

TT No.97: Steve Hardy - Saturday 25th January 2020; **Leaffield Athletic** v Sporting Sandwell; Birmingham & District League Division 5; Result: 13-0; Admission: Free; Programme: No; Attendance: 2 h/c

It's good to be back! After my recent 'galavantings', in Southampton, it was back to my favourite league in the world today, for what I think was my penultimate ground before recompleting the league.

Leaffield Athletic are new to the league this season, after the long-established junior club of the same name decided to add an adult men's and women's team to their repertoire. It is quite a strange set up really. They are based in Rumbush Lane in Dickens Heath, but have two separate entrances. One for the Men's team and another for the Ladies set up, despite the fact that the two pitches used are adjacent to each other.

There was a girls U16 match going on at the rear of the set up when I arrived with a fairly large crowd watching them too. Both parties have excellent changing room facilities and there is also a very large café inside the men's one.

The match itself was typical of the Brum AFA. Bottom of the table Sporting have played just three league games this season, and are on -3 points with a goal difference of -29. At kick-off time they had just 8 players on the pitch but an injury to the Leaffield keeper in the pre-match warm up meant a 25-minute delay whilst an ambulance was called. By the time we managed to start the game, Sporting had got a bare 11 together and off we went.

As you can see from the score-line, Sporting were never in it. They had a stand in keeper who refused to dive, several players who had to be introduced to each other as they had obviously been dragged along to make up the numbers, and a variety of different kit, none of which had numbers on their backs. It was 9-0 by half time and I did wonder if Leaffield might hit 20, but they managed just the 4 more in the second half.

On the plus side, the Leaffield captain had a strong word with his players when they started showboating in the second half. He told them that the opposition deserved respect and should be accorded it. For their part, Sporting never gave up, and didn't argue with each other either, so I do hope things improve for them as the season progresses.