

**TT No.5: *Rob Champion*** - Sat 30th July 2011; **Emirates Cup 2011**: Venue: Emirates Stadium, **Arsenal FC**; Clubs involved: Arsenal, Boca Juniors; New York Red Bulls and Paris St Germain.

Today is a day in football terms that I have been looking forward to for a couple of months now. Why that long? Well this is simply when I ordered the tickets for day 1 of this annual pre-season tournament, at (to quote Gary Spooner) "the best stadium in the country".

#### Getting to the stadium

Chances to get to the bigger stadiums are few and far between for myself due to two reasons - availability and cost. It was during the early part of May that I had the idea of trying to get tickets and having checked Arsenal's official website it stated they were to go on general sale on the 19th May with tickets reasonably priced (by Arsenal's standards!!!!). My dad Paul agreed with come down to London with me and with tickets ordered it was a case of looking at the transport options that would get us to the stadium. Due to the mass of residents parking schemes around the stadium it was decided to park on the outskirts @ Cockfosters in Hertfordshire and catch the tube direct to the stadium. The Transport for London website is an excellent resource for visitors giving timetables, fares and anything related to visiting this country's capital city. With this in mind I did my research as usual and worked out it would be cheaper to purchase an Oyster Card. This is a plastic smart card that gives cheaper fares and is used instead of paper tickets.

#### Fare comparison (Cockfosters to Arsenal)

Cash - anytime single: £5

Oyster - £1.40

Before going on I would like to thank Gary (Spooners) for offering us the use of his oyster card. Cheers, much appreciated.

We decided to make a day of and left Leicester @ 9am which would enable us to have lunch before arriving at the stadium itself. We arrived @ Cockfosters tube station at around 10.45am and this taking into account road works on both the M1 south of Milton Keynes and M25, both of which had 50mph average speed checks in place - remind me to never to drive south along the M1 for the foreseeable future!!! Parking at the station was £1.50 for the day and using the oyster card system was very simple - basically when you enter and leave a station you put the card over a yellow button and it records your journey and deducts the correct total from your account balance. The tube ride took around twenty minutes and we decided to get off @ Finsbury Park and have a walk down to the stadium. This took around ten minutes and to be fair it did not seem the best part of London. Our first aim was to find somewhere to have lunch and on having had a walk round the

stadium taking photographs, visiting the club shop we found a small family run cafe called Papaya on Hornsey Road which is a two-minute walk from the stadium.

### The Emirates Cup

The competition is a mini four team pre-season tournament that is played over two days in which each team plays two games. The 2011 edition will be the tournament's fifth edition with Arsenal recording three victories and Hamburg one. This year the participants along with Arsenal are Paris St. Germain (who will be participating for the third time) and debutants New York Red Bulls and Boca Juniors from Buenos Aires.

A history on the tournament and a breakdown of the results can be found on both Wikipedia and the official Arsenal website.

### The Emirates Stadium

The stadium, home to Arsenal Football Club was opened in July 2006 and has a capacity of 60,355. It cost £390 million to build and includes associated infrastructure that went with it. Originally known as Ashburton Grove, it was named the Emirates Stadium following a £100 million 15-year naming rights deal. It is the second largest club football stadium in England and the seventh overall in the UK.

### Largest 10 UK stadiums:

- 01) 90,000: Wembley Stadium [London]
- 02) 82,000: Twickenham [London]
- 03) 75,957: Old Trafford [Manchester]
- 04) 74,500: Millennium Stadium [Cardiff]
- 05) 67,800: Murrayfield [Edinburgh]
- 06) 60,832: Celtic Park [Glasgow]
- 07) 60,355: Emirates Stadium [London]
- 08) 52,387: St. James' Park [Newcastle-upon-Tyne]
- 09) 52,063: Hampden Park [Glasgow]
- 10) 51,082: Ibrox Park [Glasgow]

My first impression of the stadium was simply "wow" - the design of the exterior just (metaphorically speaking) blew me away. Having took it all in we went into the club shop and like all major sporting institutions everything and anything is on sale and is a gold mine for any Arsenal fan. All that was purchased was two postcards (£1 each) and a pin badge for £3. The stadium inside is just as impressive with the concourse of the upper tier being very light (due to large glass panels on the exterior) and had plenty of room. On getting to our seats you get a real sense of the size of the place and the view we had from was excellent. All the seats

were padded and there was plenty of leg room which helps when you are over 6' tall like me. There are two large scoreboards in two corners (south east and north west) and the old clock from their previous home Highbury on the south stand.

