

TT No.114: *Keith Aslan* - Saturday 7th April 2018; Old Carthusians v Old Hamptonians; London Old Boys Senior Cup Final; Venue: **OLD PAULINE F.C.**; Kick-Off: 15.05; Result: 1-0 to O.C.; Admission & Programme: Free; Attendance: 46 (9 O.C.; 20 O.H.& 17 neutral).

Old Boys football has always fascinated me. Played out in an almost total publicity vacuum it is autonomous from the F.A. pyramid, it's teams only ever play each other, it has its own officials and while grassroots clubs and leagues are folding by the day, this football continues to thrive with no shortage of players or teams. Clubs have magnificent facilities with today's venue at Old Pauline being typical of the ones I have visited. A gym, a snack bar where you can watch women in leotards getting sweaty (not that I was interested in that sort of thing), a bar showing *Sky Sports*, plus three Rugby, and three Football pitches all with immaculate playing surfaces. The place was buzzing this afternoon with a couple of Rugby games and another football match taking place around my chosen game. Where do all the players come from?

Old Carthusians originate from Charterhouse public school and can boast of an illustrious history. They are one of only three clubs to have won the Amateur and F.A. Cups. The other two are Royal Engineers and Wimbledon. They play in the Arthurian League while their opponents strut their stuff in the Amateur Football Combination. This Cup Final was played at Old Pauline a name that would have meant nothing to me a week ago. It is handy to get to by public transport being a 5-minute walk from Thames Ditton station. Being in a perpetual state of hunger I was gutted to find the kitchen was closed before the match due to catering for a bunch of rugby bods annual jolly. They then proceeded to taunt me by carrying a relay of roast dinners to the function so close I could smell them. At half time they were only producing meals for players and officials. I wasn't going to miss out again and I had a delicious chilli-con-carne by pretending to be an official. There are two types of hopper, the devious and the hungry. If the girl who served me wondered why an official looked like he'd been sleeping rough she didn't say anything.

Probably best to gloss over the football match, it wasn't very good, but at least Old Carthusians second half goal meant we were spared extra time. The pitch was roped off and what a waste of time that was with half the crowd ignoring it and blocking the view of the other half who dutifully watched the game from where they were supposed to. I wonder if the miscreants thought they were getting a better view by moving six feet closer to the pitch. Presumably it never occurred to them why there was a rope round the pitch in the first place. You'd have thought the 4th official might have done something. This waste of space didn't even have a matrix board to grapple with and he must be feeling very pleased with himself that he's connected to a sport that pays him to do nothing all afternoon. And while on the subject of officials, the referee today merely confirmed what I've thought for ages, telling the time isn't a prerequisite for the man in black. A fashionably late

kick off of course, not even worth the effort of starting on time for a cup final. He then spun the first half out for 50 minutes. A change of ball which took up to all of half a minute was the only stoppage. No injuries, no time wasting, and even if you subscribe to the myth of adding 30 seconds on for goals and substitutions there weren't any of them either. He atoned in the second half by only playing 44 minutes. Strange man.

Met up with a fellow hopper I hadn't seen for ages and we spent the afternoon putting football in particular, and the world in general, to rights. This added to a smashing day out that even a rubbishy football match couldn't detract from.

04/20