



**Saturday 30<sup>th</sup> October 2021**



## **Boreham Wood 1 - Southend 0**



Albert stood in the middle of his kitchen. A full freezer (Courtesy of his daughters) and a microwave stared back at him. His thoughts were elsewhere though. Suggestions had been made that his culinary skills weren't all that. But didn't he pride himself on his jam sandwiches and, whilst a slight tricker, there was nothing wrong either with the toast soldiers that he made to go along with his boiled egg. Then there was his 'piece de la resistance', beans on toast. Lovely grub and very filling too! It had been suggested to him that he might enjoy the beans more if they were heated up, but he preferred to keep things simple. Besides, if they could safely remain cold inside a can for a few years, then why not inside his stomach?

Still musing the problem around in his head, he headed out towards his car. The sky had been weeping all morning but now the clouds looked like breaking up a little. With Tracy International just a short distance away he began to focus upon the game ahead, away to Boreham Wood. Apart from all the trees, it sounded just his sort of place and he was looking forward to it.

Over at the airport, final preparations for the Thunderbird flight were being made. The runway had been hoovered and the terminal buildings doors firmly shut. Marlene worried that the two thick iron bars across them looked a tad uninviting. Boycie though, fully aware of the false news being spread that the Greens were offering a free full English to early arrivals, wasn't prepared to take any chances and so was even considering barricades.

Indeed, he didn't lower his guard until all the passengers had been sealed down in the hold. Albert had been his biggest worry. Fortunately though he appeared to have something on his mind, and so had been easily distracted. Mike, preparing his navigation charts to take account of inclement conditions on both the A13 and 127, too proved to be of no concern. So, with Grandad, a warrior of some renown when armed with a knife and fork, travelling to the game by coach, Boycie could safely park his fears for a while.

Instead, he began talking about the recent happenings at Roots Hall with both players departing and arriving. Would Sheff Utds loss, be our gain? Would work now finally start on the new stadium? Would Ron get an invitation to attend one of Her Majesties residences at her pleasure?

Interesting and enjoyable subjects all, they kept us gainfully employed until the M25, TBII's favourite flight path after the M1, was below us. With reports that the coach was still held up by problems on the A127, Mike was feeling a mite smug about his decision to fly along the A12 instead. But now, with traffic slowing down ahead, he began to consider awesome flight plans C and D. The lane that he was in, was though still moving and, before overly long the reason for the blockage effecting isles 2 and 3 became clear. A two-car shunt had just occurred, and their occupants were still evacuating as we passed. Emergency services were rushing to the scene on the opposite side of the motorway; a factor that, no doubt, would have a further detrimental effect upon the progress of the supporter coaches behind us. However, with only a few more miles to go and Albert still uncharacteristically thoughtfully quiet, we made the best out of the situation and so arrived at the ground soon afterwards.

Employing S.O.P's, we dumped our O.A.G at the ground before setting off to search for a mooring post. Finding one just a short distance away up a side street. Two minutes later we were back where we had last seen Albert. However, he had wandered off and, whilst this temporarily raised hopes that he might have got lost, more realistically we suspected that even he would have experienced few difficulties in following the

crowds heading for the away turnstiles. That said, Marlene still thought it somewhat incumbent upon herself to ask a rather bemused passer-by for directions to the ground despite her standing almost directly beneath one of its floodlights!

Boreham Wood's Meadow Park stadium shows obvious signs of their flourishing relationship with Arsenal. With quite respectable terracing behind the goals and two stands of seating extending down each side of the pitch, it has quite a prosperous air. The pitch too was no muddy park field. Instead, it was lush and smooth. A friendly steward ("Eat your heart out", Trigs) proudly informing us that the Premiership outfit had provided it free to them in response to their agreeing to be the home ground for the Arsenal Ladies team. In fact, they were also going to finance the building of two further stands and also other ground improvements. Another opportunity missed eh Ron!

The catering and toilet facilities were still fairly basic though. However, given the rate that the 800 plus Southend supporters were munching their way through burgers and chips, the situation concerning the hot food bar was unlikely to hold true for too much longer. The consequences of it profiting from the situation were though likely to prove detrimental to those requiring the conveniences (One of each!) come halftime!

