

**TT No.80:** *Brian Buck* - Tuesday 9th January 2018. Altis v United London; London Junior Cup 4th Round; Venue: played at London Marathon Community Track, Stratford; Result: 1-1 (United London won 4-2 on penalties); Attendance: 90 approx.

This game was played on what is in effect the 'warm up' track to the literally adjacent London Stadium, where West Ham United play (sometimes!). I think that it's locally called the 'warm up' track because tonight it was nowhere near as cold as it was for my game at Huntingdon Town on the previous night. It seemed rather strange not leaving home until shortly after 6pm to get to a floodlit game in London, but this was an 8.15pm (8.18pm actually) kick off.

So, I caught the 7.14pm train from Cheshunt to Stratford. Then, once I found where the right platform was, it was a two-minute journey to Pudding Mill Lane on the Docklands Light Railway and about a five-minute walk to the ground from there. I was in the ground by about 7.50pm, a £1.80 Oyster Card journey. Next it was time to track down a programme, £3 tonight! Then it was time to join the who's who of Groundhoppers who formed most of the crowd, with the majority sitting in the 300-seater stand. This was placed slightly off-centre so it could cater for people watching the closing stage of the athletics meetings they hold here. But despite this the view of proceedings wasn't bad. Add to that all the lights of the towers of flats or offices in the distance and this place had a bit of character to it.

Soon as the match started, we noticed that there were no lino's. Initially I thought that this might place a lot of pressure on the ref, but despite his tender years he officiated very well and both sides seemed to respect him. The opening goal was scored by United London on 9 minutes. They are a fans-based side. Each one of their games are filmed and then by way of an on-line vote, they select the team for the next game. They do have a coach though! The game then moved on and without being brilliant it was entertaining, but with lots of misplaced passes. Then on 61 minutes Altis surprisingly equalized, by way of a header from a free kick. This brought life into the match, but also concerns for the watching multitude, as some had specific trains to catch to get home and we were hoping that the game might be resolved in normal time. On 90(+3) minutes the Altis keeper brought down a United London player just as he was about to score and he was sent off. Then after the same United London player missed an open goal two minutes later it was on to the dreaded penalties. Here after Altis missed their first two spots kicks, it was fairly easy for United London to win through.

Then it was a quick dash back to Pudding Mill Lane and I just managed to catch the 10.30pm train back to Cheshunt from Stratford. Overall an enjoyable evening out at a venue which is unlikely to stage too many floodlit games, unless an Essex Senior League side wants to try and do a deal to play here!

