

**TT No. 1: Steve Hardy** - Saturday 4<sup>th</sup> August 2018; **Cheltenham Town U18** v Forest Green Rovers U18; Football League Youth Alliance; Kick-Off: 11.00am; Result: 1-1; Admission: Free; Team-sheets: available; Attendance: 55 h/c

Quite what possessed me to use the M5 on a Bank Holiday weekend, I shall never know. The continuing road works at Junctions 1 and 2, plus huge volumes of holiday traffic, meant I screeched in to the car park at Cheltenham Town's training ground with minutes to spare.

The Academy is based to the north of Cheltenham in an area called Swindon Village, on the wonderfully named Quat Goose Lane. Today saw the first round of games in the FLYA for this season, with Forest Green's U18s and U16s the visitors. The games were played on adjoining pitches and spectators were allowed to stand down one side of each pitch.

I thoroughly enjoyed this game, although it did take a while to get going. 0-0 at half time, with both sides having hit the post, the deadlock was eventually broken after 51 minutes when Cheltenham took the lead. FGR had brought a good, few parents/supporters over with them, and it looked as if they were going to go home disappointed, until they scored a deserved equaliser after 83 minutes.

A couple of things happened that you really don't expect at youth team level football. Firstly, three Cheltenham players got booked, which is almost unheard of in my experience. Secondly, and far more seriously, play was held up for 10 minutes after a linesman flagged the referee over to say he had been threatened by an FGR supporter after he had ruled an FGR goal out for offside. Security were called, and the gentleman concerned was escorted away, although I noticed he came straight back in again soon after.

Free admission as usual, with copies of the two team sheets available to anyone who wanted them. An excellent tea bar in the clubhouse building too, selling hot food to the grateful masses. A super start to my season proper.