

TT No.9: Gyles Basey-Fisher - Mon 19th July; **Barnstable Town** v Doncaster Rovers; South West Cup (Joma Cup); Kick off: 8pm; Result: 1-10; Admission: £5.00; Programme: £2.00 (Covers all games); Attendance: 408.

It is no coincidence that we were now staying just outside Ilfracombe. I have followed the fortunes of the South West Cup for a few seasons and decided to give it a look.

The South West Cup seems to be gathering momentum; this seasons competition has attracted the likes of Kilmarnock, Doncaster Rovers and the return of Premier League new boys Blackpool. Games take place over a week with four groups, one of four teams and three groups of three, playing between Monday and Thursday then the Semi Finals, Saturday and the Final, Sunday. The Tournament uses six grounds around North Devon - Bideford, Barnstable,

Ilfracombe, Torrington, Holsworthy and Elmore. For those who dislike friendlies you may be interested to know that there are only three substitutions allowed and they even have fourth officials.

My aim was to do Bideford v Kilmarnock on Monday and Barnstable v Doncaster Rovers on Thursday, but a fixture switch saw the latter also moved to Monday, maybe my luck has now ran-out, so Bideford v Accrington Stanley on Wednesday would be my other fixture.

I arrived at a gloomy Barnstable about an hour before kick-off. You could tell rain was coming, but how long would it hold out? I paid my £5 admission and purchased the official Tournament Programme for £2. It covered all games and basically had a couple of pages about each of the twelve teams and their squads.

Barnstable had been busy in the summer. You enter the ground behind the goal and either side of the turnstiles where two brand new concrete terraces comprising of two wide steps and steel barriers existed. Going in an anti-clockwise direction from the entrance: there was a small club shop towards the corner; along the far side was a large club house then a covered terrace which ran about half the length of the touch line. Behind the far goal was hard standing and coming round to the old main stand, on the halfway line, which has four rows of wooden benches. Either side of the stand were grass banks, which made for a good elevated view of the pitch and in the near corner were the changing rooms.

The game almost never took place, Doncaster Rovers were unhappy about the three subs rule and at 7.30pm still hadn't decided whether to participate in the tournament. Finally, they agreed to play the game, but did subsequently

withdraw their first team from the competition and played a reserve team in the next match putting a statement on their website explaining that they were worried about players picking up injuries due to not being able to rotate the squad. The good thing to come out of this was that they played a nearly full-strength team,

which although resulted in a 10-1 hammering for the home side, the neat passing football was enjoyable to watch. It was also fascinating to listen to the Barnstable manager trying everything in his locker to stop the relentless surge of Doncaster's midfield and speedy wingers, the own goal after only 5 minutes didn't help and the one in the second half, both by the same player!

The crowd saw a very healthy 408 crowd containing a good number of Doncaster Rovers fans, but also supporters of other teams in the competition not involved that evening. The torrential rain held off until the final whistle.

07/20