

TT No.69: *Keith Aslan* - Saturday 1st December 2018; **WHITE ENSIGN** v Holland; Eastern Counties Division 1 South; Kick-Off: 15.00; Result: 2-3; Admission: £2 for old folk; Programme: £1; Attendance: 59 (37 home, 12 away & 10 neutral)

Oh, the glamour of groundhopping, one week it's Merthyr Tydfil, the next it's Basildon, most people can only dream about visiting these exotic tourist hotspots. Changing trains at Stratford, Westfields was packed with Christmas shoppers, what sort of saddo spends their Saturdays shopping? Basildon was its usual welcoming self with the overcast drizzle adding to the charisma of Essex's premier town. Basildon Bowl as it should still be called, is a 25-minute stroll from the station, and has officially changed its name to the pretentious 'Basildon Sporting Village' Building a leisure centre next to the ground doesn't make it a village. The aforementioned leisure centre has a fabulous café with full meals available where you can enjoy your food amid lots of fit and healthy people, apart from the groundhoppers who were out in force for this one. The programme was dated Tuesday December 1st, so half right then. Don't be put off by the running track, although a bit of a distance from the pitch the gargantuan stand, running the entire length of the touchline, provides an excellent view of proceedings.

White Ensign have been forced to move here from their Southend base because their pitch was too small. It really beggars-belief that in the bonkers world of non-league football you need a bigger pitch to play in the Eastern Counties League than the Essex Olympian. They will only be allowed to play here for one season because, among other reasons, the pitch is too small here too! This was only discovered after they'd been playing here a few months. Now I would have thought that those wonderful ground grading people would have noticed this when they did their inspection, but apparently not. I assume they were so overawed with the massive stand they didn't bother with anything else. At last they've found a club with the same vision as the FA, a stand with 25 seats for every spectator. One day all non-league grounds will be like this. Another problem is the pay box. Built specially to please the ground graders, at no small cost I would imagine, this wooden building is apparently no good because it's moveable. Yes really. How it must spoil the matchday experience for spectators when they enter the ground knowing that if a few of them got together they could move the paybox. As well as spending more money bolting it to the ground turnstiles and presumably a Doric arch are musts for next season, I'm sure the 37 home supporters will appreciate it. If I was in charge at White Ensign, I wouldn't bother with all this nonsense and just carry on playing in the Essex Olympian.

White Ensign was formed in 1951 by, among others, current chairman Alan Day who is retiring at the end of the season. That's 67 years-service during which time he's filled every post at the club. With that nice Mr. Scudamore getting a £5-million-pound payoff for a few years of well-paid employment negotiating TV deals, Alan

Day's contribution to football should be worth much more on his retirement, but if I was him, I wouldn't go booking that world cruise just yet.

The match was excellent with two teams fighting out an honourable and deserved draw after 90 minutes. The referee had other ideas and kept the game going to give one of the teams a chance to score a winner, which Holland did in the 95th minute. This gave the game an unfair and false result. Why do referees do this? Oh, for a Clive Thomas today, so misunderstood for correctly timing a football match.

White Ensign have taken the step up in their stride and at the start of play were top of the league, but achieving promotion just by winning football match's is so last century, much more important to get that pay box bolted to the ground.

04/20