

TT No.19: *Rob Champion* - Sat 27th August 2011; **OADBY TOWN 3-1 ST. ANDREWS**; East Midlands Counties League; Venue: Greene King Park; Admission: £5; Programme: £1; Attendance: 120; Match rating: 3 out of 5.

A visit to Oadby Town Football Club was not on my agenda this afternoon at all, actually in fact six weeks ago it was not on my agenda all season!!!! Not because I have no interest in the club but because I was planning to spend the season, like previous one's ground hopping. A couple of weeks ago when driving up to Derby I lost a lot of interest in this hobby of mine and missed the buzz of supporting a club week in week out. This is when I offered my services to run a club shop that Oadby are planning to set up, but would only be on a Saturday due to work commitments.

My interest in Oadby goes back to January 1997 when I first went down to watch them for an FA Vase tie against Tooting & Mitcham United. This game ended in a 2-2 draw after extra time and following this I went to watch them a couple more times during the season. In the summer I wrote to them offering to edit their match day programme and spent three years doing this around the turn of the century. I have always kept in an interest in the team despite not going down much over the past few years, in fact it is just over two years since I last saw a game here, though I did see them twice away from home last season @ Tividale in the FA Cup and Tipton Town for a Midland Alliance encounter.

Last season was probably the worst ever for Oadby on the field as they were relegated for the first time in their seventy-four-year history and this season find themselves in the East Midlands Counties League. Lee Harriman took over as manager in the summer with Jeff Stocking as his assistant. Oadby have started well this season picking up four points from their opening two league games (5-0 @ Holwell and 1-1@ Ibstock) plus a 6-1 thumping of United Counties League side Northampton Spencer in the FA Cup last Saturday. The reward for the Cup victory is a trip to local rivals Quorn next Saturday in the next round - and yes, I will be there.

Today's game against St. Andrews will be the first time that they have played each other in a competitive match since the 21st January 2003 when Oadby recorded a 5-3 victory after extra-time in the 2nd round of the Leicestershire "Westerby" Challenge Cup. The last league games between the two sides were in the 1998/99 season when they were both members of the Leicestershire Senior League (LSL). A 3-3 draw @ St. Andrews on the 3rd October 1998 was followed by a 2-1 victory for Oadby in the reverse fixture on the 3rd April 1999. Oadby went on to win the LSL title and gain promotion to the Midland Alliance. Oadby spent twelve years in the Alliance, winning the title at the first attempt finishing ten points ahead of runners-up Stratford Town. The nearest they came to winning a second title came in the 2000/01 and 2002/03 seasons when fourth place finishes were achieved.

Oadby's ground is located on the B582 Wigston Road and is opposite the Leicester Tigers training ground and in front of Parklands Leisure Centre. Car parking is available inside the ground behind the goal at the Oadby end, while the clubhouse, changing rooms and burger bar all at the other end of the ground. There is only one section of cover at Greene King Park - a 200-seater stand that straddles the half way line on the Wigston Road side of the ground. The ground has gone through various names due to sponsorship over the years. When I first went down in 1998 it was called Invicta Park and this was followed by Events & Leisure Park and Topps Park (named after Topps Tiles) before Bury St. Edmunds brewers Greene King.

Oadby had to work hard for this victory against the early pacesetters and came through with a 3-1 victory. They should have made the perfect start as Michael Reeves was clean through after only twenty odd seconds but the ball ran away from him as he tried to control it. The opening ten minutes saw both sides evenly matched in the middle of the park as either side struggled to gain the upper hand. Following successive corners Oadby took the lead on twelve minutes when the ball was headed back into the penalty area and Reeves finished from close range. Former Leicester City and Sunderland midfielder Matt Piper was a constant threat all afternoon for Oadby and was he who created their second goal on fifteen minutes. Excellent work and cross on the left saw John Stevenson control the ball before finishing into the roof of the net. To be fair the visitors did not let their heads drop and were the better side for a short period leading up to their goal. A free kick on the left found Kris Stevenson unmarked in the penalty area and he headed home from a few yards out. The remainder of the half and the opening exchanges of the second half saw either keeper rarely tested as both sides were well organised in defence, in particular Joe Latham for Oadby giving the Andrews forward line very little all afternoon. The referee did not help matters as he seemed very quick to dish out yellow cards for what appeared to be for very little. I don't think he took into account the conditions as the game was played in either heavy showers or bright sunshine. Just after the hour mark Oadby put the game to bed by making it 3-1. Stevenson smashed the ball home from fifteen yards out that gave Warren Butlin in the Andrews goal no chance. The final twenty minutes saw Oadby come close to adding to their goal tally on several occasions. The closest the visitors came to scoring in the latter stages came in stoppage time when a free kick was deflected wide.

The Man of the match award: Matt Piper (Oadby Town).

Overall, a good performance from Oadby who remain unbeaten in the early stages of their 2011/12 campaign, and on a personal level I really enjoyed being back seeing old faces and meeting new ones.

07/20