

TT No. 120: *Steve Hardy* - Saturday 14th April 2018; **Dudley Town** v Tividale; West Midlands Regional League Premier Division; Kick-Off: 3.00pm; Result: 2-2; Admission: £3; Programme: £1; Attendance: 93 (h/c)

There is good news and bad news to report about Dudley Town. They are currently based at The Dell athletics stadium in Brierley Hill where they play on a grass pitch in the middle of the athletics running track. It would be fair to say that this ground has never been popular with groundhoppers, myself included, and the good news is that you won't have to put up with it anymore as Dudley Town are moving out and will be based at the old Oldbury United ground next season. The bad news is that if you haven't already seen a game at the Dell, then I am afraid you have missed your chance. Let me explain.

A few months ago, the grass pitch was invaded by badgers. Sounds ridiculous, doesn't it, but the fact is that these badgers have completely ruined the pitch and it is now unusable. They can't be evicted as they just keep coming back, so Dudley Town were left in the position of not being able to use the grass pitch, and with no prospect of sharing with anyone else at this late stage in the season. As a stopgap until they move to Oldbury, they have been given permission to use the floodlit 3G pitch in a cage that is also at The Dell site, and that is why I and several other groundhoppers were in attendance yesterday.

The visitors were local rivals Tividale, and the two clubs served up a full-blooded Black Country derby which I, for one, thoroughly enjoyed. The kiddies of the Dudley team have struggled somewhat this season but gave this game everything and were royally rewarded with an early goal from a penalty on 10 minutes. They continued to look the better side, even after having a player sent off for a dreadful tackle on the half hour mark, and it was no surprise to me that they doubled their lead on 38 minutes, when a sublime free-kick bent round the wall and in. 2-0 and coasting. It was then that Tividale started to gain control. Just a minute after the second Dudley goal they pulled one back and at the break going in only 2-1 down looked a lot better than they had done at 2-0 down.

The second half was just as intense, and the large contingent of Tividale fans around me were very relieved to see the equaliser go in. As they pointed out, this was a game they really should have won on paper. In the end though they considered themselves very fortunate to have got a point.

For fellow completists, Dudley will be playing all of their remaining home games this season on this 3G pitch, so several opportunities to visit for a venue that won't be used next season.