

TT No.155: *Justin Holmes* - Saturday 28th January 2012; **Lowestoft Town v Wealdstone**; Isthmian League Prem Division; Venue: Crown Meadow, Lowestoft; Score: 2-1; Admission: £10.00; Programme: £2.00; Att: 855; Match Rating: 3.

Bargain train tickets again from National Express East Anglia prompted me to venture to the most easterly senior football club - and town - in the United Kingdom today. It would also be an opportunity to visit a club that has intrigued me in recent seasons, attracting extremely impressive attendances despite only very recently rising from County League level.

The Crown Meadow ground is located less than ten minutes' walk north from Lowestoft train station and very close to the town centre. In truth, it is quite a charmless and dreary ground, but it does the job for the level of football. As one enters the ground in one corner, the clubhouse is to the left behind one of the goals, and as one continues along the touchline, there is a covered terrace area, an old-fashioned all-seater stand straddling the half way line, and a modern brick building housing the changing rooms and tea bar. Behind the far goal is a small shelter, and around the rest of the ground is just hard standing, with a background of housing all around. The programme was reasonable, fairly typical fare for the level - some interesting material but heavy with advertising.

Lowestoft look in a great position to push on and go one better this season, having only missed out on promotion to the Conference South last season when they lost in the play-off final to Tonbridge Angels 3-4, having led 3-1. They were in third place going into today's game, just two points behind the leaders Billericay but with three games in hand - they have two games in hand on second placed Hornchurch, on the same number of points. Their recent form in the league has not been too good, losing two of their last three games, although before that they were in electric form, winning their eight and drawing the other of their previous nine games. Wealdstone are stuck firmly in mid table, in eleventh place but will still have hope of reaching the play-offs, being seven points adrift of fifth placed Cray Wanderers but with two games in hand. They too have been in good recent form, unbeaten in their last nine league games and fifteen games in all competitions, but have drawn their last three games 1-1. A goalless draw was played out when Lowestoft travelled to Wealdstone earlier in the season.

On a dry, intermittently sunny afternoon, it was Lowestoft who looked the brighter in the early stages as they did all of the attacking, but completely against the run of play, it was the visitors who took the lead on 22 minutes when Britt Assombalonga, on loan from Watford, sprang the offside trap, ran from the touchline close to the halfway line unopposed, before beating the keeper. This unsurprisingly inspired Wealdstone to get more into the game, with both sides having reasonable chances to score during the remainder of the half, but going into the break it was the visitors who retained their slender lead.

It did not take Lowestoft long to get back on level terms though, when a defender's clearance was charged down, with the ball running free to Chris Henderson, who took his time to place a beautiful shot into the top corner from just outside the penalty area. Lowestoft then went on to dominate proceedings and on the hour mark, they were awarded a penalty when Lubomir Guentchev was bundled over close to the edge of the box. Joe Francis powered home the penalty just out of the reach of the keeper to his right. It was Lowestoft who looked far more the likely to add to the scoring for the rest of the game, although deep into injury time, it was Wealdstone who came agonisingly close to snatching an equaliser, when a 25 yard free kick was fumbled by the keeper, but he somehow managed to smother a powerful follow-up shot from a few yards out.

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