

TT No.124: *Justin Holmes* - Tues 27th December 2011; **Windsor v Egham Town**; Combined Counties League Prem Division; Venue: Stag Meadow, Windsor; Score: 4-1; Admn: Free; Programme: £2.50; Attendance: 806; Match Rating: 4.

For my latest festive bank holiday football fix, I went for "a right royal day out", with a trip to Windsor, attracted by the club offering free entry to all spectators for today's match, which was appealing enough in itself, being a local derby between two of the better sides in the Combined Counties League Premier Division.

This is Windsor's first season in existence, formed after the winding up of the previous club Windsor and Eton. They have taken over the former club's ground at Stag Meadow, which is located about a half hour walk from Windsor and Eton Riverside station. The walk is certainly very pleasant, as one passes close by Windsor Castle and then through the town centre. Stag Meadow is located on the edge of the Great Park, and is neat, tidy and well maintained, but it will not live long in the memory of my groundhopping travels. The ground is very open, with a small old-fashioned all-seater stand, dating back to the 1940's, straddling the half way line on one side, either side of the stand are uncovered terraces, whilst on the other side of the pitch, cover is extended along the middle three quarters of the length over a few terrace steps. Behind both goals are again a few terrace steps but uncovered. A tea bar is located in one corner just after one enters the ground, whilst on the other side of the main stand is the clubhouse and as this was designated a "Family Fun Day", a hog roast was offered together with face painting and various other attractions. A special edition of the programme was produced, for 50 pence more than normal, today containing 48 pages in full colour. Plenty of interesting articles and stats to read. A slight criticism might be that the editor tried to be a little too funny on too many occasions, although in fairness perhaps regular fans would have "got the jokes" more than a one-off visitor.

Considering Windsor had to start from scratch at the start of this season, it is to their enormous credit that they found themselves in second place going into today's game, three points behind reigning champions Guildford City. After an understandably slow start to the season, they have been in electric form recently, winning their last four league games and are unbeaten in their last ten league games, stretching back to mid-October, and over the season, their stand out results have been 11-0, 10-0 and 7-1 victories. Today's visitors, Egham Town, are doing better than they have in recent years, in fourth place, eight points behind Windsor but with two games in hand. They also have been in very good form, losing just once in their last 13 games.

On an incredibly mild afternoon for a festive fixture, the opening exchanges pointed to an even match, yet on eight minutes, Windsor opened the scoring when a surging run from the right towards the goalkeeper by Ryan O'Toole ended with the ball being played along the six-yard line for Joe Chandiram to fire home.

Windsor dominated the rest of the half and missed at least three glorious chances to extend their lead, although this was more a reflection of how well Windsor were playing - credit to Egham for always looking to play football and they showed enough with intermittent attacks to suggest that the game was still very much in the balance at half time and Windsor may yet regret missing those golden chances.

The second half started off as evenly as the first had, but on the hour mark, Windsor increased their lead when Michael Chennels fired home from close range following a good run into the box and cut back by Yashwa Romeo. Five minutes later and it was game over, when Ben Porter showed good trickery before laying the ball back to Romeo to tap the ball into an empty net. A minute later and the score-line became very harsh on the visitors when O'Toole worked some space before curling a peach of a low shot into the corner from the edge of the box. The home side took their foot off of the gas after this, which allowed Egham to come more and more into the game, and they got the goal they deserved on 86 minutes when Dan Hartlebury curled a lovely shot just out of the reach of the keeper and into the net. They had a couple of chances to make the score-line more respectable, but the match ended 4-1 to the home side. Egham could count themselves very unlucky to be on the end of such a score-line - a similar performance against most other teams in the league would probably yield three points, but today they were simply blitzed by an electric spell from the home side in the space of six second half minutes.

It was a brave decision to allow free entry for a match that probably would have attracted a reasonable crowd anyway, being a festive fixture against a local team also going well this season, but it was pleasing to see the club rewarded for the big efforts that had been put in to make the day a success with a huge attendance, who not only got their wallets out for refreshments, but the town was very much sent the message that their team is alive and kicking again after the demise of the former club, and on today's showing, Windsor will run Guildford very close for the title and a return to the Southern League looks a distinct possibility.

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