

TT No.3: Steve Hardy - Saturday 11th August 2018; **Barnsley U18** v Watford U18; U18 Professional Development League; Kick-Off: 11.00am; Result: 3-2; Admission charge: No; Team sheet: Free; Attendance: 58 h/c

I was long overdue a return visit to Barnsley's Academy. A couple of years ago I turned up to watch their U18s play Birmingham U18s and found the place deserted. Turned out the game had been played the previous day, and I hadn't spotted it! Doh!

No such problems today though, as I arrived just as a large bus from Watford was spilling its players out by the dressing rooms. The Academy set up is very impressive indeed at Barnsley, and is situated directly behind the Palmer stand at Oakwell. On entering the facility, there is a 3G pitch straight in front of you which has a huge stand along one side. I seem to remember that breakaway club AFC Barnsley played there during their brief spell in the Central Midlands League a few years back. Beyond that is the pitch we used today, where there is a large area of seated terracing behind one goal, and which was the only area we spectators could use.

No admission charge, of course, and a full colour team sheet was widely available from the Academy reception building.

On the pitch, this one turned out to be excellent entertainment. Visitors Watford looked much the better side in the first half, and had taken a deserved 2-0 lead after 25 minutes. Just before the break, though, Barnsley pulled one back, and it was then 'game on'. The second half was all Barnsley and they duly equalised from a corner after 53 minutes, before popping in the winner on 77 minutes. Cue scenes of great excitement from the players, management team and most of the crowd of 58!

So, a great start to my Yorkshire trip, and it was off to the second game.

04/20