

TT No.20: *Brian Buck* - Saturday 1st September 2018; **Old Southendian** v Bishop's Stortford Swifts; Prokit UK Essex Olympian League Premier Division; Kick-Off: 2.30pm; Venue: played at Garon Park; Result: 1-2; Attendance: 70 approx.

After the previous match had finished, I was soon at my second game, staged in this large complex. I don't know how much of it belongs to Old Southendian, but in addition to having a leisure centre, from where I purchased my pre-match food, they also have a golf course, rugby pitches, a massive purpose-built cricket arena, where Essex Cricket Club have played from time to time and a dog training section, which was on the go when I arrived. Obviously, they play football here as well and on my arrival a youth match was taking place. They are intending to lay a 3G pitch here soon as well. Later I was told that it costs about £45,000 a year to have a groundsman here, but when pushed I was told that not all of it goes into his pocket as some of this goes on the equipment he needs as well! I watched some cricket whilst I ate my food. No hot dogs of course though. Then it was into the bar, shared between the football and cricket, but with separate entrances. Here I encountered a 'Budleigh Salterton' type barmaid, which meant that it was very difficult to look her in the eye, as I found out when I visited the aforementioned club some years back, leading to some difficulty in watching the match that evening. Today I was much more sensible, as I was driving!

The match was a very physical one. It was well attended and from what I gathered it was because some of the 'true' Old Southendians had been having a pre-match meal in a large marquee before the game and they came out to watch with their drinks. It seems that in their 119-year existence today was the highest level they'd ever staged a home league match at. Both teams gave the ref a hard time, the visitors more so. They had the greater experience, whereas the newly promoted hosts struggled a bit in the first half. They were architects of their own down fall in this period. An intercepted clearance from the keeper saw the ball put back behind him for the first goal on 17 minutes and despite cries of "Leave it" by the keeper a defender managed to head the ball over him for 0-2, 6 minutes later. The hosts played better after the break and pulled a goal back from the spot on 54 minutes. On 70 and 78 minutes there were 'comings together' which saw a player from each side dismissed in each incident. There should have been more red cards shown here. The hosts tried hard for the equaliser and, although they eventually played well, they weren't quite good enough to beat the visitors.