

TT No.26: *Andy Gallon* - Mon 29th August 2011; **Wakefield FC** v Ossett Town; NPL Division One North; Res: 4-1; Att: 117; Admission: £7; Programme: £1.50 (24pp); FGIF Match Rating: ***.

On a cold, windy August Bank Holiday afternoon, the deserted centre of Ossett is the epitome of lifelessness. The elegant Town Hall, built between 1906 and 1908 to a dignified design from the pen of Batley architect AW Hanstock, tries hard to raise the architectural tone of this ugly town, a metaphorical bomb crater in the bleak no man's land between the front lines of Wakefield and Dewsbury. There is so little evidence of coherence in Ossett, one wonders if the local authority has any planners on its payroll. The wholly unappealing centre is a disjointed mess; a hotchpotch of vile building styles, litter strewn alleys, uninviting pubs and tiny car parks, the latter apparently shoehorned without thought into spaces created (I imagine) by slum clearance. At least Ossett boasts a few independent businesses, but for how much longer? Voracious retail giant Tesco is being allowed to gain a foothold here, and will soon erect a superstore on Ingfield, home of Ossett Town FC, today's destination. Ingfield is a prime site next to the revamped (oh, it's horrible) bus station, and though the football club will do very well out of the deal, exchanging a shabby, life-expired ground for a smart new stadium, 'Tescoisation' is almost certain to kill off Ossett's grubby high street. Across Britain, the irreversible damage done by so-called 'Tescopoly' is plain to see. As you sow, so shall you reap.

For Ossett Town, notionally at least, this derby was an away game because Wakefield FC, booted unceremoniously out of College Grove, the city's old rugby union ground, at the end of last season, are now their tenants. Though I couldn't get a straight answer from anyone about when Tesco plans to start construction of its superstore, I was told the ground sale had gone through and had the impression that Wakefield's stay here is likely to be a one-season affair. "What then?" I asked an official. "We're in trouble," he replied, with a shrug and a half-smile, hallmarks of the long suffering. "Why not," I ought to have countered, "give up this daft 'Wakefield FC' project, swallow your pride and go back to Emley?" Therein, of course, lies another tale.

Ingfield will be no loss, frankly. With three 'crinkly tin' stands, a bumpy, sloping pitch, drab portable buildings dotted all over the place and an unbecoming setting amid careworn houses and mills, it is not a pretty venue. The most impressive stand, a propped cantilever the width of the penalty area with six rows of red plastic tip-up seats, is behind the Town End goal. Like Ossett itself, Ingfield appears to have developed piecemeal, without rhyme or reason. The other two stands aren't really in the right locations, the layout and design of the terracing doesn't work, there are peculiar bits of railed walkway here and there, the gloomy social club is positioned off centre and set back from the pitch, and the grim portable buildings which serve as hospitality suites (you're having a laugh, surely?),

souvenir shop and refreshment hut would jar the least sensitive eye. In summary, Ingfield is a dump, and Ossett Town must be looking forward to the opportunity of starting afresh somewhere else.

As for the game, well, tenant gave landlord a footballing lesson. This isn't the first Ossett team (Town or Albion) I've seen who appear incapable of doing anything but kick the opposition. It was obvious from the start that the 'visiting team' would struggle to keep 11 players on the pitch, and so it proved. Thuggish centre-half Jacob Lawlor was shown a second yellow card in the 62nd minute for one cheap shot too many, and petulant team-mates Darren Thornton (a man with a short temper, if ever I saw one) and Luke Richardson were lucky not to join him prematurely in the communal bath. The remarkably patient referee, a Mr Mellor, from Leeds, was kept busy as he attempted to curb Ossett's wilder excesses, dishing out a total of eight yellow cards.

Wakefield went ahead in the eighth minute with a wonderful 20-yard, over-the-shoulder volley into the top corner from big striker Tom Denton, whose muscular presence and impressive skill set made him a real handful throughout. A strong wind kept creative play to a minimum (the West Yorkshire League fixture I watched at Field two days previously was far more entertaining than this tripe), but the Bears dominated until, unexpectedly and unaccountably, Ossett equalised in the third minute of stoppage time. Nathan Joynes scored from the spot (the only way his side were going to find the net), sending keeper Jan Zolna the wrong way after Luke Danville had needlessly upended Michael Senior. It was virtually the last kick of the first half, and as the players trooped towards the dressing rooms, attention seeker Zolna bawled out his team-mates with an unnecessarily noisy tirade which, if nothing else, confirmed his Eastern European origins.

Substitute Danny South headed Wakefield back in front in the 57th minute, and once Lawlor had walked, the 'hosts' really rubbed in their superiority. Experienced Ossett keeper Steve Dickinson's saves prevented a wider margin of defeat. In the 64th minute, Denton struck the bar with a close-range header before nodding in the third from a corner three minutes later. Dan Sheriffe kept his cool in a one-on-one in the 73rd minute to complete the rout. By this stage, the loudmouths on the Ossett bench had lapsed into moody silence. I guess there's nothing more dispiriting than landlord being so comprehensively upstaged by tenant.

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