

TT No.25: *Mike Latham* - Sat 12th October 2013; Lowland League: **East Kilbride 0-3 Dalbeattie Star**; Attendance: 140 (h/c); Admission: £4; Programme £1; FGIF Match Rating: 3*.

With the game finishing at 3-45pm, how I love the 2-pm starts in the West Juniors there was time for a fact-finding dip into the newly formed Lowland League. East Kilbride FC, formed as recently as 2010 entered the South of Scotland League for the current season but were then admitted into the Lowland League without playing a game. I know that some groundhoppers turn their noses up at people who come to games at half-time. Personally, I couldn't care less- I'd far rather visit the second half of a game played 200 miles from home and delay my homeward journey an hour or so if it enhances my afternoon out.

East Kirkbride FC have a large junior and women's set-up, encompassing 30 teams and 600 players and the senior team plays its matches at the K Park Training Academy, an impressive facility within the grounds of Calderglen Country Park, just out of East Kilbride on the Strathaven road. The East Kilbride Cricket Club is located opposite the entrance, the square cordoned off while maintenance takes place. Dog-walkers and rambles were wandering around the grounds within earshot of an important football game.

The main football pitch at K Park consists of a mixture of quartz sand and rubber granules, designed to reduce the likelihood of injury and reduce the impact of a fall; it also encourages better ball control for the players. The pitch certainly played well in the 45 minutes that I witnessed and the style of football was certainly of a far different character than that I witnessed earlier in the afternoon.

The ground has an impressive 400-seater main stand that runs virtually along the length of the nearside touchline, the only side on which spectators are allowed. There is a catering hut and an well designed dressing room complex. In leafy surrounds it was a world away from Show Park and the true surface allowed some good football to be played.

Visitors Dalbeattie were 2-0 up at half-time as I arrived and went on to record a 3-0 win over the Home side, who had begun the game sitting top of the league. Star look an impressive side, well coached and structured and played some good football ideally suited to the splendid pitch.

I'd estimate around 140 spectators were in attendance. I much preferred the former game for atmosphere and character, finding the latter game a bit too sanitised for my liking; but I am realistic enough to realise that the latter option is the way ahead for Scottish football and to encourage youngsters to develop their skills in excellent conditions. I really enjoyed my time in East Kilbride and left with a real sense that progress was being made on two fronts, one an old club looking to re-establish themselves, the other a new organisation with designs one day of a place in the Scottish Football League.

