



Tuesday 23rd October 2018



Southend 3 – Walsall 0



Roadworks, scheduled for Friday, but in 'operational mode' tonight, caused massive traffic problems on the A127. They added around an hour to journey times. So spare a thought for the twenty or so Walsall fans who made the otherwise relatively straightforward trip down the M6 and M1. Whilst we will be taking almost 1,000 supporters all the way up to Sunderland on Saturday, a round trip close to 600 miles, travelling from Walsall is only half that distance. So why so few away fans?

Yes, it was midweek fixture, but that didn't prevent us from taking plenty of supporters to Burton. We may not be a 'sleeping giant' or a supposedly 'big' club in many people's eyes but our support certainly rivals that of many teams who apparently are! Our good away form is certainly a factor but Walsall must surely have been fancying their chances given our dire home record. So, with at least a point almost assured, why not travel to support your team?

They certainly play some neat, grass level, football. Making the ball run at quite a number of knots, they had us floundering in their wake for long periods of the first half. A half that was unfortunately broken up by a number of incidents. Things getting off to a slow start as, within the opening five minutes of the game, three balls went AWOL as they were sent sailing out of the stadium. Alas, things didn't stop there because around 15 minutes into the game, an evil tackle from behind floored poor Lennon who was just returning from an injury incurred in the opening fixture of the season.

Now, the ref clearly saw the incident because a foul was awarded to us. But where was the red card that the 'tackle' clearly merited? Nay a sign, as indeed neither was one of a different colour. Kick away a ball, or celebrate a goal without your shirt and cards get flashed faster than Rodney reaches for the ground when he spots a lost coin! But commit a career threatening foul, (Lennon was rushed straight off to hospital) and not a word gets spoken!

Less than five minutes later and Ben was rushing onto the pitch again. This time to treat Hopper who looked like he had turned an ankle after his studs got caught up in the pitch. It was beginning to resemble a scene from M.A.S.H as medics rushed about here there and everywhere tending the injured. But at least it provided an opportunity for the referee, obviously a keen fan of meat pies, to catch his breath.

It probably also saved us from another rather ignominious home defeat because the incidents served to break up Walsall's game. They had pretty much been sweeping us aside but these two unfortunate breaks in play did at least provide Chrissy with a chance to change a few things, beyond the introduction of two subs that is, and this helped us to get a foot back in the game.

Accordingly, whilst it would be stretching things to say that it was with the run of play that we scored, it was nowhere near as much of a surprise as was our equaliser on Saturday. The North Bank goal has had a charmed life this season (Well at least as far as we have been concerned) but all that changed inside the 23rd minute when, seizing upon the rebound after Moore's header had hit the bar, Bunn swept the ball into the net.

The Thunderbirds nest immediately became a scene of some disarray. No change there you might be thinking but with Albert bursting at the seams to tell everybody and everybody that that was our first goal at the

North end of the ground this season (We knew!) and Rodney claiming like mad that it was his cry of "Shoot" that had made all the difference, mayhem doesn't begin to describe the scene. It was fun though!

Walsall were not impressed! For long periods they had been making all the running but now they were behind. Time to do something about it and so they did, grabbing the game by the nip of its shirt and plonking it down firmly upon the edge of our area. But we were in an equally determined mood to hang onto our lead and so, huff and puff as they most certainly did, no future pork pies or sausages were made homeless. That there was a wolf at our door we were only to aware but halftime was fast approaching. If we could just hold out until then, a period within which Chrissy could properly organise his troops, then possibly, just possibly we could get a point out of this game!

Eight loooooooooooooong minutes after its scheduled appointment it duly arrived and we were still in the lead! Definitely a fact to be celebrated albeit with a degree of surprise. We had certainly been working hard but Walsall weren't a bad team at all and their league position, some positions above ours, did not lie. If the game continued on like this there was simply no way that they weren't going to score!

Now it has developed into a race between three competitors, Denzil, Albert and Boycie, as to who can whip out their palm jewellery the fastest and boot it into action. Once upon a time, Denzil had the field entirely to himself but unfortunately the compulsion to have something shining in their hand has now overcome our two tribal elders as well. Perhaps it is indeed the pretty lights that turns them into moths. But there again, given their advanced age, possibly the illusion of warmth (It was a slightly chilly evening) did the trick for them? Either way, a shield of impenetrable silence surrounded them as they each became lost to a world other than that contained within their palms. Boys and their toys eh!

It quickly became evident in the second half that the force of domination had switched sides. Not sure just what Chrissy had done but suddenly our midfield was beginning to look the business. Whereas once Walsall had been playing the ball around us with consummate ease, now they were struggling to even get a touch of it. Our single goal lead was beginning to look much more secure but a second would still be nice!

It duly arrived in the 76th minute as a cross eluded Moore but was met with some aplomb by Dieng's head. An event that caused the ball to fly powerfully into the goal. Whoops of joy coincided with the net shaking as everyone, bar the faithful twenty, began celebrating. It was Dieng's first goal for the club but, if he had any special sort of dance or ritual planned, then he had no chance to execute it as he was swamped by delighted team mates.

Six minutes later and the fireworks went off again as Bunn seized upon a chance close in to score his second of the season for Blues. 3 - 0 up! No one had seen that coming. Especially after Walsall's first half performance. But they just weren't the same team after the break, or perhaps we had learnt the trick of preventing them to be so. Whatever, there was the scoreboard brightly shouting out the news that Blues were not only storming but in hurricane mode!

Indeed it was just as if Walsall had encountered a tsunami as they were now being swept aside as easily as autumn's leaves. All resistance had gone from them and in its place was nastiness. And in particular, the elbow of one of their forwards. Firmly, and deliberately, shoved into Moore's face it sent our defender reeling but no action at all was taken by the referee. That is until Moore later inadvertently bumped into his assailant and immediately received a yellow card for his troubles. What!

But no amount of dubious referring (The linesman in front of an enraged, yes enraged, East Stand was far from innocent too) was going to ruin our evening. A party like atmosphere enveloping the hall as the final minutes ticked away. It had not been one of our finest performance but it had been amongst our most enjoyable. Neutrals might, with some justification, claim that our 3 - 0 victory did not reflect the game but, who cared. Certainly not us or our wonderful team!

Come on you Blues!!