

TT No.5: Keith Aslan - Sat 10th September 2016; **Blyth Town** v Ryton and Crawcrook; FA Vase; Kick-Off: 15.01; Result: 1-2; Admission: £5 (including a free drink); Programme: £1.50p; Attendance: 91 (76 home, 8 away & 7 neutral)

It's the Newcastle City games this weekend with tomorrow seeing the world's largest half marathon with 60,000 competitors ranging from Mo Farrah to fun runners, although the 'fun' aspect of running 13 miles escapes me. I have chosen this particular Saturday for my longest trip of the season as the athletics means Newcastle Central Metro Station is actually open. Every other weekend it's shut due to a multi-million pound's modernisation programme. Come on, it's a tube station, it looked fine to me quite adequately fulfilling its purpose. What 'modernisation' does it need that it has to be closed every weekend. Crystal Chandeliers above the escalators? The ticket hall incorporating a mini version of the angel of the north? A botanical garden with a water feature? A laser light show? Whatever needs doing can be done at night when there are no tubes. Stop messing everyone about. Choosing the only Saturday with the metro station open has a trade-off that I have had to pick a game with the possibility of extra time.

To reach Northern League newcomers Blyth Town the best way is to get the metro (if it's ever open again at weekends) to Regent Interchange where every half hour the X9 takes you right to the ground (warning: Arriva North East is probably the most expensive bus company in the world). It's obvious there has been plenty of action here to bring things up to spec. for their higher status with much of the ground brand new. The programme says that Blyth are aiming for the football league in ten years. Get real boys. Bizarrely the admission price includes a free drink, this includes beer, and as I paid the old boy's rate of £3, if I'd taken advantage of a gratis pint of larger, it would have cost more than I'd paid to get in. I don't think Blyth have thought this through. The pre. match entertainment in the clubhouse was the Manchester derby being shown on a big screen, the result of which gladdened my heart.

The match itself was low on skill but high on entertainment, an absorbing contest which I would probably have appreciated much more if it wasn't for the spectre of extra time. Not a welcome prospect at the best of places. A round trip of 720 miles from home is not the best of places. An added 30 minutes equating to a two hour later return to my Broadstairs' dacha. One all on 90 minutes I was resigned for a very late night, but thanks go to the referee for adding lots of time on for no reason, and at 90+3 Ryton scrambled a winner. The celebrations on their bench were nothing compared to the celebrations of this hopper. A bus journey, a metro journey, two train journeys (including one on Virgin), 360 miles, and I was home in plenty of time for 'Match of the Day'. It goes to show that things do sometimes work in this country, just not as often as they should.

You will get a warm welcome at Blyth, as with most clubs in this part of the world, and my email to the secretary earlier in the week was met with an instant

response. They are geared to go higher up the pyramid, but they do want to forget ideas of the football league for a century or two.

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