

TT1920-90

**TT No.90: Keith Aslan** - Saturday 18<sup>th</sup> January 2020; **Ecclesfield Red Rose** v North Gawber Colliery; Sheffield Senior Premier Division; Kick-Off: 14.03 (officials and away team good to go at advertised kick off time, home team not so); Result: 2-2; Admission: Free; Programme: £1; Attendance: 18 (16 home, 0 away & 2 neutral)

You never know where this hobby is going to take you. Contentedly sitting on a train on my way to Chesterfield I got a phone call from a fellow hopper telling me there wasn't going to be a programme today at my destination and so alternative arrangements had to be made courtesy of 'Traveller'. Already zooming through the Leicestershire countryside my options were limited to one that was new and paper filled so Ecclesfield it was. They play in the north of Sheffield and my orienteering skills were tested to the max. with no maps or bus timetables and certainly not one of those magic phones that tells you where to go. A visit to the bus interchange information desk set me on my way, a 7 or 8 from the City Centre drops you literally right outside the ground. They play at Chaucer School, but the pitch is a bit different from what you would usually expect at an educational establishment.

Ideally situated next door to the *Asda* superstore where I was able to partake of dinner served by a very friendly lady who appeared to really enjoy her job. Working for a pittance and treated like dirt by the management, what's not to like? Well sustained I entered the school buildings and came out the other side confronted by a large raised garden with a lot of steps (at least it seemed a lot to me in my current state) leading up to the playing fields. It is a long climb from the changing rooms and although I've known teams make it back at half time to dressing rooms that are a bus ride away (Yes, I'm talking about you Worcester Raiders) common sense prevailed today and the break was spent out on the pitch requiring only a five minute interval. If teams only need five minutes for their team talk when staying out, why do they need 16 or 17 minutes when they go in? The raised playing field also includes a running track and a 3g pitch which Ecclesfield sometimes use when the weather is dodgy. No problems today though and the game took place on the more aesthetically pleasing grass.

The game was a frisky, over-frisky at times, the two-all draw being about the right result. Highlight of the match for me was the teenage lines-girl, Caitlin O'Grady. Can't understand why she should want to spend her Saturday afternoons having abuse shouted at her by a bunch of footballers. Oh, I was forgetting, that doesn't happen anymore - thanks to pre match handshakes and sin bins. One thing to bear in mind here, wrap up warm. At this elevated point when the sun went down the wind blowing across from the Pennines made for some shivery weather.

The bus back went past Hillsborough and one thing I hadn't factored in was the crowds coming out of Sheffield Wednesday. The reason this wasn't on my radar was because we went past the ground five minutes into the second half. People were streaming out. Why would you pay a lot of money to see a football match then

leave just after half-time? Football fans are strange people. I assume the mass exodus was because Wednesday were 4-0 down at the time but I still can't understand why you would leave so early. Mind you I shouldn't think they would understand why I'd travelled the best part of 500 miles to watch a game on a playing field.

04/20