



Saturday 29th September 2018



Wycombe 2 - Southend 3



It was an 'orrible sight and definitely no way to kick off a morning. Tucked away in an untidy corner of his mind, Mike knew that such things existed of course. But to come face to face with, not just one, but an entire scruff of claret and blue clad creatures, was to receive a very hard slap in the face from reality. And it was all Denzil's fault!

Having totally written off a couple of vehicles after going deciding to go bumper to bumper with a lorry on two separate occasions; each time claiming to be an innocent victim!, he now travels everywhere by public transport. This morning, using his tattered and much maligned 'Yoof' card he had hopped aboard a train heading West. His palm jewellery had informed him that it would arrive in the beautiful hinterland surrounding the Tracy Island annex by quarter to the hour. That it did not; either tells you a lot about our rail transport systems or perhaps even more about the reliability of any information taken off the internet!

Thunderbird Airlines prides itself both upon its promptness and unerring ability to arrive at destinations without any detours whatsoever. So, adhering to this policy, TBII had duly landed upon the stations concourse at the designated time only to find it deserted of anything that resembled Body Shops number one customer. However, alas, it was not also totally devoid of any life forms.

Bruised knuckles here, gaping mouths there and with enough pot bellies to feed the 5000, the place was heaving with sights that made one regret having a full stomach. Loud grunting noises filled the air, competing with the distressed cries of the seagulls who were fleeing the scene whilst railway staff huddled together for safety in tight groups.

At least at the cinema a film's rating prepares you for something like this, but 'Smoke Me A Kipper' had landed right in amongst it completely unprepared. Fortunately he is made of firm stuff but even so, after a few minutes of it he was forced to look away in disgust. The London stadium might well be doing a grand job in providing social housing for the unfortunate and terminally distressed, but to see so many of its residents herding around together at the same time was truly stomach churning.

Time passes slowly at such times but eventually, eventually, the very welcome sight of a line of carriages wiggling its way towards the platform appeared. A stray beam of light reflecting back from a substantial acreage that was totally bare of a crop of hair announcing Denzil's arrival. It would be fun to also report the scrimmage that he had to fight his way through in order to exit the train, but few were actually trying to board. Indeed, it was not until a guard bravely took a step forward and made pointy signs towards the train that the Iron, in every sense of the word including weight, intelligence and social graces, Army began to move.

Feeling that he had been well and truly hammered, Mike flew the short hop over to Tracy Island International. It should have only taken a couple of minutes but someone was digging a hole in the village's High Street and so further delays occurred. Now ordinarily this would result in a whole row of Thunderbirds lining the runway; each one tapping upon their watch. But, in the event, only Albert was wandering around unsupervised and, as time in his book is some sort of ingredient in a stew, no form of censor was

forthcoming. Instead only a very hairy wannabe security guard took notice of our arrival; barking out a series of very complicated instructions as we landed.

Whilst Mike calmed him down, Denzil went forth and performed his usual religious ceremonies. An event that triggered off the rest of the islands security force. A scene very reminiscent of the one left behind at the station ensuing before Boycie finally decided to make his appearance. Time is a very abstract and relative thing to many of the Thunderbirds!

Trigger is another! Determined to carry on doing his crossword, he struggled toward the spacious hold of TBII under the weight of his picnic hamper. We would be only be travelling a short distance but he has never been one to risk going hungry under any circumstances. The estrogenic loaded half of the population who claims that 'Men can't multitask' would have felt fully vindicated had they observed him as, the wicker frame groaning under the strain, he attempted to heave it aboard whilst at the same time mumbling "8 Letters , The father of one's father".

The answer was unfortunately not travelling to the game. Struck down by a particularly vicious and tenacious form of Man Flu, he had taken to his bed armed with enough tablets to weigh down a tank. Hoping to still make the trip to Burton on Tuesday, he would be following events on BBC Colchester. He truly was a very sick man!

It would also be nice to be able to report that the trip to Wycombe was conducted in a quiet and orderly manner. With Albert on board? Come on! Although it was still only mid-morning he was already running through several recipes he might try out when preparing the supper that he was looking forward to upon our return. Usually such a disjointed discourse is a treat reserved for the trip home but, inspired perhaps by Trigger's steady munching; Albert was already in full flow. Pickled oysters on toast, roasted peas accompanied by piles of lightly boiled black pudding, spiced cabbage and raw brussels all lovingly sprinkled with soured cream the possibilities, unfortunately, seemed endless.

