

**TT No.28: Justin Holmes** - Mon 29th August 2011; **Alton Town** v Moneyfields; Wessex League Premier Division; Venue: Alton (Bass) Sports Ground, Alton; Score: 3-2; Admn: £6.00; Prog: £1.00; Att: 70 (est.); Match Rating: 4.

Upon the conclusion of my first game of the day at Farnham, I hopped back on the train to make the short journey southwards and over the Surrey-Hampshire border to take in the Wessex League Premier Division fixture between Alton Town and Moneyfields. A train that had not moved half hour previous to my arrival at the station due to a points failure between Farnham and Alton was cause for concern, with points related delays varying in length between minutes and hours, however in the end I made it to Alton with plenty of time to spare.

The Alton (Bass) Sports Ground is located about a ten-minute walk from the town's train station and is a moderately attractive ground. All of the spectator facilities are located along the length of the pitch where one enters the ground. To the right and straddling the half way line is an old-fashioned stand with wooden bench seating, and to the other side of the ground's entrance is the clubhouse and tea bar. Around the rest of the ground is hard standing. The ground used to house a cricket field, and so there is a large area of grass - about the size of another football pitch - that is used for training and warming up backing onto the main pitch - and behind that is a cricket pavilion building which houses the changing rooms. Pine trees behind this additional pitch give a reasonably pleasant background to the ground. The programme was, in truth, nothing to write home about, with more than its fair share of advertising and lacking the club's fixtures and results, but it did have welcome messages from the chairman and manager.

Alton Town have only played two games so far this season, winning one and losing the other after finishing 13th in the 22 team Premier League last season. Moneyfields, based in northern Portsmouth, have played four games and have made a great start to the season, winning three and drawing the other, scoring 16 goals - averaging four per game - in the process. They have also shipped 13 goals though, so an entertaining game would have appeared to have been on the cards with them in action. Last season, they finished in seventh place.

Similar to this morning's game, the visitors would probably have been deemed favourites for this game, however again it was the home side who managed to build up a solid lead during the first half. On 12 minutes, Alton took the lead when the ball broke free and Simbarashe Mlambo strode forward from wide before hammering home from a slight angle. On 20 minutes, Alton doubled their advantage when Mlambo barged his way down the wing - bordering on illegally - before cutting the ball back from close to the by-line allowing Scott Sanderson the simple task of smashing the ball past the keeper from fairly close range. On 39 minutes, Alton's lead was extended to three when a free-kick was looped tantalisingly into the box, and the ball was headed across goal and acrobatically converted by Mlambo for his second of the match. The game was looking up

already for the visitors, but they managed to pull a goal back almost immediately, when a Moneyfields player stormed unopposed from the half way line into the box before cutting back to allow Danny Boyle a simple finish to make the half time score-line 3-1.

Within a couple of minutes of the restart and it really was "game-on", as Moneyfields scored again with a well worked goal ending in Boyle applying the finish from close range for his second of the match. Moneyfields were certainly looking buoyed by the comeback, but the game really could have swung either way as the second half was extremely open with both sides pushing hard for the crucial goal and having presentable chances to score it, and in injury time, Moneyfields could well have grabbed an equaliser to complete a fantastic comeback when the ball was stabbed inches wide following a corner. But 3-2 was how it ended, an excellent result and just about deserved three points for Alton, condemning Moneyfields to their first defeat of the season, and I was left to reflect on another great choice of a game, having watched two very entertaining games and 11 goals.

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