

TT No.123: 06/06/05 Club/Ground Focus: *Dennis Woods* - Calais Racing Union FC (Championnat - France Amateur Group A)

On Saturday 4th June, Eddie Cook, Cliff Heath, Roland Reeve and I visited Calais Racing Union FC for their final Championnat France Amateur - Group A match with Chalons E/C. This game was originally planned for the 28th May, but the whole programme for that day had been moved to the 4th June due to some poor weather earlier in the year where the whole days programme had been cancelled and all subsequent games had been moved back a week.

Eddie drove us to Dover where he parked the car for the day and we headed for our 10am Hoverspeed Speed Cat journey to Calais. On arriving at Calais, we decided to visit the stadium straight away and check the game out. We were expertly led by Cliff with his map, although the rest of us were a little worried when he led us through fields, over small fences across a disused railway line and old roads that had been closed to traffic. But he got us to the stadium in around 40 minutes.

On arriving at the stadium, we were allowed to walk through the open gates and take some pictures of the stadium. You will see from the pictures that the stadium has one stand and a covered terrace opposite. There is also a raised terrace at one end behind the goal and both ends are uncovered. A long bar rather than a club house was also available. The stadium has 4 corner floodlights, but these were not required for our 6pm kick off. There was also a scoreboard with a clock in the far corner. Food outlets were also available. After taking a few pictures we decided to head off for a few drinks and something to eat.

It was strange to be in a foreign country and keep bumping in to fellow hoppers, but this made the day even more enjoyable and gave it a feel of a mini hop. I guess there were up to 20 UK hoppers at the game.

After our late lunch we decide to head back to the Stade Julien Denis and we purchased our 8-euro (£5.50) seat tickets. No programme was issued. The game itself was very interesting Calais RUFC were 4th from bottom with 70 points and Chalons E/C were 3rd from bottom with 69 points. There are 18 teams in the league and 3 teams get relegated. Now you may think that this is a lot of points for 2 teams close to the bottom of the table, but it appears that every team in the league gets a point for every game they play i.e. all 18 teams in the league had an additional 33 points before the last game of the season. This seems a 'pointless' (perhaps not the correct word to use here) exercise. What difference does it achieve? Any way basically Calais needed to avoid defeat and Chalons E/C had to win. This meant that a bumper crowd of around 2,000 attended. There didn't seem to be any Police at the as game, but the ground has a 7-foot fence all around the pitch which made viewing difficult. Calais were never really trouble and scored their first goal through a penalty in the first half. Calais also scored their second

goal through a penalty in the second half. They were then awarded a third penalty which the Chalons goal keeper this time saved, well he was getting lots of practice wasn't he. Calais scored another goal to send the home team fans home happy with a 3-0 win.

After the final whistle we walked back to the Hoverspeed port to catch our Sea Cat, although this was delayed by 30 minutes. A very rough crossing meant that many people very sick, although everyone in our party was fine. Although at the time I was thinking that the 8% beer that I had earlier was going to be a big mistake.

So, an enjoyable day over in France, to visit a really friendly club.

03/20