

TT No.75: Steve Hardy - Saturday 14th December 2019; **Hartford** v Lord Raglan; The Northern Cup Round 1; Kick-Off: 1.30pm; Result: 2-3; Admission: Free; Programme: No; Attendance: 1 h/c

The Northern cup competition flies very much below most people's radar, I think. Have you ever heard of it? No, well there you go then. It is a competition for clubs who are way down the pyramid below step 7 in the north of England and I enjoy it because it features clubs from leagues that I am not familiar with. Today was a fine example with Lord Raglan playing in the Blackburn & District combination, a league that I know absolutely nothing about.

The home team were Hartford. They are newcomers to the Cheshire league this season, and are currently bottom of the bottom division. They play all their home matches on a 3G pitch at the rear of the Cheshire FA headquarters at Moss Farm in Northwich. The whole area is vast, as the football is shared with Northwich Cricket Club, a huge gymnastics hall and Northwich rugby club. The rugby are the biggest users here by far, and have two floodlit grass pitches, and a super clubhouse on site as well.

The rugby team were at home to Vale of Lune this afternoon, and there was a sizeable crowd in attendance, including a few from Lancaster who had come on the team coach. My match wasn't quite so well populated, and my initial headcount was 1. Following the example of last Thursday's election, I demanded a recount, but I still came up with same number, 1.

Hartford looked really poor initially and were 2 down inside 9 minutes. Somehow, they pulled one back on 23 minutes, but in truth Raglan were much the better side throughout. After half time Raglan got their 3rd on 49 minutes when the Hartford keeper palmed a cross into his own net, and that looked to be game over. It wasn't though, and Hartford started to play some good football, and duly scored their 2nd on 68 minutes. Amid extensive time wasting from Raglan, Hartford tried everything to get an equaliser, but just couldn't break through and in the end Raglan more than deserved their narrow victory.

And what about Sarah Satnav I hear you say? Well once I ignored her very first instruction and turned right out of my drive instead of the left she was advocating, it all went to pot. Basically, she just gave up on providing any information whatsoever, and sulked. Women eh?