

**TT No.056: 22/03/05 Ground/Club Focus: *Mike Latham* - Droylsden (NCN)**

Monday 21 March 2005: Conference North - Droylsden 2-0 Altrincham (attendance est. 814)

Droylsden continued their recent remarkable run of form, moving up to second place in Conference North with a 2-0 win over Altrincham at the Butchers Arms on Monday evening.

The Bloods' sixth win in their last seven games featured some exciting attacking football and superb passing moves and was clinched by a spectacular 35-yard strike from Jody Banim.

Injury hit Altrincham, backed by a large and noisy following that lent a terrific atmosphere to an entertaining night's football, gave a good account of themselves in a skilful encounter played in good spirit.

Situated behind the Butchers Arms just off the main street of the town the ground has a chequered football history dating back to the 1880s. In recent years it has been extensively modernised to meet Conference grading requirements. The impressive new 500-seater William Pace Stand affords an excellent elevated view and straddles the halfway line. To the left is a big social club and the covered terrace behind the left-hand goal was developed last summer and the pitch moved about five yards from right to left.

Earlier in the season the markings of the old pitch layout were clearly visible but these have now disappeared. In an early season match against Bradford PA the referee gave a penalty that would have been one under the old pitch markings but not under the news ones, much to the visitors' chagrin.

On the opposite side there is a small covered terrace and the end to the right behind the goal is uncovered and shallow. Two of the sides have wire meshing to help prevent the ball disappearing into adjoining gardens.

Located just over a mile from J23 of the M60, the Butchers Arms is an intimate ground hemmed in by a retail park and housing but despite space being at a premium the football club certainly makes the best of what it has got and there are plans for further ground improvements.

Most of the club's remarkable transformation in fortunes is down to the energy, vision and investment of their chairman, Dave Pace, who also doubles up as the club manager.

The writer has seen Droylsden in action half a dozen times this season and can vouch for their entertaining style of play that is worthy of far better support. But with Manchester City and United, Oldham Athletic and fellow non-league clubs such as Ashton United, Curzon Ashton, Stalybridge Celtic and many more within a narrow radius competition for the paying spectator is fierce.

A superb, fact filled programme sold for £2, another example of the terrific standard of match day magazines that help make non-league football so enjoyable.

Admission was £8 adults and £5 concessions with children under-14 admitted free. With the Easter holidays having started many parents seemed to have taken advantage of this initiative to bring along their children.

A well-stocked snack bar sold good value drinks and food and was well patronised and the clubhouse is also open to all.

An old cotton mill dominates the skyline from the main stand together with a large terraced building advertising the Pain Clinic- a local acupuncturist. It was certainly no pain to be at the Butchers Arms with Droylsden's jubilant fans rightly claiming to be the pride of Tameside at the moment.

03/20