

TT No.248: Justin Holmes - Sat 26th May 2012; **FC Romania** v Willesden Constantine; Middlesex County League Prem Division; Venue: Coles Park, North London; Score: 4-3; Admission: None; Programme: £2.00; Att: 40 (est.); Match rating: 4.

For what will surely be my final match of the 2011/12 season, there were only a handful of games to choose from in the south-east today, in the Middlesex County or Essex Olympian League, none of which had anything really riding on them. In the end, I chose to pay a visit to a senior football ground I had not previously visited.

Although they have played most of their games this season in Leyton, FC Romania played this game at Coles Park, home of Haringey Borough of the South Midlands Spartan League. The ground is located about a twenty-minute walk from Wood Green underground station, along White Hart Lane - if one were to continue along the road, one would end up at the home of Tottenham Hotspur. In all honesty, it is not a ground that will live long in the memory. There is a main stand, which offers good elevated views apart from supporting pillars and floodlight pylons which slightly obstruct one's view. Behind the stand is a low building with changing rooms and a rather scruffy clubhouse. Around the rest of the pitch is just hard standing, and the background is housing and industrial units. Ground improvements appear to be well underway, with plenty of excavation work being carried out all around the stand. Basic programmes were available today, very much a one-off though by all accounts, as FC Romania do not usually issue programmes.

Today's match, on the last day of the season, would be between two of the better sides in the league, although there would be absolutely nothing left to play for either side today. FC Romania are assured of second place in the table, twelve points behind champions Interwood and seven points clear of third placed Southall, who have already completed their games. They have ended the season in excellent form, winning their last six games and thirteen of their last fourteen games. Willesden Constantine are assured of fourth place, seven points behind Southall and with a much better goal difference than the two clubs immediately beneath them on the same points who have both completed their fixtures. They have lost their last two games, although their last game was three weeks ago. When the two teams met earlier in the season, Willesden Constantine won 3-2.

With this being the last game of the season, played in late May, with nothing riding on the outcome and in very warm and sunny conditions, everything pointed to a rather dull and pedestrian game. What panned out was, happily, nothing of the sort, and the game was one of the most entertaining I have watched all season. With just three minutes on the clock, a Willesden defender played a suicidal ball across the pitch straight to the FC Romania striker, who strode forward from close to the half way line towards goal and he showed good composure in side stepping the keeper before slotting the ball into the net. The game then settled down,

always with FC Romania looking the better and more skilful side but with Willesden Constantine playing their part in a very entertaining first half. On 41 minutes though, the home side doubled their lead, when two shots were blocked on the line in quick succession, before the loose ball was drilled home through a crowd of players.

So a fairly comfortable lead for FC Romania at the interval, a lead which became even more comfortable ten minutes into the second half, when a Willesden defender sloppily lost possession 8 yards along the touchline, and a FC Romania pulled the ball back and his fellow striker smashed the ball home for what looked like "game over". It certainly was a harsh looking score-line on the visitors, and they continued to play reasonably well and struck a few long distance off target shots. On 67 minutes, they scored what looked like a consolation goal when the ball was tucked home from 8 yards after the ball was pulled back from the touchline. Five minutes later and it was suddenly very much game on, and a Willesden player worked some space for himself close to the corner flag before sending a high cross into the box. The FC Romania defender made a hash of his header away, and the ball was smashed home from 8 yards out. Another five minutes later and Willesden Constantine completed an excellent comeback to level the scores. The FC Romania goalkeeper had to take much of the blame for conceding the goal, as a mix up with his defender saw a soft corner being conceded. From the corner, the goalkeeper went up to claim the ball but spilt the ball, and the loose ball was smashed high into the net. All of the momentum was obviously now with the visitors and they looked the likely side to win it in the remaining quarter of an hour, but deep into injury time, it was FC Romania who scored the winner thanks to yet more poor defending, when a Willesden Constantine defender lost possession in the box, and the ball was bundled into the net from close range following a short cross along the six yard box. Now it remains to be seen whether FC Romania shall be promoted. The ambition is certainly there, and apparently, they shall groundshare at Cheshunt should they be promoted, although champions Interwood are also seeking promotion, which may have some bearing on whether FC Romania are successful.

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