

**TT No. 108: 04/05/05 Club/Ground Focus: *Andy Molden* - Berinsfield FC (Oxfordshire Senior League Premier Division)**

Berinsfield (2) 5 Kidlington Old Boys (1) 1; Oxfordshire Senior League Premier Division; attendance 57.

Berinsfield have come from nowhere to be odds-on to claim the Senior League title; barring a record defeat at home to second bottom Worcester College Old Boys and Bletchington on Saturday and second placed Eynsham getting a cricket score in their last game, Berinsfield are champions.

The village of Berinsfield is a post war "estate" seven miles south east of Oxford. Its famous son is former England and Liverpool captain Mark Wright, who now owns a number of properties in the village. In the past it has had a reputation, but of late re-generation has taken place and no longer are the local pub and school just burnt out shells.

I have visited the ground(s) a couple of times before. In travelling circles the club have a reputation for never having games off; this could be that they have four or five pitches to choose from and all are quite well grassed. To find the ground follow signs for the village centre, go to the top of the village green, turn right at the shops (Smarts Take-away, Co-op Village Store) Lay Avenue is third right after the "one-way side" of the village green. This will make sense if you saw it. The ground is at the end of Lay Avenue.

Last night the game was played on the main pitch next to the sports centre. A couple of years ago when I went this pitch was fallow and they played on an outside pitch next to an Eastern European style block of flats, which are now demolished and replaced by new houses.

The main pitch has moved 30 yards since I saw a game on it and to say it is a large pitch is an under-statement. About 115 by 80 yards is a rough measurement. Since my last visit a plush new dressing room block with tea bar have been built, as well as an "enclosed" carpark. In years gone by you would have left your car in view while watching a game in case one of the locals borrowed it. The club use the Sports Centre Bar and Social Club which are on the far side of the pitch and which can also be accessed from the village green. Extra car parking, if required, is also available at the Sports Centre.

The pitch has a bank with tarmac path running the full length and this gives a very good view of the game. The pitch is usually roped and as the home officials were duly doing this the ref told them they need not bother!! Though this would be a black mark for "ace doyens" of the hobby, a plus point was that the game had official "lino's", a rare treat in this league. The one on the "dug out" side of the pitch was well chosen, well over six feet, fifteen plus stone, shaven head and an ex-copper, he had a super game and no one questioned his decisions.

The home sec asked the one other traveller present if he was Mick who had phoned him during the weekend. He said he had received a number of calls over the weekend, but had been away until Tuesday morning so was unable to answer all the queries.

The game started a pace and "Kiddy" opened the scoring after only 5 minutes. But within ten minutes the homesters had not only equalised but had also gone 2-1 up. To be fair the first half was very even. After our half-time cup of tea from a very helpful chap in the tea bar we looked forward to the second period.

Kiddy started to tire and the homesters got on top; we had one bout of "handbags" where the Ref just watched and then told them not to be silly again or they would be off. He did have to book a couple of players later on.

The homesters got into a 4-1 lead by the 90-minute mark and with the game safe we thought injury time would pass by without incident. How wrong we were; a ball to the Berinsfield right winger saw said player decide to tackle the nearest Kiddy player with a leg breaking challenge off the ball. We thought all hell would break loose, but the home officials and players rounded on their own player and called him every name under the sun (telling him how he was bringing the club a bad name and not to bother turning up on Saturday). He was duly given "a straight red card" for his efforts. Although the Kiddy defender was shaken and stirred he was able to carry on. The ten men homesters were not finished and ran in a super fifth goal.

The tea bar man said goodbye to one and all and hoped we had enjoyed the game.

The "grapevine" had previously told me the club have had their ground inspected for Hellenic football for next term. As champs we may well see Berinsfield in the Hellenic next year. If the club so wished, lights would not be a problem as the Sports Centre already has a floodlit all-weather surface which runs alongside the pitch.

The nearest Station is Culham which is about three miles away but as this has only a few trains a day it is not much use. There is a bus service from Oxford to Berinsfield and also the Oxford to Wallingford bus stops on the main road outside the village, giving a half a mile walk to the ground. They are run by Thames Travel and are white in colour, I only know these facts as both services pass my house!

As with most Oxfordshire grounds, a mobile Kebab van was in situ in the entrance to the Sports Centre.

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