

**TT No.97: *Justin Holmes*** - Sat 12th November 2011; **Colwyn Bay** v Gainsborough Trinity; Conference North; Venue: Llanelian Road, Old Colwyn; Score: 2-1; Admission: £9.00; Prog: £1.50; Att: 436; Match Rating: 3.

The second game of my stay in the Colwyn Bay area was to be the "highlight" of my three planned games, to watch one of the half dozen Welsh clubs who have chosen to remain within the English non-league pyramid, in their first ever season in the Conference North.

Colwyn Bay's Llanelian Road ground is located about a half hour walk eastwards from Colwyn Bay rail station and town centre, and whilst it does not enjoy the spectacular background of many Welsh football grounds, nor any particular endearing character, it is a pleasant enough ground, with green hills either side of the ground giving a nice, rural feel. Some attractive wall murals also add a touch of uniqueness. Along one length of the pitch is an uncovered terrace of about a dozen steps, whilst along the other are two all-seater stands, with many obstructing pillars to obstruct one's view. These stands will have to be modified in the very near future, with the club recently receiving notice that they must be expanded to contain an extra row of seating to meet the required four, at an estimated cost of £30,000, or they will face demotion. It is difficult to see how these stands can be expanded. Behind one of the goals is a stand similar to the other two, again with obstructing pillars, with just one row of bench seating at the rear, and the stand is one of the lowest I can recall, very much a hazard for tall persons. Behind the other goal is hard standing, behind which is the clubhouse, changing rooms and a tea bar. In the corner there is a small all-seater stand reserved for the media. Following on from a bargain entry fee compared to what I am used to in the Conference South, the programme was also excellent value at £1.50, containing much interesting to read.

In their first season at this level having won promotion through the play-offs last season from the Northern Premier League, Colwyn Bay have had a good start to the season and were in eighth place in the league going into this game. Potential worrying signs have emerged though, as they have gained just two points from their last three games, and their manager Dave Challinor stepping down to bump up his pay packet at a club two divisions below Colwyn Bay, taking his assistant with him. Striker Jon Newby has taken over the reins for his first taste of management, and he would also play today. Gainsborough Trinity had a very good start to their season, winning five consecutive games in a purple patch between August and September and are well inside the promotion play-off places in fourth position, although eight points behind the top two.

On a bright, sunny afternoon, from the first whistle, it was the visitors who grabbed the initiative and it was no surprise when they opened the scoring with just five minutes on the clock, when a cross was flicked on and Leon Mettam volleyed home powerfully off the underside of the crossbar. Gainsborough went on

to dominate the remainder of the first half, always threatening the most to mount attacks but rarely really troubling the Colwyn Bay defence, whilst Colwyn Bay seemed to lack cohesion and nous. A 0-1 half-time lead to the visitors was a very accurate reflection on proceedings.

From the restart, Colwyn Bay seemed to have more purpose and more desire than they had shown in the first half, and within five minutes of the restart, Colwyn Bay equalised when a cross was headed home by Lee McEvelly. By now, Colwyn Bay were looking the more threatening and urgent side, and if there were to be a winner, they looked the most likely, and indeed, with quarter of an hour remaining, they went into the lead. A scramble at the corner flag suddenly resulted in a whipped cross into the box, and Karl Noon scored with a smart near post flicked header. Gainsborough seemed to have no answer to this as they continued to barely threaten for the rest of the match, indeed it was Colwyn Bay who passed up some presentable chances to extend their lead. In the end it did not matter, as Colwyn Bay claimed an important three points, the first win of Jon Newby's reign, and Gainsborough Trinity will reflect on how they managed to lose the initiative in a game they were dominant in up to half time.

07/20