Food and drink choices inside the stadium is limited and the food is certainly expensive. A breakdown of prices is below:

Pies - £4

Foot long Hot Dog - £5

16oz soft drink - £2.10

Bottled water - £2.20

Hot drinks - £2

Carlsberg Lager/Tetley's Bitter/Bulmer's Cider - £3.90 pint

Smirnoff Ice - £3.90

The club:

To give a club as such as Arsenal justice on here is difficult and in the end all I decided to do list the club's honours and some records.

The club were founded in 1886 as Dial Square by workers of the Royal Arsenal in Woolwich, south-east London. In 1893 they were elected to the Football League and with it changed their name to Woolwich Arsenal. They have been members of the Football League / FA Premier League ever since. Two other league competitions have also been competed in - the United League between 1896 and 1899 and the London League between 1901-1904.

League champions (13): 1931, 1933, 1934, 1935, 1938, 1948, 1953, 1971, 1989, 1991, 1998, 2002, 2004

FA Cup winners (10): 1930, 1936, 1950, 1971, 1979, 1993, 1998, 2002, 2003, 2005

League Cup winners (2): 1987, 1993

Community Shield winners (11 + 1 shared): 1930, 1931, 1933, 1934, 1938, 1948, 1953, 1991 (shared), 1998, 1999, 2002, 2004

European Fairs Cup winners (1): 1970

European Cup-winner's Cup winners (1): 1994

Record victory: 12-0 v Loughborough Town (H) 12/03/1900 (FL-2) and v Ashford United (H) 14/10/1893 (FA Cup-1)

Record defeat: 0-8 v Loughborough Town (A) 12/12/1896 (FL-2)

Most appearances: 722 - David O'Leary

Most consecutive appearances: 172 - Tom Parker (03/04/1926 to 26/12/1929)

Top goal-scorer: 226 - Thierry Henry

Most goals scored in a game: 7 - Ted Drake (v Aston Villa (a) 14/12/1935)

Record attendance: 73,295 v Sunderland (09/03/1935)

Lowest attendance: 4,554 v Leeds United (05/05/1966)

A full detailed history can be found on the official website.

The games: Match 1 - **NEW YORK RED BULLS** 1-0 **PARIS ST. GERMAIN** (2pm kick-off).

This was a fairly slow-paced opening game of the afternoon which pitched the mechanical workmanlike Red Bulls against the flair of their Parisian opponents. PSG seemed a class above their opponents in the opening exchanges but were limited to long range efforts from Mathieu Bodmer and Jean-Christophe Bahebeck. New York's main threat came from Jamaican Dane Richards on the right. The PSG offside trap was sprung on 27 minutes when Richards played in Joel Lindpere who curled the ball past Salvatore Sirigu to give the Americans the lead.

The second half saw PSG play some nice football and dominate in terms of possession but they created very few clear-cut chances. The only ones of note saw Christophe Jallet curl a free kick onto the roof of the net and a Jeremy Menez shot went inches over the bar. New York seemed content to sit on their one goal advantage and in the end, it was a case of job done and looking towards their game against Arsenal today (Sunday 31st).

Match rating: 2 out of 5.

Match 2 - **ARSENAL** 2-2 **BOCA JUNIORS** (4.20pm kick-off).

The second game of the afternoon was a lot quicker but also a lot stop-start due to persistent niggly fouls from the Argentinians. England midfielder Jack Wilshere was on the end of most of them. Chances were few and far between but just before the half hour the deadlock was broken. Samir Nasri fed new signing Gervinho down the left and his low cross was turned in at the near post by Robin Van Persie. At the interval Arsene Wenger made five changes and within sixty seconds of the re-start two of them combined to give Arsenal a two-goal advantage. Carlos Vela jinked his way past a couple of Boca defenders and despite being fouled fed Aaron Ramsey who lashed the ball past the despairing Augustin Orion in the Boca goal. At times Ramsey looked class and (from an international point of view) wish he was English instead of Welsh!!! Arsenal looked comfortable with Boca offering very little threat. A mistake from Sebastien Squillaci allowed Juan Riquelme to feed Lucas Viatri who lashed the ball past Vito Mannone. Game on. Three minutes later and it was all square as a Carl Jenkinson header was picked up (by who else) Riquelme. He then fed Pablo Mouche who slid the ball past Mannone. The last fifteen minutes saw Boca look the more likely to snatch the winner as Arsenal faded.

Overall a reasonably entertaining game with a score-line that looked unlikely after an hour.

Match rating: 2 1/2 out of 5.

Admission: £35; Programme: £5 - excellent with plenty of reading material;  
Attendance: seemed approximately between 40 - 45,000. Was not full by any means. Stadium rating: 5\*.

As the stadium is in a residential area everyone has to arrive and leave by public transport or on foot. We made our way back to Finsbury Park tube station, and just over an hour after the final whistle were back @ Cockfosters and back home in Leicester at 9.15pm. It was an excellent day out at what is now my favourite stadium that I have visited.

07/20