

**TT No.129: Steve Hardy** - Saturday 13<sup>th</sup> April 2019; **Mansfield Town U18 v Bradford City U18**; Football League Youth Alliance North East Division; Kick-Off: 11am; Result: 1-2; Admission: Free; Programme: No; Attendance: 68 h/c

Mansfield Town have a brand-new Academy set up this season, in the village of Pleasley, just north of Mansfield. This comprises of a 4G floodlit pitch in a cage, plus a plethora of grass pitches spread around the changing room complex and canteen. Having deposited my better half at our local railway station, I had an hour and a half to do the 70 odd miles to Mansfield and the last thing I needed was Sarah the Satnav girl getting shirty with me. Things went swimmingly until I got to my exit on the M1, which I knew was just a mile from the ground. Sarah was having none of it though, and tried to get me to turn around and go back down the M1 for some reason known only to herself. I switched her off and made my way to the ground with 15 minutes to spare. I knew that would prove to be a mistake though, and that she would get her revenge later.

The North East division of the EFL Youth Alliance is really tight this year. The top five clubs are separated by just 2 points and today's game saw 2<sup>nd</sup> place Mansfield entertain 5<sup>th</sup> place Bradford, who have 2 games in hand on the other clubs around them. The match was played on the 4G pitch (groan) and it turned out to be a cracker. In truth, Bradford were much the better team, and deserved their 2-0 half time lead through a penalty on 21 minutes and a second just before the break on 43 minutes. For some reason though, Bradford started wasting time from the start of the second half. As the bookings for timewasting added up, Mansfield seized their chance to reduce the arrears on 65 minutes, and it looked as if they could well sneak an undeserved draw. Bradford held their nerve though and threw the title race wide open in the process.

It could have been so much easier for them if they had continued to play their attacking game throughout, but a win is a win and this one was well deserved.