

TT No.51: Steve Hardy - Saturday 3rd November 2018; **Blackburn Rovers U18s** v West Bromwich Albion U18s; FA Premier Academy League U18 Division; Result: 4-1; Admission and team-sheet: Free; Attendance: 44 (h/c)

Definitely one of the poshest places I have seen a game at, this one. Blackburn Rovers training ground and academy are based in a gated community called Brockhall Village, which is in the village of Old Langho, just north of Blackburn. You have to drive through a couple of barriers to get to the Academy, but this was no problem as they just automatically raise as you approach them. In fact, there was no problem getting in to the Academy at all. Staff are really friendly, there are free hot drinks in reception for all spectators, and the team-sheet was also available from there too.

There are several immaculate pitches outside the changing room block, and today we had two games being played as the U16s, of the two teams, I watched were playing on an adjacent pitch.

The football was a bit different to normal too. Academy matches are often sterile affairs with technically gifted lads cancelling each other out. Not today though, and that is probably due to the Baggies kids not really being that organised I thought. Blackburn scored on 22 minutes as the Albion keeper spilled the ball for a simple tap in, and again on 38 minutes for a 2-0 half time lead.

What we needed in the second half was an early Baggies response. We didn't get it though, as Rovers scored a 3rd on 53 minutes and bossed the game thereafter. A flurry of substitutions led to an unlikely Albion goal on 62 minutes, but that was as good as it got for them, with Rovers scoring a fourth on 75 minutes to complete the scoring.

Most of the spectators left at half time to get to Blackburn in time to watch the first team play QPR and this made it a lot less hassle for me to set off for my second game of the day.