

TT No.99: *Keith Aslan* - Saturday 10th March 2018; **RAMSGATE** v Chipstead Isthmian League Division 1 South; Kick-Off: (believe it or not!) 15.00; Result 3-0; Admission: £5 for old people; Programme: £2; Attendance: 134 (122 home, 12 away & neutral).

Ramsgate FC is a 20-minute bus ride from my country dacha, but it takes a bit longer when I go via London. It was in the capital I discovered plans A and B were both postponed and with plan C's only for the professional I had dined at my favourite Camden trattoria before returning eastward where I knew Ramsgate wouldn't let me down. The pitch was probably in no better shape than a lot of games that were called off, but the Rams wanted to play which makes all the difference. I find it a quaint notion so many clubs and players have these days that you can't play football in mud. As rain isn't exactly unknown in the winter it's no wonder so many clubs now have fixture backlogs.

Ramsgate is a proper club with a proper ground, covered terracing behind both goals. Good grub, good programme, what's not to like. And I won first prize in the raffle, £30. We'll be eating every day this week. I always buy raffle tickets here. The winning numbers are put up outside the club shop at half-time and the prizes are decent, none of this cheap bottle of wine nonsense, here there is £60 up for grabs. I can never work out where the prize money comes from, I don't know what the take up is, but you would need 50% of the crowd to shell out just to break even! Is it being used as a money laundering exercise?

Lee Dyson, the referee, was clearly disorientated and totally failed to grasp the concept of Isthmian Mean Time. Maybe, like me, he wanted to get home to watch the Welsh football on S4C, but whatever the reason he kicked off the match dead on time. Since I moved down here, I must have seen over a hundred Isthmian games and this was the first one to start when it should have done. The crowd were completely thrown by this and one wag near me shouted out to the ref. 'You won't last very long at this level if you can't even kick the game off late' I assume he was being ironic but he could just as likely have been the assessor.

All to play for this afternoon with both sides locked in a titanic battle for the coveted 16th spot. While the score-line looks fairly comfortable it wasn't, and only a tremendous save by the home keeper prevented Chipstead from taking the lead. I wish them well, any team that has a player called Ollie Twum deserves success.

A day that could have been a downer turned out very well and arriving home with more money than I left with was a bit of a bonus.