

TT No.46: Keith Aslan - Sat 20th December 2014; **May & Baker** v Rayleigh; 14.04 Essex Olympian League Premier Division; Kick-Off: 14:04; Result: 0-2; Adm/Prog: Free (usually charge but it's Christmas!); Att: 7 (3 home, 3 away & 1 neutral).

If travelling by public transport the first thing you need to know about M & B sports is to ignore the address. Dagenham Road is the entrance for cars, but feet travellers should go nowhere near the place. It's Dagenham East on the district line. Left out of the station, cross the road and after about 100 yards there is a book-makers with an alleyway down the side. Follow this and you will come to the ground after only an eight-minute walk from the station. You enter the M & B complex through a turnstile giving the approach a proper football feel to it.

The set-up is very impressive, full meals are available in the large clubhouse, delicious and very welcome, with the lunchtime footie showing on a big screen, and altogether a very relaxing atmosphere to while away the time prior to kick off. There was a rugby match taking place on the adjoining pitch with a crowd of 72, somewhat larger than the football attendance! I went for a pre match stroll around the adjacent large country park. This was somewhat of a surprise as "country park" is not the first thing that springs to mind when you mention "Dagenham".

The main man at M & B is chairman Ray Wright. Very helpful on the phone, I had a long conversation with him at the game. He virtually runs the club single handed, and has been there for years as player, manager, and everything else. He has spent a lot of his money, and even more of his time keeping the club going and is one of football's unsung heroes. Without people like him football at this level just wouldn't exist. He was bemoaning the fact that the FA get billions from TV deals while they starve the grassroots game of money.

The M & B crest (which like everything else was designed and paid for by the chairman) has the number 693 incorporated on it. May and Baker were a pharmaceutical company and they invented the drug 'sulphapyridine' which revolutionised the cure for pneumonia. Winston Churchill took the drug during the war and it quite possibly saved his life as back then pneumonia was a killer disease. The pill was simply called M&B 693. The factory closed down recently and while the club retains the name its full title is May & Baker Eastbrook Community Club which is why it's referred to on "Full Time" as M & B EC.

Played on a dull chilly day there wasn't much between the two sides with a goal in each after giving Rayleigh the points. The programme from the Mark Kettley stable was so up to date it had the afternoon's postponements in it. This part of Essex must have its own micro climate as the Olympian League has been beset by call offs all season when almost every other league has been able to complete full programmes. Another tranche of games was postponed today, although looking at the near perfect pitch this game was played on, I wonder if Christmas shopping rather than rain was responsible?

