



Tuesday 11th January 2021



Southend 2 – Yeovil 1



A young woman once primly told me that ‘Babe’s don’t sweat, they glow!’”. And, while it’s never really been determined, or possibly even questioned, if the weather is male or female, certain characteristics do rather lean towards the latter. So, if indeed that is the case, then either the clouds were doing a ‘Boris’ and so hosting a party attended by a lot of brightly illuminated lasses or somebody had left the taps running. Because, whilst it wasn’t exactly pouring down, there was nevertheless rather a lot of moisture in the air. Some people call it muzzling, others drizzle but Albert simply swears at it.

It might be good for the garden, and it certainly saves him from the trouble of washing his car but anything that makes the stagger to his local that bit more challenging isn’t likely to get much of a thumbs up from him. Albert and water have a special relationship. It has a job to do, he hasn’t. It loves to run, Albert doesn’t believe in any form of exercise at all. And, whilst water requires heating in order to form gas, Albert is already full of it!

This being an evening kick off it was also dark. A combination of factors that allows the British to indulge in their fantasy of becoming totally invisible, In other countries people wear bright clothing and even bear torches once the sun goes down. But not us Brits. Instead, we bury ourselves inside the darkest clothing possible. Dark hats, dark coats, dark trousers, dark shoes, fearing that even a hint of something lighter will reveal our presence to say a passing car or speeding truck! Just why there is this national obsession to become as one with the darkness is a mystery but, come the first winter night and black becomes, well the new black!

So, driving down the backstreets close to the centre of the universe was challenging, as indeed so too was finding a mooring spot for TBII. A side effect of having to ‘Work from home’ is the amount of kerb litter that’s about in the form of parked vehicles. It was everywhere and so treasured “I always park here’s” had been transformed into “Not tonight maties”. Nicht gut as they say in foreign parts and in even odder accents.

Still, employing my encyclopaedia knowledge of the area (Ok, I lived there for 15 years) a suitable spot for the pride of the Thunderbird fleet to reside in for a couple of hours was soon located. The falling rain had been duly noted, but even so, its water content had not been fully appreciated. Why is it that some rain is wetter than others? Anyway, within a couple of seconds I had encountered a problem completely unknown to Denzil kind. Namely that my hair was soaking wet.

With a skull as barefaced as the lies being sprouted out of number 10, he might occasionally experience a ‘glow’ but never ever the dire sensation of having a damp mop spreading its tentacles all over his head. The prospect of having to endure this phenomenon for some time lacked charm, and so a warm, thick, and yes, black, woollen hat was soon forming part of my apparel as I headed in the direction of Roots Hall.

Its floodlights were lighting up the night sky for miles around engendering an atmosphere that is totally unique to evening kick offs. In years long past, the air would have been enhanced by the smell

of burning coal fires and the sound of the Salvation Army tuning up their instruments. But in place of strange farting noises there was only the boring beat of the grounds tannoys. Why they feel so impelled to belt out the same sort of pollution that makes your car tremble whenever stuck in a jam next to a car whose occupant's obviously have hearing difficulties, is a bit of a puzzle. But they do.

The Thunderbirds eyrie looked strangely sparse and unoccupied as I approached it. The Greens were there, as so too were Trig's and our map challenged navigator. But somehow it felt incomplete. The empty seats around it perhaps didn't help the situation. But a certain something, or someone, was definitely missing. It felt quite nice!

Trigger was being particularly brave attending the game because he had spent the day stretched out, unconscious, upon a hospital bed. Requiring an operation to have gallstones removed, he had gone in for day surgery and, despite his doctors warning, just couldn't give the game a miss. Or was it his halftime hamper?

As kick off approached so the ground began to fill up. Given our abysmal record over the past three seasons, attendance, both home and away, are way beyond amazing. Whilst the TV pundits will extol the virtue of the likes of Sunderland or Newcastle supporters travelling 'all the way' to visit each other's grounds. The likes of us, proper supporters who know the full meaning of bad luck and groaning treatment rooms, get ignored. How many of their 'fantastic' supporters would be troubling themselves to come out on a wet, dark winters night to watch their 'team' after three relegation themed seasons with another one hovering over the immediate horizon?

That said, there are definite signs that our Kev is beginning to turn this Titanic of a disaster around. Icebergs, populated with the odd bewildered penguin, still float around us but they are growing smaller, both in terms of size and number. Their threat still remains, but three points from tonight's game against Yeovil would go a long way towards turning a leaking lifebelt into a safety raft. The same team as won the oh so important game against Weymouth at the weekend had been announced. But would asking them to perform to such high standards twice within the space of only a few days be beyond them? We were about to find out.