We were rescued, not by the A.A or R.A.C, but by a traffic accident involving around eight vehicles on the M25. Now, what would you prefer, little to no information or out and out lies? The latter being the loudly preferred choice of the backseat driver's union as they swore by the gospel according to Goooooogole which stated, unequivocally, that there would be a delay of only five minutes. Twenty minutes later, and it was still holding to its word!

Police cars crawled their way through all the jammed vehicles ; our groans accompanying them as painful experience has taught us that once the authorities get involved time simply calls it a day. Fortunately though their vehicles must have been filled with brooms because before overly long the traffic started moving again and so we soon passing by a scene of some considerable devastation. It was full of relived looking drivers, badly crumpled cars and coppers welding the aforementioned tools clearing the outside lanes of debris. Good to see the law hard at work!

If Heineken were ever to build football stadiums then they could do little better than follow Wycombe's example. Not the ground itself, pleasant enough as it is for this level of football, but rather its superb location. It is sited at the bottom of two steep valleys. The one bordering it to its immediate right is filled to the brim with trees; resplendent in their autumn plumage, whilst to its left are green, grass filled meadows that stretch up to a sky that's populated with flocks of kites. Just before kick-off Boycie counted nine of them all circling around above the stadium. Mike, his mind blighted by his experience at the station and Albert's lengthy menu, felt peace finally descending upon him as he gazed out of the away stand, enjoying the fantastic view.

As expected, Oxley was back in goal, fresh from his four match suspension and, as hoped, Yearwood was on the bench making his first appearance upon the team sheet this season after returning from an injury incurred in the very last game of last term. They and the rest of the team were greeted by loud and joyously repeated choruses of "20 seconds to go and you 'mucked' it up, 20 seconds to go and you 'mucked' it up". Extremely fond memories of a certain occasion at Wembley flooding into everyone's mind as the tune got

repeated over and over again. We certainly enjoyed singing it, but no Wycombe fans were to hand to tell us how they felt about hearing it. Accordingly it felt only right and proper to follow it with "We saw you crying on the telly!" Football is truly more than just a game!

Blues, or rather Oranges, both our home and away kits clashing with our hosts colours, started the game attacking towards us. Wycombe took the kick off and hearts were soon in mouths as, within 20 seconds (Was it all going to come back to haunt us?) they had earned a corner. But fortunately it all came to nothing and soon it was we who were on the attack.

That pretty much set the pattern of play for the rest of an entertaining game. One side pushing forward only to be thwarted by the other, who would then attack in turn. Very ably officiated by a young, fit, and fully equipped with a head of hair, referee, the match ebbed and flowed from one end of the field to the other. They had reasonable chances, we had gilt edged ones. Unfortunately they all fell to the foot of Robinson who, although otherwise having a decent game, had clearly left his shooting boots back in the dressing room. To say his finishing was awful is to describe Marlene's singing as being on the weak side.

But to give him his due, he was at least getting into the right positions to score and with Demetriou having one of his best games for the club, certainly in terms of delivering dangerous looking balls into the box, at some point in the game his boot would surely make contact with the ball in terms that would be meaningful to a scoreboard.

And so, in the 38th minute of the game it proved to be. Some great interchanges of the ball down our right set Hopper free. Hounded by a defender he sped into the box, but wide of goal, before delivering a dream of a ball right across the goalmouth and whose boot was there to meet it? Robinson whose goal celebration almost matched ours, so delighted was he to have finally got it right!

We were still in the lead as halftime arrived in the usual way. Wycombe had looked dangerous on occasions but the goal had given us quite a lift and a neutral would have had no trouble at all in identifying which team was on top. Still, our record in second halves in nothing to write home about. So, whilst we were content enough with one goal when in all truth we should really have had three or four to perhaps their one, no one was taking a win for granted.

The sun, until now just a glowing haze hidden by the main stand, began playing peep bo above its roof. For some reason this led all of the four T'Birds sitting in front of Mike to start stripping off and saluting people. Curious, but it did rather amuse the young ladies sitting nearby. Well at least until Trigs began talking about his legs which had apparently been revealed to an incredulous public down at Brighton during the week. Now he was threatening to unwrap them again but fortunately a pork pie, until then lying forgotten and discarded at the bottom of his hamper, turned his mind to other, more urgent, matters.

Out on the field, matters were going rather nicely too. A cross from the left, courtesy of Coker, had been met by a fierce strike from Hopper and now we were two up and starting to enjoy the party. In previous years we have taken quite a number of fans to this fixture but today just under 800 had made the effort. But now they were getting their reward as 'Oranges' began to run the game, Wycombe barely being able to get out of their half.

