

TT No. 116: Brian Buck - Saturday 29th February 2020; **Kensington & Ealing Borough** v Godalming Town; Cherry Red Records Combined Counties League Division 1; Venue: played at Club des Sports, The Park Club, Ealing; Result: 4-2; Attendance: 71.

This was my first Saturday game on the 29th February for 28 years. On that day in 1992 I was at Wellington 3 Devizes Town 3 in a Great Mills Western League Division 1 match (Attendance: 80 approx.). Having endured visiting County FA grounds on the two previous Saturdays to get my fix, with questionable degrees of enjoyment, things were nearly back to normal today, but not quite. To get to this ground I elected to drive to Carpenders Park and go by Overground to Acton Central, changing at Willesden Junction. This brought back memories of leaving my car at the first named station, when I went this way to watch Spurs play at Wembley up until almost a year ago now. From here it was a pleasant walk past some expensive houses and a lovely park, none of which seem to have changed much for many years, before I found the ground, which was equally salubrious.

I have called it as the Combined Counties League have, in giving their permission for Kensington to play here, but dotted around were plenty of signs referring to it as the Wetherby Sports Ground. The first thing I noticed on my arrival that the 3G pitch was not inside a cage. Hurray, or even hurray! It was open to walk round all four sides and only enclosed by a standard size metal fence. Above the changing rooms was a balcony and many watched the match from there. Soon I found the club bar, but left again quickly when I found that the prices of food and drink were similar to the last two Saturdays. Also, they were selling a beer called *Corona* and you never know what I could have caught had I drunk that stuff. So, as I had time, I re-routed back to the station and more particularly to the pub right by it to satisfy my needs.

I was back well in time for the match and as I took my place on the far side of the ground and stared around, I realised just what a pretty place this is. I suspect that in summer when all the many trees are in leaf then this would be a lovely peaceful place to do whatever you come here to do. Having said all that, the weather did play a part in proceedings. Although it was mainly sunny, I had encountered a hail or snow storm driving to Carpenders Park and we were graced with one during the game as well. On my way to the game I had spotted nine young away fans, probably all in their late teens. I thought that they might be here to cause trouble, but later we were told that they were Godalming Town fans who follow their team everywhere by public transport. They were noisy, but genuinely here to support their bottom of the table side.

Things didn't go their way initially as they were 2-0 down by the 19th minute. But on the day, they turned out to be not that bad and by the 42nd minute they had equalised. However, just before the break the hosts regained the lead. The second half was reasonably even, but on 64 minutes the visitors sealed their win with a

fourth goal, which came direct from a corner, possibly wind assisted and it went in off the far post, thus completing the scorers hattrick. Overall, as a fellow Hopper put it, this ground was a bit of a gem. The game wasn't bad and apart from it being cold, this was a decent day out.

04/20