

**TT No.59: *Chris Freer*** - Sat January 18th 2014; **Peacehaven & Telscombe v Ramsgate**; Isthmian Division One South; Score: 5-1; Attendance: 159; Entertainment value: 3/5.

I know it's not likely to happen, but if I ever take my seat on the train, look up and find myself sitting opposite the Prime Minister of the day, I'd like to think I wouldn't be too tongue-tied to ask him (or her!) some searching questions. Such as, why is it that the general public are habitually treated so shoddily by a lack of contingencies?

Take motorway pile-ups for example, where those poor souls whose only crime is to be sharing the same stretch of road immediately behind the cars involved in the shunt are made to sit tight for as long as it takes to clear the road. Which might be minutes, or in some cases hours. So how hard would it be for a 'Motorway Maintenance Hit Squad' to come along the opposite carriageway, remove a specially-designed section of crash barrier, lay down some artificial surface (eg. planks), and allow the trapped vehicles to double back to the previous junction and resume their journey? Or maybe those sports matches where weather conditions can affect whether the game goes ahead. Why not develop a type of pitch that can be relied upon to always be ready to play on? Maybe an artificial one...hey, I think I might be on to something here....

Joking apart, it always seems to be the punter who is expected to suffer in silence, when much of it could be easily avoided with some proper contingencies! Some sensible diversionary options on the roads, and widespread acceptance that if an artificial surface is good enough for footballers in the Scottish League and the lower echelons of the English League, maybe for the well-being of the sport it ought to be looked at on a universal basis.

I'm travelling down to London by train again today with weather and transport issues both threatening to affect my day. The previous evening's overhead wire problems at Hendon are still causing issues, and though no mention is made of this on my journey south, a lengthy pause at Luton station is the precursor for the inevitable. Everybody out, Thameslink to St Albans, and the dreaded 'Replacement-Bus' ride to St Pancras. If only it was that simple.

They fail to warn us that the bus will call at every interim station on the Thameslink route, that the driver will be unsure of his London geography, and that the 20-mile journey will take two hours, much of it going around in circles. So instead of arriving in the Smoke at 7.30am, ahead of a leisurely stroll to my destination Wetherspoons near London Bridge station, I actually head off from St Pancras at 9.30am desperate for some breakfast and becoming increasingly conscious that my list of possible games is dwindling by the minute.

Fortunately, although I am down to three, I choose wisely. Redhill aren't deciding until Midday so I can't wait for them, there's nothing coming out of North

Greenford (they don't appear to employ Twitter) but the people at Peacehaven & Telscombe are looking to drum up a good crowd and announce very early on Twitter that their game will definitely be on. So that's where I elect to go.

It's not cheap buying a rail ticket in the South East, but I bite the bullet and after courageously eschewing the chance of a pint in the Lord Nelson in Brighton (my No1 favourite UK pub) I change trains and arrive at Newhaven Town station with enough time to check out the town's hostelries. It's a quiet place is Newhaven, with tumbleweed rolling down the main street. I look through the door of the Ship, which has Doombar on handpump, before deciding to take my refreshment in the White Hart, just up the road. The only cask beer is a decidedly murky pint of Harvey's Best Bitter, but despite its dodgy looks, the excellence of this brew still shines through and I thank the gods for its creation.

There's a good regular bus service from Newhaven to Brighton along the sea front, and I catch the No.12 for a ten-minute journey (£3 return ticket) before alighting outside the Sussex Coaster pub in Peacehaven. Although I don't have time to venture in, through the window I espy a couple of pumps on the bar with interesting looking clips attached. From here it's a 5-minute brisk walk inland to Sports Park, home to Isthmian League Division One South newcomers Peacehaven & Telscombe, who have hit the ground running and top the table by a clear 11 points with only around half the season gone.

The ground is not overly developed, sporting just a low-level kit seated stand on one side, with most punters gathered on the opposite side, on the covered steps in front of the clubhouse. The bar doesn't feature any cask beer, but there are bottles of Fullers London Pride in the fridge. Nice beer that it is, I'd been hoping for a Harvey's! There's a snack hatch which opens into the clubhouse and also out onto the terrace. Veggie offerings run to chips and soup (not that I'm recommending you mix the two!).

The pitch looks surprisingly firm and it is visiting Ramsgate, on a good run themselves, who have much the better of the first half, playing primarily on the break but creating enough chances to be out of sight by half time. They have to settle for being just 1-0 up at the interval. The gentlemen next to me, who sports a clipboard and makes various phone calls to report on the game from a Ramsgate perspective, asks me the same question that I am asking myself. How can Peacehaven be so far ahead in the table, when they have barely had a shot on goal thus far. We are about to find out.

They come out with all guns blazing, the mother of all scrambles leading to handball and a converted penalty. Within ten more minutes they have turned the game on its head, creating numerous chances and scoring with two of them. 3-1, and Ramsgate are wondering what's hit them. To their credit, they game-fully look to get back into the match, but two further home strikes in the closing minutes sets the seal on a real 'game of two halves'.

I'm back in London in two-week's time, and will again be gambling with the weather and working out my contingencies. Let's hope those clubs with foresight

take the time out to let the punters know if their game is definitely on. They might drum up some extra trade, me for a start!

There's more on my blog at <http://flynn123.wordpress.com/>

The place to be for contingencies...

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