

TT No.223: Keith Aslan - Sat 14th April 2012, KO 15.05; Mersea Island v Coggeshall; Essex & Suffolk Border League 1; Result: 2-2; Admission and programme: Free; Attendance: 13 (10 home, 2 away & 1 neutral).

Mersea Island is a hidden gem and a lovely place to visit on a warm spring day, or even a cold miserable one which this was. It is a holiday resort, although a week on one of the many caravan sites on the island might be a bit excessive as you can walk round the whole island in a few hours. 10 miles south of Colchester, buses leave from the bus station at 21 minutes past the hour and return from a stop 5 minutes from the ground at 3 minutes past the hour. If like me you are one of the few people who actually pay for bus journeys, the fare is £6 return. Checking the kick off time here is a must as the island is cut off from the mainland at high tide which can result in some very unusual start times. No such problems today though.

"The Glebe" is towards the north of the island, just a pitch with a clubhouse and changing rooms behind the goal. The 24-page colour programmes are spread around the clubhouse and you help yourself. Feed and water yourself in the town before coming out as there is nowhere close by and hot drinks and food are not available at the ground.

The game kicked off late of course as Coggeshall declined to leave the dressing room for a 3pm kick off and the referee declined to make them. Going off at a tangent, am I the only person who think U.E.F.A. should have fined Manchester City much more than £25,000 (less than a day's wages for most of their players) for coming out late for the second half of a European game? Even a 15-minute half time wasn't enough for them and in spite of being called, they strolled onto the pitch two minutes late showing a contempt for the spectators, the opposition and the TV companies who had paid vast sums of money to show the game. (Much has been debated about TV's influence on football, but one thing nobody has ever said is "We don't want your money"). How about a fine for Coggeshall say £20 for a first offence, which would virtually guarantee that there would be no second offence? And how about the referee being asked to explain the late start in his match report? It won't happen of course, as nobody within football cares any more. The younger generation of football fan will never know the joy of anticipation of going to a game knowing when it is going to start and finish.

The game was absorbing, Coggeshall's extra time in the changing room didn't do them any good and in the first nine minutes they had conceded a penalty, which was missed, and gone two goals down. It was 2-1 at half time and I made the excellent decision to watch the second half from behind the Mersea goal, thus getting a close-up view of almost all of the action. The away side totally dominated; I lost count of the corners they had but it must have been at least a dozen, and they must have been very disappointed to return to the mainland with just a point.

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