Well before then though Boycie had fell in lust. His cupid arrows being all aimed in the direction of our new loanee central defender. Tall, powerfully built and fast, Lopata looked the business. So too did the player who had accompanied him darn Sarf, Brunt, a midfielder who obviously had both a neat touch and an eye for passing the ball forwards. Neither player disappointed during the game, helping our defence to look for once, not only fairly solid, but also organised whilst in midfield, encouraged by Brunt's example, even Dunne was spotted on occasion tentatively facing the direction that we were attacking!

Boreham, enjoying being at the top of the table, were though very well organised and definitely up for it. A pity really because, if we had been playing someone midtable, then things might have gone better for us. As it was though we spent long periods of the game defending; only breaking into their half on very rare occasions. However, for around 15 minutes just before the break, things did improve for us, and so it was definitely our hosts who were the most relieved to hear the halftime whistle.

The officials at this level of the game are dire. Sorry F.A and all that, but you too know this to be true. Or you should! However, the creature that you sent us today must have emerged out of the same test tube as a miscarried warthog with nasal issues. Oh, it could grunt and make noises, but only in terms of making spurious awards to the home team. It was a stuck up little barsteward too. So much so that it had the temerity to send off one of our players for daring to suggest that the distance adjudged by your representative to be 10 feet was in fact closer to the twenty that it actually was. In fact, once the game restarted he allowed John White to take up just the very position that, moments before, he had ordered off Ogogo for standing in. Go figure !!

Later in the game, it again indulged in a spate of spitefulness, sending off our manager for complaining that a free kick had had not yet been taken. Awarded a rare freekick close to their corner flag, Murphy had tapped the ball towards Ferguson for him to position and so take it. However, the referee, obviously immediately regretting his uncharacteristic decision to be fair, instantly corrected his 'mistake' by deciding that the free kick had been taken and thus allowed Boreham to break away on an attack. The situation was beyond a joke. It was obvious what Murphy had been doing and only the entrails, that even a starving vulture would regard as beyond the pale to eat, somehow 'misunderstood' the situation.

Just as he had done so earlier when their player clearly handled the ball inside the area. Just as he had done before when Murphy was grabbed by more arms than ever a whole tangle of octopuses boasts as he struggled to get through on goal. And just as he had when their goalkeeper caught the ball so far out of the area that he was almost standing on the corner flag!

Be interesting to read the assessors report. So sad then that they are not ever in the public domain. Strange that, especially for an organisation that claims to want to have 'Respect'. Player's performances are analysed openly, both in the form of printed letters on paper (Ok, spoken words to Albert) and graphical images on TV. Equally so, managers and even club chairman. But never, ever, do we get the F.A's take on any of their officials activities, good or otherwise. People learn and develop through their mistakes. Perhaps though that

does go a long way towards explaining why the performances of match officials have deteriorated so badly for many years. If they are never informed of them, how can they then improve? Perhaps though, F.A, you have proof that says otherwise?

The mere fact that this report has issued such challenges to the authorities (Like they care!) does though indicate something quite important and possibly even exciting. Because a sea change was very evident today, in both the way Blues approached this game and how they performed. Yes, we still lost, but an awful lot of the blame for that has to fall upon the official's shoulders. Given a fair crack of the whip, a point (Three would be stretching things) could well have been our well-deserved result. That it was not to be, was not through any lack of endeavour, hard work or desire on our part.

Accordingly, many left the ground after the match feeling both upbeat and encouraged. For the first time in many seasons there were signs of improvement in both our game plan and organisation. It's still obviously a work in progress, but the mere fact that at long, long, last, we have taken a step forwards rather than yet another back, is something to be celebrated and welcomed. Our position at the foot of the table is tenuous to say the least, but ladders need a firm base to stand upon and the foundations for such were most certainly there today for everyone to witness and admire.

Expectations though do have to be managed. So, just like Albert in his kitchen, we still need to work upon getting the basics right before becoming too adventurous. Takeaways, in the form of loanees for us, Indians for our venerable tribal elder, will though help to bridge the gap as we work towards something more substantial. And whilst as likely as it is that caviar on sole might remain only a service provided by a cobbler as far as our burnt eggshell merchant is concerned, given time, and certainly on the evidence of today, promotions and trips to Wembley might once again, someday, become features upon our menu!

Come on you Blues !!