

TT No. 133: *Brian Buck* - Wednesday 3rd April 2019; **Tottenham Hotspur v Crystal Palace**; Premier League; Result: 2-0; Attendance: 59,215.

So today was the day and after nearly two years after leaving White Hart Lane, Spurs were back here. But would it feel the same? Early indications were that it would as I got just about the same parking space near Cheshunt station as I always used to get. Then it was off to Northumberland Park on the train, which ran a few minutes late. No change there either then! But after I alighted from the train, I encountered a seemingly endless number of ramps to go down before I finally hit the street. Then the walk to the ground was pretty much the same. By now it had started to rain a bit. My next task was to get a programme. There were none on sale around the ground. I was told that I could either get one in the Spurs shop or inside the ground. With time getting on and not wanting to miss the opening ceremony I opted for the latter.

Getting in was quite easy. My season ticket was scanned by a steward and then I had to walk past a fully body scanner and after scanning my stadium access card I was suddenly in the ground! I looked for a programme seller and told that I could get one at Level 2. I managed to get in here and after I was told that they had run out and that they were free in this section I suddenly realised that I was rubbing shoulders with the £6,000 a season ticket-holders, where everything, including food is free! Eventually I found my way to Level 5, where my seat is and found a programme queue. But after waiting a few minutes they ran out. I did have another opportunity to get one at half time, but it would have taken too long in this cashless stadium to get one. So, after finding a toilet, which wasn't easy, I made my way to my seat.

I have to say that the view from my front row seat in the top tier, halfway inside one half, was very impressive, as of course was the ground as a whole and it wasn't so different from my view at the old ground. Good thing for me is that I no longer get people standing up in front of me every time Spurs score or look likely to score. The LED floodlights were already on and were used to great effect during the ten-minute opening ceremony when after a brief hailstorm, the guy from the *Compare.com* adverts sang 'Glory Glory Halleluiah' and I have to admit this brought a tear to my eye. Then after an impressive load of fireworks were let off from the roof the match started.

Whether it was just the fact that the emotion of the evening got to Spurs, or not, but they looked rather jaded throughout, although you couldn't fault them for effort. No goals in the first half then. I tried to search out a toilet at the break. But there were loads of people in the concourse, buying up every last morsel of food and drink, almost like they haven't eaten for these past two years and I couldn't find a toilet in time! The second half eventually saw Spurs do the business with Son getting the opening goal, via a deflection. Eriksen got a second later on.

Getting home wasn't so bad. There was the usual bun fight at Northumberland Park station, but despite the queue I got my intended train. Overall a wonderful experience at a brilliant new ground, which will get even better once everything settles down. PS. as I write, the £10 (plus £4.99 postage) commemorative programme I ordered on line after the match has still yet to arrive some 15 days later!

04/20