

**TT No.149: Keith Aslan** - Saturday 4<sup>th</sup> May 2019; **NEWCASTLE BLUE STAR** v Newcastle University; Northern Alliance Premier Division; Kick-Off: 14.29; Result: 0-2; Admission: Free; Programme: £2; Attendance: 61 (47 home, 0 away & 14 neutral)

Probably the only club in the world to be named after a brown ale, Newcastle Blue Star have an illustrious history. Formed in 1930 they have won the Vase and reached the Northern Premier League before losing their smashing Wheatsheaf ground and as one of the hundred or so who packed into the 12,000-capacity rugby stadium to watch them it was obvious this was a business model doomed to failure and in 2009 they folded. They lasted longer than the brown ale from which they took their name which ceased production in 2003 because according to Scottish and Newcastle Brewery 'beer drinkers' tastes are changing'. Well that and the fact it tasted like sick. In 1992 a consortium was formed to bring Maidstone United to the north east to form a merger with Blue Star and thus take the Stones place in the Football League. Jim Thompson, the then chairman of Maidstone didn't think this was a very good idea and put the block on it. Can't see what his problem was! Back to today and step forward Stephen Best who last year decided to revive the club and boy has he done a spectacular job in a short space of time. Although only starting up this season if you didn't know you'd think they've been part of the local football scene for years.

You can't miss the ground with a massive banner declaring this is home to Newcastle Blue Star outside the brand new 'Bobby Robson Lounge' opened by his missus only six months ago and a very cosy place to enjoy a drink. Plenty of hot food also available. The ground is fully railed with permanent dugouts, the Blue Star crest emblazoned on them. Mr. Best clearly has much money and gets things done. At the moment the players are changing in the adjacent boxing club but at the current rate of building it should only take a few weeks to tack on a new changing room block to the bar. Also, it's very easy to reach for the carless with a 20-minute door to door bus service covering the 4-mile journey from Central Station.

Loads of groundhoppers at this one and I didn't know any of them, all northern brethren who presumably don't venture south. Also present was Peter Beardsley who must be at loose end on Saturdays these days after his dismissal from Newcastle amid allegations of bullying and racism. He seemed a thoroughly decent bloke and I find it very difficult to believe any of it is true. I can pay him no greater compliment than to say he's as nice a person as I am. He stayed until the final whistle, was genuinely interested in the club and the game, and was happy to talk to anyone and pose for selfies. Top man.

As for the match, Blue Star must be wondering how they lost it. So many chances, so many misses while the opposition took theirs. The University still have an outside chance of winning the league but according to the programme have

already been accepted into the Northern League for next season ground sharing at Prudhoe. As for Blue Star I would expect them to go from strength to strength on and off the pitch.

04/20