

TT No.71: *Brian Buck* - Saturday 1st December 2018; **Stapleford Town** v Newark Flowserve; Notts Senior Cup 3rd Round; Result: 1-3; Programme: £1; Attendance: 120 approx.

Today this was the place to be for me as seeing a match here enabled me to complete the top division of the Notts Senior League. Travel was fairly straightforward and fairly easy, but not without a few minor hiccups. I travelled by train from Peterborough to Nottingham, fully aware that I would be sharing the train with some Ipswich Town fans, who were on their way to watch their side lose 2-0 at Forest. They were loud and chanted a lot. Bearing in mind that they are rock bottom of the Championship then they really had nothing to boast about. The train would have got in ten minutes early, but for some secret reason, known only to the Nottingham station staff, we were held up for 25 minutes just outside the station and thus arrived 15 minutes late. This meant I missed my intended curiously numbered i4 bus to the ground. No big deal, as they run every 10 minutes, but it was 10 minutes lost drinking time!

Anyway, I arrived at the ground about 45 minutes before kick-off and picked up my £1 informative programme. No bar here. So, I shot off to the nearest pub. Here it took me a good five minutes to get served. The young bar maid seemed insistent on refilling existing customers glasses first. Then when I did get served, she didn't seem to know what two bottles of Newcastle Brown Ale looked like and when she did find them it took her an age to find a suitable glass to drink it from. By now cactuses were starting to grow on my tongue and so I instructed her to give me any glass capable of holding liquid!

My hurried stay here lasted less than twenty minutes and I was back well before kick-off, only to find that they weren't playing on the pitch in front of the changing rooms like I thought they would. In fact, it was played out on a semi enclosed pitch, slightly divorced from the rest of the recreation ground. I still had time for a quick hot dog before I followed the players and the match officials out as we all made this short walk to the pitch. The club hope to relocate permanently to here, enclosing it more fully to make it more suitable for higher grade football, I wish them well, but it's not going to be easy to do this in a public park!

The match was a feisty one. The lovely Zoe, secretary of Flowserve, who've I met several times before, told me that they were three players short today. I was tempted to tell her to get some taller ones. But in a first half devoid of many pots at goal, they did score on 35 minutes. However, the hosts equalised just 44 seconds into the restart, but Flowserve were ahead again five minutes later. On 75 minutes there was a punch up which saw a player from each side dismissed. There should have been more! Now Flowserve were struggling to see off a spirited home side and it was in the 90th minute before they made the game safe, from the spot, following a handball. Overall a decent game in front of large crowd for a public park match.

Then came the getting home experience. The bus stop was merely two minutes away and one came almost immediately. I got on it only to find that I'd mislaid some of my travel documents where I keep my bus pass. So, I got off the bus to see if I could find them. I walked back to the ground without success, gave up and caught the next bus back to Nottingham. Suddenly I found them. They were in my coat pocket rather than my jacket pocket. The bus got back early enough to allow me to catch the 4.24pm train back from Nottingham, thus avoiding those nice Ipswich Town fans, or so I thought! Just before the train left, I was joined by four of them. These 'loyal' fans must have left soon after half time by which time their side was losing 2-0. They'd be better off focusing on air ventilators and becoming ex-tractor fans!

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