

TT No. 13: Steve Hardy - Saturday 10th August 2019; **Bolton Wanderers U16 FC v Watford U18**; U18 Professional Development League - North; Kick-Off: 11.00am; Result: 1-4; Admission and Team-sheet: Free; Attendance: 36 H/C

I know what you are thinking. The silly old buffer has put the wrong age group for the Bolton team, hasn't he? Well, no actually, he hasn't. The problems at Bolton are well documented, and it turns out that the Bolton U18 team were drafted in to play for the first team v Coventry today, as they have so few senior players signed on. This left the U16s to step up to play Watford U18s, and whilst they tried very hard, the 2-year age gap at this level left the result never in doubt.

Just like the main stadium, the Bolton Academy set up is also in Horwich and, indeed, the floodlights can be seen in the distance. Or at least they could have been if it hadn't been raining heavily throughout. No problem getting in here, although with the car park flooded, parking was an issue. Luckily the terrible weather kept the attendance down, and those that did seemed mostly from Watford.

I was really impressed by this Academy. Loads of pitches available, including a floodlit 3G pitch next to lake car park. I saw people coming back from the office area with cups of tea, although getting back to the pitch would have turned the tea into rainwater, so I didn't bother.

Despite the rain, the grass pitch was immaculate. Visitors Watford took the lead on 16 minutes with an unmarked header from a corner, and it was one-way traffic after that as they scored three more by the 63rd minute for a comfortable 4-0 lead. Credit due to Bolton though as they intercepted a cross-field pass for a one on one run through on goal which the lad scored with aplomb on 80 minutes.

I have never been much of a Bolton fan ever since my partner and I were abused by several drunken Bolton fans in the stand whilst we were watching my beloved Reading winning 3-1 in the Premier League a few years back. The stewards did nothing to help us and it left a very sour taste in our mouths. That said I do hope they can sort this current mess out and not get thrown out to the EFL, as seems increasingly likely, at the moment.