

**TT No. 13:** *Steve Hardy* - Saturday 25<sup>th</sup> August 2018; **Rochdale U18** v Fleetwood Town U18; EFL Youth Alliance Northern Cup Group 4; Kick-Off: 11.00am; No admission charge or team-sheet; Attendance: 51 h/c

Up at silly-o-clock again for today's long planned trip to Manchester and, for once, all the public transport worked perfectly. Three buses and a train journey later I finally arrived at Stalybridge Celtic, which is where Rochdale U18s have been playing for the past couple of years now. I must say that I really liked Stalybridge's football ground. The whole ground was open for the 51 punters who attended, which meant I could wander round taking photos from every angle I wanted.

Observant readers of my drivel will have noticed that I quite like watching U18 football on a Saturday morning. I find that the better academies haven't drummed any cynicism into the young lads in their charge, so there is none of this diving, cheating or snide fouling that is such a feature of the modern game. Both these teams just wanted to play football today, and both were technically very skilful, but with just a lack of finishing ability holding them back.

The first half ended 0-0, but that wasn't for the want of trying by both teams. We desperately needed a goal, and it duly came just after the break when Rochdale finally scored a beautifully worked opener. I thought things might open up a bit after this, but they didn't, although Fleetwood had a chance to equalise right at the death, but blazed a simple looking chance over the bar.

After the game it was back on the buses again for the hour-long trip to my second game at Cheadle Heath Nomads.