

**TT No.70:** *Steve Hardy* - Saturday 23<sup>rd</sup> December 2017; **GNP Sports** v AFC Solihull; Midlands League Division Three; Result: 1-1; Admission: Free; Programme: No; Attendance: 18 h/c

Guru Nanak Prakash Sports have returned to the Midland league this season after a brief three-year spell between 1997-2000. Back then, they were based in Solihull, but now they have decamped to Coventry and moved into the Coventry Athletics track, which is part of the University of Warwick, Westwood Campus site.

This is just what it sounds like. A grass pitch in the middle of an athletics track where the track itself is painted a rather lurid blue colour. The famous Coventry Godiva Harriers athletics club are also based here, and they have a separate club house behind one corner of the track.

GNP have taken the league by storm so far, this season. They had won all their opening ten games to lead the table, and today were facing the surprise package of this season, AFC Solihull. Regular watchers of Midland league football will be amazed to find AFC Solihull in third place in the table. Normally they are rock bottom, and suffering thrashing after thrashing, but not this year.

The match itself was really good, and gripping from start to finish. GNP had most of the possession in the first half, but I thought Solihull were excellent in defence and reduced the GNP boys to shots from further and further out which usually sailed way over the bar. They were nippy on the counter attack too, and to everyone's amazement they took the lead through a breakaway goal exactly on half time.

After the break it was more of the same, with GNP getting more and more frustrated as they just couldn't find a way through the well organised Solihull defence. Time wore on, until with virtually the last shot of the game, GNP finally managed to get into the Solihull box and sneak in a deserved equaliser.

GNP were very disparaging of Solihull on their *twitter* account afterwards, with pictures of parked buses to show what they thought of the AFC Solihull tactics. Personally, I thought Solihull came with a plan, stuck to it well, and thoroughly deserved their point.

The athletics track is a soulless place to watch football. On a bitterly cold afternoon, there were no spectator facilities at all for the 18 spectators, although there is a hot drinks machine in the dressing room block if you are desperate!