

TT No.87: Keith Aslan - Sat May 14th: Birmingham Irish v Birmingham Medics @ HAMPTON FC; Holder Cup Final; Kick-Off: 15.04; Result: 1-0 to Irish (AET); Admission & Programme: Free; Att: 80 (28 Irish, 35 Medics & 17 neutral).

Hampton has been a longstanding member of my 'to do' list, occasional issuers but never on the occasions I wanted to go, today I knew a cup final would produce the paper at this remote ground. Just to clear up any misunderstanding, the Holder Cup is named after a league official and not well known Brummie and Slade frontman, Noddy.

Hampton is in the proverbial 'middle of nowhere', equidistant between Hampton in Arden and Solihull stations with the 82-bus connecting to both hourly stopping a ten-minute walk from the ground. Coming from Hampton in Arden I alighted at the previous bus stop in the magnificently named village of Catherine de Barnes for a refreshment break at The Boat Inn. The village is a fifteen-minute walk away and is the nearest civilization encroaches on the ground which is fully railed with a walkway and two stands, surrounded for the most part by more football pitches. Through the trees is the adjacent Glades FC with its own entrance and clubhouse, also fully railed with a large stand. Across the road is the local cricket club, all in all a sporting cornucopia, but nothing in the way of houses which makes me wonder where all the players come from, Hampton and Glades have 22 youth teams between them. Should Hampton ever wish to erect floodlights they won't have any problems as there are no neighbours to complain.

Pre. match entertainment was in the clubhouse which was showing Derby County's traditional end of season capitulation as Hull City gave them a good seeing to. They'll be dancing in the streets of Newmarket tonight. The game was partially spoilt by a number of noisy infants that thoughtless parents had bought into the place. I'm afraid my views on babies are somewhere to the far right of King Herod. Hot and cold drinks and burgers were available throughout the afternoon. I felt a tingle down my spine when I learnt the very building that I was sitting in was home in the seventies to "The Jasper Carrott Folk and Music Club" Living history! I thought Hampton had always played here but they only moved in in 2005 after the ground had been left derelict for a number of years. Prior to that it was home to a local rugby club.

Using my finely attuned ear for accents I gathered that Birmingham Irish doesn't have much of an Irish quotient. For example, and I'm only guessing here, I shouldn't think their main man, Roble Mohamoud, is nicknamed Paddy by his workmates. Conversely, I would imagine the Medics team were all doctors as they spoke in an accent alien to these parts called 'educated' They didn't need a trainer, and when someone went down, the nearest player came over and gave an instant assessment of his injuries. I should have got one of the subs. to have a look at my dodgy knees while he was waiting to go on.

A bit of a strange game, not unentertaining, but always looking like an extra time job with both defences holding firm. A scrambled goal in the 114th minute gave the Irish a win they possibly just about deserved on the run of play.

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