

TT No. 19: *Brian Buck* - Saturday 1st September 2018; **Southend United U18 v Stevenage U18**; EFL Youth Alliance U18 South East Division; Kick-Off: 10.30am; Venue: played at Southend United (Boots & Laces) Training Ground; Result: 2-3; Attendance: 50 approx.

I was originally going to just 'do' the game at Old Southendian, as detailed above, but then I saw that Southend United Youth were at home as well and the two grounds are about ten minutes-walk apart. But today I drove because I didn't fancy getting up at silly o'clock to get here by train. Nor did I fancy making the return journey home in the company of those nice Southend United and Charlton Athletic fans, who were playing each other at Roots Hall. Anyway, I arrived here with just under half an hour before kick-off. Luckily, I'd found the entrance on *Google Street View* the previous night as it's very easy to miss. I got what I thought was the last parking space here, but for heaven's sake, I was in Essex and when I returned to my car at the end of the game, I found that there were loads of spaces! I then managed to have a cup of coffee before setting out to watch the match. I kept wondering what all this metal scaffolding was stacked up all over the place. Then Peter Miles, (he of *Groundtastic Magazine*) and a life-long Southend United fan, turned up and he explained to me that all this was part of what was the David Beckham Academy in London, where I once saw an indoor game. It's parked here because if Southend's plans come to fruition then not only will the Academy be recreated here but also the new Southend United ground will be built here too. There is plenty of land available for it, but things seemed to have stalled at present. I'd been here once before for a game, on 29 July 1995 when I saw a goalless draw in a friendly between Southend United U18 v Spurs U17 (or Juniors as they were then known) with an attendance of 40 approx. Since then this training ground has been extended, apparently courtesy of the fee Southend received from Nottingham Forest for the signature of Stan Colleymore!

Today we weren't allowed to watch this match from the side-lines. It seems that halfway through last season someone got hit by a ball and now everyone has to watch from behind the goals, which to most people eyes is even more dangerous! As for the match, it was a good one and against their slightly younger looking opponents Stevenage had a good first half, to the point where the Southend photographer gave up and moved towards to the end Stevenage were attacking. Stevenage took the lead on 19 minutes with a shot which went in off the crossbar and doubled it on 34 minutes with a curled shot into the top right-hand corner, which no keeper would stop. The game was seemingly won, but within 41 seconds of the restart Southend pulled a goal back. On 60 minutes Stevenage missed a penalty, saved, following a push and to make matters worse for them they conceded a headed own goal for the equaliser on 70 minutes. Were Stevenage going to buckle? Well no, because as I saw from them on the previous Tuesday, they now have that determination to work harder when things go wrong and the

winner came on 78 minutes. The ball was won deep right and passed. The receiver hit a hard five-yard cross into the area, which was met with a close- range header.

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