attendance (augmented by a fair sprinkling of Bradford supporters) was slightly disappointing. The programme was a huge disappointment, consisting of 24 pages of black and white print, much of which was taken up with advertising and for the most part devoid of interesting information. That would be fair enough for a pre-season publication if £1.50 were not being charged for it.

On another warm, muggy afternoon, Bradford started the match with pretty much their first team, and indeed, Chelmsford were completely outclassed in the first half, blown away by a display of hungry, aggressive football from Bradford. They took the lead on 12 minutes when Gareth Evans converted a penalty despite the Chelmsford keeper guessing the right way. On 26 minutes, they doubled their lead thanks to a wonderful goal, Gareth Evans again on the scoresheet with an emphatic scissor kick shot on the volley. Tom Adeyemi scored a third on 36 minutes when he broke clear of the defence and finished emphatically despite the keeper getting his fingertips to the shot. One feared for Chelmsford at this stage, who were playing as poorly as Bradford were playing well. However, the second

half saw no further addition to the score-line, which was full of neat and tidy football but was essentially a predictably drab affair given that this was a friendly match with one team having raced into a convincing position. Chelmsford certainly played much better in the second half, keeping the ball well, passing more accurately and looked much stronger in defence.

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