

TT No.43: *Keith Aslan* - Saturday 13th October 2018; **BEDFORD ALBION** v Sandy (Albion free since 2001); Bedfordshire County Division 1; Kick-Off: 11.01; Result: 9-0; Admission: Free; Programme: £2; Attendance: 149 (20 home, 0 away & 129 neutral).

Another hop, another social occasion, and while I don't have many friends, most of the ones I do have were here. Everybody on my train got off at Bedford, but I was one of the few that actually wanted to. Rail Replacement buses for the poor sods who needed to go any further north, Bedford to Leicester by bus? Oh joy! An hourly-service runs from the bus station to outside the ground but I don't quite know why. 4 hoppers on the outward journey and 1 hopper (me) on the return and that was the lot. In Thanet the council are threatening to remove all bus subsidies on routes people are actually using while Bedford Council are putting their money into running empty ones. Arrival at the ground was in pouring rain which the BBC had neglected to tell anybody about but it was soon over and I was able to dry out in un-October-esque temperatures of 24 degrees during the match.

Everything you would expect from a hop match (unless it's an Eastern Counties one). Programme, hot food, drinks and the teams written on a large whiteboard. The homemade Walnut and Coffee cake was absolutely scrumptious but you needed to get in quick as some greedy people (well just me actually) had three slices. Whoever made it should be on 'The Great British Bake Off': I quote from the chairman's history of the club "We were very fortunate after (the) 2nd game of the season last season's top scorer Challi got injured which ruled him out for a full season" If I was 'Challi' I'd be a bit miffed about that sentence. Sandy have gone a long way down in the world, when I visited them, they were riding high in the South Midlands League in the days before the evil of ground grading took hold. Their manager has recently done a runner taking a shed load of players with him, hence today's result.

Top v bottom this was a rerun of David and Goliath only this time Goliath came up trumps. 7-0 at half time Bedford took pity in the second half while the referee did his bit in keeping the score down by not awarding the home side the most obvious penalty you will see in your life. He had a big grin on his face as he indicated play on after the blatant foul and waved away the understandable protests from players and groundhoppers alike by forming a square with his fingers suggesting it should be referred to VAR but as there wasn't any there's nothing anyone could do about it. The ref. was a bit of a character!

Having done the next two Hop games, I had the choice of doing a revisit with a programme, doing a new ground without one or going home. I went home.