More goals surely had to come our way and a third duly did in the 57th minute as Cox, weaving his way past defenders unleashed a powerful strike from close in. The away stand, already excited by two goals, reacted to the third with absolute delight. "Cox's on fire" ringing out from all quarters. Too much white flesh might though have been shown by one particular row of supporters as they danced and jumped about in celebration. Sunglasses, however, were invented for a reason, and no amount of white flashes was going to spoil our fun. Nevertheless nearby parents were somewhat relieved when the 'Gruesome Foursome' did finally sit down meaning that they could remove their hands from over their young offspring's eyes. Too much information can flood tender minds and these were definitely torrential conditions!

Three up and away from home! Doesn't happen too often, and, with still some 30 minutes of a game that we were ruling to go, more fun might well be coming our way. Ironic in a way then that Granddad, who always forecasts us winning by at least four goals, had had to miss this game. Still, no worries, no doubt BBC Colchester were discussing it all at some length. Yeah, like for all of five seconds!!

With another game looming up just three days away, Chrissy's mind now turned to resting a few of his players. Accordingly Cox and Robinson left the field, being replaced by Kightly and McLaughlin. It did not improve our game; the impetus of which almost immediately turned the other way. Both of the substituted players had been causing Wycombe problems but now the home side were only facing questions that even Trigger could answer straight away. Oxley, in the Southend goal and wearing a cap borrowed from a Blues supporter, was about to get busy!

However, before this became fully apparent, Chrissy made one more change. To wild and ecstatic cries from the away end, Yearwood took to the pitch in place of Mantom. The midfielder we captured from Scunthorpe during the summer had had a more than useful game and Chrissy was only resting him, but our reception of Yearwood could hardly have been music to his ears. However Yearwood's welcome return to the team is hardly likely to come at his expense and it was sooooooooooooo good to see our young genius back out there. Can only hope though that expectations won't be too high as he has only just finished pre-season training and so is hardly, yet; likely to be fully on the ball.

Then, from out of literally nowhere, Mackail-Smith, once a target of ours, pulled one back for his team. It was a well-executed goal, Oxley having no chance of saving it, but still, with only some 10 or so minutes left in the game, nothing to be unduly concerned about. It was disappointing to see our clean sheet go though and it also gave a lift to a very dispirited home support; many of whom had already headed home.

We were not feeling so sanguine though a few minutes later when Akinfenwa, heavy weight champion of the division, was left with plenty of time and space to make it 3 – 2. He had been responding well to our taunts that he was 'Just a s**t Emile Heskey' and now he had more than made a point. We all had everything crossed that he wasn't also going to get one!

But, with a loooooooooooooong five minutes of extra time added, only one team was looking like scoring. And it wasn't us! Oh when, when, when are we going to learn how to kill a game? At 3 – 0 we were coasting, now we sending off emergency flares right and centre with a lee shore dangerously below our helm. The reefs of relegation had appeared to be sinking back under the waves but now, a swiftly running ebb tide was crashing us right back up against them. A rather pleasant, almost lazy, afternoon relaxing in the sunshine had suddenly turned into something from Elm Street!

Fortunately the referee came to our rescue. Blowing for time exactly on 95 minutes. Ok so our piecing whistles (Some even started whilst Akinfenwa was still celebrating) might have helped the cause. But still some credit should go to our defence who, despite going totally Albert for a while after Wycombe scored their second, soon recovered some degree of composure and so were able to fend off their attacks even if it did always seem to be at the very last minute!

Three very welcome points to celebrate then. And we did. Chrissy, obviously enjoying the moment too, playing 'Now you see me, now you don't' as the side screens protecting the players tunnel got withdrawn. Reappearing several times, he was continually greeted by both laughter and wild cheers. Nice to have a manager who knows how to revel in a victory.

Not so us! Instead we were left stranded in the club's carpark for almost 50 minutes after the game. Reason unknown. One moment traffic was moving nicely, the next, everything came to a complete halt. Upon a very steep sided cliff and with only loosely pebbled ground, it was hard for TBII to maintain position. Accordingly, when things did eventually get moving again, it was with considerable relief that Mike released her brakes and pointed her in the general direction of due East.

Cheerful conversation flowed like smooth wine on the way home. Ok, so there were a few burps as the two tribal elders grumbled into their beards about the two goals that we had conceded. But other than that, and of course Denzil's attempts to cover points that we had already discussed some twenty minutes before, the journey home was uneventful. Oh that the one back from Burton on Tuesday night will be similar.

Come on you Blues!!