

TT No.43: Keith Aslan - Sat 2nd January 2016; **Achilles** v Barham; SIL Bob Coleman League Cup; Kick-Off: 13.28; Result 10(ten)-0; Admission: Free; Programme: Donation; Att: 64 (59 home, 3 away & 2 neutral).

With my part time girlfriend over from Mongolia for January logistical problems occur on the groundhopping front. 'I've travelled halfway round the world to see you and you're going to leave on my own all day' quickly turns into 'Enjoy yourself, no need to hurry back' by pointing her in the direction of Westwood Cross (Thanet's premier shopping experience) and giving her all my money. This could turn out to be an expensive month. Incidentally I have completed the Mongolian league, not as good as it sounds as there are only six teams in it and they all play at the same ground. A poor country with very little infrastructure but they do manage to run trains seven days a week, something Abellio East Anglia couldn't quite manage this weekend. Joy of joys Stratford to Ipswich required a tube journey to Newbury Park followed by a rail replacement bus to Ingatestone before you could actually get on a train. In a more enlightened country than England those responsible for this fiasco would be executed.

Achillies is a 25-minute walk from Ipswich station up a very steep hill that Chris Bonnington might think twice about tackling. I was greeted by the friendly chairman, David Morgan, with the words "you must be an anorak" as I attacked him when I spotted him getting the programmes out of his car boot. I use the word attacked in the metaphorical, not the AC London sense. He used to play for the club in the fifties as did another committee member, clearly the club inspires longevity. But nobody could tell me where their name originates from. In spite of much precipitation the game was never in doubt thanks to the Suffolk non-league groundsman of the year. And just to scotch various rumours that Achillies have moved grounds lately, they haven't. The address has changed, the ground hasn't, much to the chagrin of my fellow hopper who only discovered half way through the game that he was doing a revisit. All very neat and tidy with the enclosed ground partly roped and partly railed. There is a spacious car park and pleasant clubhouse, teas and coffees at half time but no food. The big screen was showing B.B.C. and in an interview with Jurgen Klopp he really did say "money doesn't buy success" which would suggest he hasn't quite got the hang of how football works.

I've seen quite a few tonkings lately, but this one came out of the blue. Although Barham are a couple of divisions below Achillies, they had already beaten two higher league clubs in this cup and a close game was anticipated. We had a woman in charge and I can't quite understand why referees always start matches on time, something the majority of their male counterparts find impossible. They also appear to have read the page of the rulebook about the length of games and we played two halves of 45 minutes each. The game finished at 3.13 and Sharon Burman is the name you need to look out for if you're going to be tight for a train.

Got back home to find my cohabitee full of the joys of Primark so we both had a good day doing our own things. I trust next Saturday will go off equally as well.

04/20