

TT No.94: *Brian Buck* - Saturday 10th February 2018; Cricklewood Wanderers v Brentham; Cherry Red Books Middlesex County League Premier Division; Venue: played at Wembley; Kick-Off: 3pm; Result: 3-2; Attendance: 15 approx.

As I quickly made my way out of Wembley Stadium after watching Spurs beat Arsenal, I found myself in some rain. It must have absolutely tipped it down while I was watching the previous game, as there were large puddles everywhere. I tried to ring up the ground at Wembley to see if the match was still on, but either it was the wrong number or it's not in use at present, but with time at a premium I continue on my way. Once I got past Wembley Central station the crowds thinned. Soon I spotted a bus going my way and I jumped on it and this took me most of the way to the ground. I walked the rest and got there about ten minutes before kick-off. I did still wonder if the game was on as although the corner flags were out, I couldn't see any players. But then I saw some Brentham players appear through a gate in the corner of the ground and they had been warming up on an outside pitch.

So, I went into the bar for a quick pint, picking up a free programme at the same time. The barman said that this pitch is one of the best in the SSML and their grounds-man, also the Wembley manager, has won Grounds-man of the Year award for the past two seasons. When I looked closer, I could see why. Both goalmouths were in excellent condition and one of them was still fully grassed. The game kicked off on time, despite my tongue in cheek request for it to start a few minutes late. I sat in the main stand, but still the wind and now light rain blew in from time to time. I was slightly protected by one of the see-through Perspex dugouts and initially I couldn't work out the lettering on it. This ground is in a multicultural area so I thought that the word YAWA might be a local name for 'home' or 'away'. Then I realized that being see-through it actually read AWAY. I'd be dangerous if I had a brain!

The game was an excellent one with some good quality football played, despite the deteriorating conditions, which saw the central part of the pitch cut up in places. It was also a mainly non-friction game, apart from both teams trying to squeeze 'favourable' decisions out of the ref, who was an old school guy and was having none of it. Brentham took the lead on 4 minutes, but Wanderers hit back, equalizing on 12 minutes and taking the lead 8 minutes later, but Brentham scored on 42 minutes to make it level at the break. On 53 minutes the lights came on and ten minutes later the hosts got the winner they probably deserved, despite late pressure from the visitors.

Afterwards I headed back to the bar to have another pint and watch the scores come through. I would have stayed longer and spent more time with the lovely ladies who help run the club, but I would have drunk more and I had to drive home eventually. So, I couldn't help them eat the food no one seemed to want. Overall this was a good afternoon's football, despite the weather and it was good to be

back at a ground where I haven't seen a game since 30 July 1986 when I watched Wembley draw 0-0 against Wealdstone in a pre-season friendly match (attendance: 170 approx.), although on 31 March 2012 I did pop in for a few moments to see the end of a Wembley game, the one which saw Terry Venables first game as Director of Football here, which was quite close to his last one!

04/20