Albert, safely ensconced inside the depths of his favourite chaise longue, sipping meths directly from a bottle whilst listening to the game on his crystal radio set, was not a factor that we needed to consider. As already indicated, this was a rather welcome factor because his sharp elbows and annoying habit of bouncing in his chair whenever the mood took him, were distractions that we could well do without. It also meant that we could all sit a safe distance apart in these Covid threatening days whilst also maintaining the Thunderbird brand. Alles war gut as they say in strange places, but only ever rarely as they are far distant from anything resembling civilisation.

The TBirds being of a certain vintage and having associated health challenges, I was not alone in not having seen the Blues play since the Notts County game way back in early December. Indeed, possibly only Granddad has been our only representative at some of the games since then. However, it wasn't possible to determine if this had been the case as, driven to distraction by Marlene's various versions of "When I was young", each more excruciating than the other, he prefers to reside some distance away from us at home games. This is all by the by anyway, because what was noticeable almost immediately, was just how comfortable all of our players are now with playing the 'Kev' way.

Up in the darkest North, they were still coming to terms with it. But obviously over the passing month a lot of hard work upon the training pitch had taken place and we were now seeing the benefits of it as Yeovil back peddled rapidly away from our pressure game. Showing little of the same appetite to fight for the ball as we were doing. and neither were they putting anything like as much effort into retrieving it if lost. Equally the timid 'crab' passing that had once been such a feature of our game, was now no more. Instead, the ball was confidently being played, to feet, and at any distance, everywhere around the pitch. Poor Yeovil didn't know which way to turn, as first we were

attacking down one wing and then the other. Whisper it very quietly, but this is just how Blues used to play!

If their player had the ball, then he wasn't lacking company for very long. Not just one, not two, but three and sometimes even more blue shirts quickly closed him down. Our pace and energy levels were just incredible. The only question being, could we take any profit from them before they began to slow down?

Something, wandering around looking confused and occasionally blowing a whistle forlornly, was another factor to be considered. It obviously wasn't fit, arriving in the vicinity of one penalty area minutes, sometimes hours, after the ball had departed up to the other. However it did like attention and so, whenever it felt bored, it would stop the game and perform the 'Drop Ball' ceremony. It was quite involved, and it certainly took up all his attention as first he had to master the difficult task of holding the ball. Then, once it had stopped squirming against his slimy touch, he would instruct one player, any player just as long as they were wearing an away shirt, to stand close (They had to be firmly instructed to do so as no one really wanted to get that personal with something that obviously spent a lot of its time exploring the shallow end of the gene pool) whilst any Southend player was ordered to retreat at least 50, preferably 100 yards away. As you might expect, getting everything just so was quite an extended process. But at least he was enjoying it.

Finally, well it should have been but he kept on mucking it up, the ball would be dropped and so be back in play. By now at least five minutes had been wasted and, as he kept on wanting to 'be visible' and so repeated the procedure on at least one other occasion, it was becoming difficult for us to exert any form of continuous pressure against the Yeovil goal mouth. The cess pool known as Colchester, from which such cretins must surely emerge, will, someday, run out of them. But I guess whilst the formula, take two paper bags and put one over your head and the other the sheep's, remains graffitied all over their town hall, little will ever change.

A very promising move down their left flank broke down as a defender beat Dalby to a slightly overhit pass. But he wasn't in any mood to give up and so half blocked the defenders desperate attempt to hoof the ball away, such that it fell into the path of the advancing Clifford. The ball was then swiftly moved inside to Murphy who just as smartly steered it onto the onrushing Demetriou upon the opposite side of the pitch. Our defender / midfielder then struck the ball with some considerable force towards goal; a slight deflection helping to guide it past the stranded keeper and so into the back of the North bank net. Goool.

It was no more than we deserved and although a gutted ref tried to limit our players celebrations .in fact there was very little he could do about the situation. Other than to indulge in even more practice of his 'dropping the ball technique. The guy was just a total prat and even a toddler would have gotten bored long before he did with his pathetic game.

The Roots Hall atmosphere was feeling pretty good though. Especially in the West stand but the South bank were joining in too. However, the East Stand, despite every encouragement from the West, steadfastly maintained its Zimmer's at the ready attitude. Surely though cockles and tea were nevertheless still being slurped over there with more gusto than normal as a result of Blues very encouraging performance.

Ten minutes into the second, with Blues still well on top, Yeovil introduced some substitutions. Made little difference though as we just kept on playing some really attractive attacking football. It was almost like in the good old days, four or five years aback, when a visit to Roots Hall was something to be richly anticipated rather than ruefully accepted as just being part of one's duty. There were drawbacks of course, Marlene's' concerts for one, but now, with the edge of your seat no longer having any valid claims with regard to its virginity, watching the game was becoming very enjoyable.

Equally we have games in hand over teams above us, some of whom we will be playing in the forthcoming weeks. So, who knows what the table might look like come the end of the month!

Encouraging stuff indeed. Thanks Kev and the team!

Come on you Blues!