

TT No.68: Mike Latham - Tuesday 11 February 2014: Championship: **Bolton Wanderers** 0-1 Burnley; Attendance: 16,439; Admission: season ticket: Programme: £3; FGIF Match Rating: 3*.

In the late 1970s and early 1980s Wanderers went down through the divisions from the old first to the old fourth division before beginning the long climb back. Some of my best days watching football were spent following Wanderers in those days, the promotion season from division four being particularly memorable. In those days the basic infrastructure of a club remained virtually unaltered no matter which division you were in.

These days, of course, money rules and despite having surely one of the biggest and highest paid squads in the second tier, Bolton look on the road to oblivion, saddled by debts of £160m and presumably rising to a benefactor based in the Isle of Man and with a fear factor and air of desperation.

It was a bitterly cold night and the rows of empty seats at the Reebok spoke volumes for what many Wanderers fans think of their side's chances, with a relatively inexperienced manager who doesn't give the impression of knowing his best side. They started pretty well, weaved some pretty patterns, created some chances, hit the bar but then increasingly ran up blind alleys as Burnley defended stoutly, worked hard and eventually stole the points when Vokes converted Kightly's cross from close range helped by some desperate defending just before the hour mark.

Around 3,000 Burnley fans basked in the moment and the occasion, enjoying the hard work and endeavour of their side cast in the image of their impressive manager. Wanderers' fans sunk deeper into their seats and despaired. Most have a resigned air, many like me have ceased to really get too bothered about it all. There was no way back and their side's attacking play in the last half hour lacked any spark of creativity or pattern. Burnley survived without any great alarms to remain second in the league.

It was my first visit to the Reebok this season, my girls now use the season tickets most games and as I walked back to the Crown on icy pavements the chill winds of austerity were blowing down from Rivington Pike. There are some very poor players, many presumably on big, big wages wearing the famous white shirts. I struggle to watch Wanderers these days because I went for over 40 years with my dad who passed away three years ago. Memories of great times spent are still too vivid. I wondered what he would have thought of it all. He'd seen the great days and the bad but remained steadfastly optimistic. I remember Wanderers' first season in division four, they lost 4-0 to league newcomers Scarborough. 'It's come to this,' my dad said.