

TT No.090: 22/04/05 Ground/Club Focus: *Stephen Harris* - CB Hounslow United (Middlesex County League)

Thursday 21 April 2005; CB Hounslow United 0-0 Hanworth Villa; Middlesex County League; Att: c. 80; no programme issued.

The opportunity to get away from work early suddenly presented itself and a quick check of the fixture lists suggested that I might be able to get to CB Hounslow United in time for an estimated 6.30 kick-off. An hour and 20 minutes later I arrived at the ground with five minutes to spare, my bus having crawled along the Uxbridge Road at something less than walking pace.

First priority, I admit, was to try to get my hands on a programme or team sheet if there was one. A likely looking character was perusing a scrap of paper. But it was his own hand written line-ups, cadged off an official. Said official let me down gently - "Sorry mate, but we do usually do one for Saturday games". Oh well.

I hope I'll not be upsetting anyone, or even surprising anyone, by saying that the Osterley Sports Club ground is a dump. A low white rail patchily surrounds about half the pitch with the rest roped off. In the nearest corner are the smashed remains of a portacabin and this once had a small cover attached to the front. The tiny bit which remains could perhaps shelter four people at a squeeze on a rainy day. Some wooden pallets had also once been laid in this area for spectators to stand on and the rotted remains of some are still visible amongst the long grass and litter. Behind the near goal is the burnt-out shell of the social club which once stood here, together with the large, window-less but intact, dressing room block. All in all, pretty basic.

On the plus side, the grass had been cut for the occasion, the lines marked out and we even got some corner flags not too long into the game - all of this being an improvement on the situation at a supposedly more senior club I had visited earlier in the week.

This match pitted second against first in the league table and it was clear to all that both sides were quite useful. The game was entertaining, but goalless, the sides cancelling each other out as can be the way in late-season top of the table clashes at any level. It was my first goalless draw for several months, the last coming in the somewhat more salubrious surroundings of Bologna in Italy's Serie A.

I was surprised by the relatively large size of the crowd - not usually a noted feature of this league. At fairly open grounds like this, with no gate taken, the crowd tends to come and go a bit, but there were 80 spectators at the point when I did a head count, with a good mixture of home and away supporters plus neutrals like myself.

Half time saw a visit to the bar, in the dressing room block, in a high-ceilinged room which had evidently done time in the past as a squash court. My order of a

small bottle of Red Stripe and a chocolate bar came to an astonishing £2.70. The combined change of all my many pockets only amounted to £2.60, but fortunately this seemed to be enough to satisfy the barmaid.

The second half was very competitive, although pretty clean, and a draw a fair reflection I thought.

03/20