

TT No.56: Brian Buck - Saturday 11th November 2017; London APSA v Old Easthameians; Essex Alliance Premier Division; Venue: played at Flanders Field and Bobby Moore Pavilion, Napier Road, East Ham; 2pm kick off; Result: 7-6; Attendance: 7.

For the second weekend in a row we had overnight rain prior to this match. Fortunately following my Friday night phone call the genial home secretary told me that he would ring back if the game was called off. But his phone never rang, so off we went. On paper this seemed to be an easy place to get to, but once we came off the M11 we were joined by lots of other cars and we got stuck in long traffic jams. So, we abandoned our original plan to go to the ground and check out the game first in favour of heading off to West Ham Cemetery, to look for one of my friends' relatives. In doing so we got stuck in a further traffic jam and so had limited time to spend in the Cemetery and so we didn't find my friends relative.

Then it was off to the ground, where through slightly less traffic jams, we arrived five minutes before kick-off and they kicked off at least five minutes late. We needn't have worried about the pitch as it was in excellent condition and it was better than many Step 7 and above grounds. It was ironic that we should be watching football at Flanders Field today, Remembrance Day, as this ground has connections with Flanders in Belgium and the First World War. It is also where former England football captain Bobby Moore played as a child during the late 1940s and early 1950s and where he was first talent scouted. So, after a quick cup of coffee, we were ready for the action.

This was a match between the bottom of the table hosts and their mid table visitors. Unsurprisingly the visitors were expected to win. We exchanged greetings with the APSA secretary, who also turned out to be their goalie. The game was played out in a good spirit and both sides had chances in the first 15 minutes. Then on 26 minutes APSA took the lead from the spot following a foul. And then rather surprisingly, given their league position, APSA doubled their lead with a curling shot over the keeper who was a bit off his line. More coffee at half time. We could have had food here as well, but we declined it because we erroneously believed that there would be food available when we arrived at our second game at Clapton. Meanwhile while we were still drinking our coffee APSA scored a 3rd goal. Could we be witnessing their first win of the season? It seemed like it when they scored a fourth one on 54- minutes. On 56 minutes the visitors pulled a goal back, but on 65 minutes APSA got their 5th goal and a 6th followed on 68 minutes. However, the visitors scored their 2nd goal directly from the restart, which upset the home keeper as he claimed that he wasn't ready! No real problem as the score became 7-2 on 74 minutes. What could go wrong now? Well lots as Easthameians slowly clawed their way back into the match with goals on 78, 79 84 and 90(+1) minutes. They were gradually getting excited now and believed they could win. Unfortunately for them time ran out and the hosts saw out this wonderful match.

Both sides put in so much effort in trying to score, it was a joy to watch and one of the best, if not the best, games we've seen this season. Part of the reason for the hosts conceding six goals though came when I bumped into the home secretary at Aveley on the following Monday night, he told me that he was not a proper goalie.

04/20