

TT No.98: *Justin Holmes* - Sunday 13th November 2011; **Rhyl** v Porthmadog; Cymru Alliance; Venue: Belle Vue, Rhyl; Score: 0-0; Admn: £6.00; Prog: £2.00; Att: 402; Match Rating: 3.

The final game on my long weekend stay in Colwyn Bay would be on my way home. The original plan was to take in the Welsh Premiership game between Airbus UK Broughton and Afan Lido. This would not have been ideal, having to rely on Sunday buses to get to and from the ground from Chester, and happily various quirks of fate ensured that the Porthmadog v Rhyl was reversed at late notice, providing a much easier game in take in on my way home, to see two former Welsh Premiership clubs with strong ambitions to return (not always the case in Wales) in "sunny Rhyl".

The Belle Vue ground is located about 15 minutes from Rhyl town centre, slightly less from the train station and has quite an impressive and large fascia to the ground. One inside, the ground is almost completely all-seater. Behind the goal where one enters the ground is uncovered seating, with the "Legends Lounge" portacabin type building perched above. Behind the other goal is an all-seater stand. Spanning one length of the pitch is the largest all-seater stand in the ground, whereas on the other side is another all-seater stand, with the only standing areas in the ground either side of it. Unfortunately, all of the covered stands have many supporting pillars to obstruct one's view. The facilities are well in excess of what one usually encounters in the Cymru Alliance, and Belle Vue would be considered one of the best grounds in the Welsh Premiership - where they are surely destined to return sooner rather than later, having been demoted and then denied entry for off-the-pitch reasons. The 42-page programme was a good read although far overpriced at £2.00.

Today's match would be between two of the strongest teams in the Cymru Alliance. Rhyl currently sit on top of the league and have won eight games by at least four goals, twice scoring eight, and have already racked up a goal difference of plus 41 from their 11 games played. They have been formidable at home too, with a 100% record from their five games and only conceded two goals. Porthmadog sat in fourth place, just three points behind Rhyl and have only lost one league game this season - their previous game at Buckley. Porthmadog and Rhyl only played each other last week, when Rhyl triumphed 3-2 at Porthmadog in the Welsh Cup.

A good quality game was predicted between two good sides, and this quickly became apparent, and Rhyl almost took the lead on five minutes when a header hit the post. On 26 minutes, they again should have scored when the ball was blazed over from close range following a good cross. A few minutes later and they came close to scoring again, when the forward beat the keeper to the header, but the ball just dropped over the bar. With the last kick of the half, Rhyl hit the post for a second time from a free-kick. Rhyl would certainly have been kicking

themselves to have not scored in the first half, although Porthmadog certainly had their share of the play and also had some chances themselves.

The second half saw plenty of endeavour from both sides, again with Rhyl carving out the better chances, and roared on by a vocal and passionate support Rhyl came ever closer to scoring, but just couldn't find the goal. With five minutes remaining, Rhyl had Mark Powell sent off for a second yellow card, and in the end, both teams had to settle for a point, which no doubt the visitors would be much the happier with.

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