

**TT No.76: *Brian Buck*** - Saturday 14th December 2019; **FC Petrocub** v London Cranes; Essex Alliance Premier Division; Venue: played at Noak Hill Sports Complex; Result: 4-0; Attendance: 15 approx.

When I looked out of the window after I got up, the weather was as I expected it to be for the whole day. But just before I left home some light rain fell. I didn't think much of it at the time, but as I reached the station, with the intention of seeing a game in Southend, the rain intensified. Despite this I still bought a train ticket. But then while I was waiting for a tannoy announcement came telling us of delays because someone had jumped on the line at Welwyn Garden City. By now the rain was very heavy. So, I got a refund and went home to re-plan my day. Then just as I was thinking of playing my Walton Casuals/Walton & Hersham joker, the sun came out. I then checked the rainfall radar and realised that there would be no more rain today. So, as I didn't now need to be under cover, I went for a game on 3G, rather than on grass, because I knew that it would be on, without the need to check it out.

This was a first v third match and for some reason it had been allocated linos, the only one in the league to have linos. So, I went for it, getting there about 45 minutes before kick-off. The ground is in the northern suburbs of Romford, not far from Harold Hill, although I'm not sure if the famous comedian lives there. Anyway, I had time for a quick pint before I returned to the ground, by which time a like-minded Groundhopping friend of mine had turned up.

You can get inside the cage to watch proceedings here, but although there is a designated spectator viewing area, it isn't very big and when the game started our viewing was partially obscured by the number of management people and subs in front of us. Also, the sun was in our eyes and the wind was blowing in our faces. So, we made the executive decision to enter the playing arena ourselves and we went and stood on the other side of the pitch. No one challenged us, possibly because I was making notes and may have been mistaken for a league official, which made a change for being mistaken for either a scout, a reporter or an assessor (observer these days). It seems that the linos were present because some possibility of trouble was expected. But apart from the usual behaviour in games at this level, the only real problem the ref had was with the aforementioned benches and that never got out of hand. Both teams weren't actually English. FC Petrocub's players hail from Moldova and London Cranes are made up of players from Uganda, who also represent their country in the African Nations Cup UK. This was a physical competitive match which was close until FC Petrocub scored their first goal on 56 minutes. Thereafter the younger visiting side quickly fell away and conceded three more goals by close of play. Later I was surprised that the names of all the goal scorers I was given were correct, apart from the fact that the provider told me that he had scored twice and that the score was 5-0. But when I met up with the team in the pub later on, he admitted his deception! Overall a better day out than

I first imagined, helped slightly by the fact that the pub was both warm and welcoming.

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