

**TT No.28: *Brian Buck*** - Saturday 7th September 2019; **Bush Hill v Fleetlands**; Hampshire Premier League Senior Division; Result: 0-2; Attendance: 80 approx.

Today I let the train take the strain and it certainly did. The 11.22am from Waterloo crawled its way as far as Woking and then after a few minutes of nothing an announcement came across to the effect that there was a body on the line at Hook. We were told by the guard, who seemed to know a lot about these things, that we would be here for at least 45 minutes.

But as I started to flick through *The Football Traveller* magazine for possible other fixtures, I noticed that a train to Portsmouth Harbour was due in on an adjacent platform. Noting that it stopped at Havant on its way I decided to get on that train, as I knew that I could get a connection to Southampton from there. I did this and while I was waiting for my connecting train at Havant, I visited the water closet. When I re-emerged, there was another train on the platform and although it wasn't advertised on the board, I found out that it was going to Southampton direct. When I alighted at my destination and asked, I discovered that this was actually the same 11.22am train I was on earlier! Anyway, from here I immediately caught a bus to the ground which stopped literally by it.

After confirming that the match was definitely on, I adjourned to the nearby The Saints pub which was about a goal kick away. On my return I ordered some food and as the provider found out that I was a Groundhopper, he kindly put a bit extra in for me. He told those in earshot that all products he uses are sourced locally, namely *Tesco's*, *Lidl* and *Aldi*! This fully railed off ground is actually in a public park, but with a mixture of trees, a tarmacked footpath, a block of flats and the main road surrounding it, the venue felt more enclosed than it is. There is one club building, painted brightly in the club colours of red and black, but it houses the dressing rooms and the tea bar only. The ground is a few hundred yards away from that of Solent University (formerly Team Solent) of the Wessex League. No chance of floodlights here though, although someone from Fleetlands told me that they had recently been given permission to erect theirs.

This was a match between first and third and Bush Hill were not only the reigning champions, but they had won the league two out of the past three years. You got the impression that they are not too keen on losing and they gave the young ref a hard time. He was being observed by someone who looked almost as young as him and I thought that he stood up well to the pressures. After an even first half of few chances from either side things heated up after the break. On 61 minutes Fleetlands took the lead. The home lino had his flag up for offside, but the ref rightly or wrongly refused to consult him. For me the goal wasn't offside. This caused temperatures to rise on the home front as soon they had a player 'sin-binned', quickly followed by one of the management team getting a straight red. Then on 76 minutes Fleetlands doubled their lead and a minute later Bush Hill had another player 'sin-binned'. Fleetlands would have got a third goal right at the

end, but again the lino's flag was raised and this time the ref did consult him and he disallowed the goal. Immediately the game finished I dived on to a bus waiting outside the ground and once back at the station I decided to abandon *South West* trains and return home via Reading instead. An eventful day out!

04/20