



Tuesday 26th April 2022



Southend 1 – Boreham Wood 0



The Orient Express. The river Seine running under the bridges of Paris. Roots Hall under the floodlights. Each has a magical allure of its own, but for sheer home cooking, little can beat that first glimpse of the pitch as it glistens and sparkles underneath the glare of the four lighting platforms that declare to the world that the centre of the universe is open for business!

They light up the skyline for miles around and, as you approach the ground down the long straight road that is Fairfax Drive, they beckon and entice you on. Your heart beats faster and excitement grows as with every second they get bigger and bigger. Pavements, once empty and abandoned, now have an army, the Blue Army, marching upon them in. Each and every foot aimed in but one direction.

As you get closer, so the noise of the tannoy begins to get louder and maybe there will also be some chanting. Not so much pre-game this season, given the scarcity of away supporters to taunt, but a quick outburst of "Come on You Blues" never hurts anyone. Besides, it provides Trigger with something to do other than raid his hamper whilst waiting for the game to start.

All of the usual protagonists were in the eyrie, including one shame faced absentee from Saturday's game. He had arrived uncharacteristically early too. Something that had caused Uncle Albert to delicately enquire "Wet the bed did you?"

Being a midweek game and thus a school night, the Junior Greens were not present. A fact that didn't augur at all well because now there would be nothing to inhibit Marlene from exercising her bellows. Hubby Boycie certainly would not be a constraining factor as he was already casting a casual eye over our opposition, selecting his victim for the night.

Something about a player, their hairstyle, colour of their boots, waistline or just simply the way that they kick a ball will attract his attention. From that moment on they are marked men and their game will be dogged by 'encouraging' shouts whenever they came within range of his bazooka like tonsils. Cries of 'Toblerone Feet', 'Get yer hair cut' or 'Great play mate' as the ball flies off the pitch flowing down off the terraces like a waterfall in spate.

Alberts pre match ritual involves spinning like a demented top and sitting next to him can be an experience not at all dissimilar to that of being an immediate neighbour to a rabid squirrel who is frantically searching for its lost nuts! First, he will start a conversation with someone in front of him. But as soon as he realises that they have fallen into a stupor and thus he has lost them as an audience, he will turn a full 180 degrees and starts annoying those seated behind him. Then, just as quickly equally getting bored with their lack of response he will seek out a victim to either his right or left. Failing that he will stand, muttering away to himself until such a time as he spots someone who hasn't been quick enough to see him first, and so yell out their name at hurricane force.

Performed upon the stage at some ballet house, his pirouetting would result in stand-up ovations. As far as we are all concerned though, it only promotes dizziness amongst those unfortunate enough to be nearby and also cold drafts in what is already a chilly stand!

Tonight, though he was confused. Well, more than normal anyway as both sides were playing in blue. Us in dark, them in light. How on earth was he supposed to communicate employing his favourite colour tone, if neither team could be 100% sure who it was being directed at?

Irresolute, he puzzled over this dilemma for some time before cheering up as he realised that the match officials would still be left in no doubt over who he was addressing. Something that he could settle for quite happily.

Supported by well under 100 fans (How quickly the 'XXX until we die' fans disappear once the chance of a giant killing becomes history) Boreham kicked off attacking the South Bank. Route one football, with an occasional rebound courtesy of the moon, being their obvious game plan. Something that certainly ensured that our back three would all be suffering very sore heads by the end of this fixture!

We though opted to glide the ball much closer to Earth's centre of gravity. Using this ploy to good effect we grabbed the game by the scruff of its neck, dragging it to the edge of their area and firmly planted it there. If Jack Bridge wasn't tormenting them on one side of the pitch, then Demi was totally bemusing them on the other.

With both Dalby and Cardwell fully prepared to shoot just as soon as the whites of the posts came into range, our visitors just didn't know what time of day it was. Accordingly, they quickly resorted to skulduggery, aided and abetted by a referee who couldn't find a card if he was inside one of Waddington's packaging departments.

They could do almost anything they wanted. Push us over, pull us down, half strangle us or kick the ball away and not the slightest demure or protest would pass the referee's lips. Free kicks, its true, were duly awarded, no complaints there. However, as they seemingly had complete freedom to break up any promising attack by entering hooligan mode, it was making it difficult for us to create any clear-cut chances. The Thunderbird's nest was not an oasis of peace and sanctuary!

It is not at all usual to find within these scribbling's particular mentions of any players and their performances, good or bad. Instead. they concentrate more upon how the team as a whole functions and plays out a game. However, so stand out were Dalby, Bridge and young Kensdale tonight, each leading and directing play within their own areas of responsibility, that that tradition has had to be broken.

Very ably supported by their colleagues, each of these three players contributed vastly to what was a very entertaining and absorbing game. Whilst on one hand, the stubborn refusal of the referee to get out his book (Could he write?) fully exercised the passions of the TBirds, on the other, their more creative desires were being more than satisfied by Blues brilliant play.

Nevertheless, halftime arrived with the deadlock still in place. We had come close, very close, to breaking it on several occasions but still success had eluded us. Not through, as has sadly been the case on too many occasions, bad finishing, but rather through last gasp saves and clearances by our visitors. Hopefully though fortune would smile down kindlier upon us in the second!

The next forty-five minutes would reveal the truth of that. But something that did quickly became evident was that words must have been spoken down in the official's dungeon during the break because suddenly yellow cards were being waved about like the Community Chest had been broken into. Three to them and two in our direction.

Theirs was more than merited whilst ours were far more doubtful. Yes, Cartwell had been a mite impolite to his assailant. However, having had half his shirt ripped off and both legs nipped away from under him, surely some leeway should have been allowed? Marlene's sirens of distress halting all shipping in the nearby Thames.

For a brief period, the sighting of the cards encouraged Boreham to attempt to start playing football. They even began to apply some pressure towards our goalmouth and really should have scored when their

forward had the goal at his mercy from only six yards out. Fortunately though, so entrenched was his training, that rather than slip the ball into an empty net he instead sky balled it, not only way over the bar and also the North Bank roof. Phew!

It was our only close call though and fears that we, despite our overall control of the game, would suffer an unmerited defeat entered Dodo territory. That said, even though we were still firing in shots from near and far, a nil nil draw was very much more on the cards than any victory, especially as there were only about 15 minutes left to go. We were trying, very hard, to break through their determined defence but time was running out, and fast!

We had been playing low balls, fast balls, high balls, slow balls and just about any other type of cross into their box that you could imagine. Some were met only by a grateful keeper's hands, but others proved to be far more dangerous and it seemed on occasion that only the inexplicable movement of the posts was preventing us from scoring.

Then Demitriou, far out on our left, looped a high, slow, ball across into what at first appeared to be a deserted penalty area. But then from absolutely nowhere, Bridge popped up to nod the ball home from close range. It was literally a goal out of nothing. But that didn't dampen the celebrations that followed one jolt.

Now, all of a sudden Boreham discovered that they did have gears other than just first after all. For pretty much all of the game they had been slowing down play and generally wasting time. But now, a goal behind and with their play-off position hopes fading, they sped up. Their goalkeeper even discovering that he could take a goal kick in under five minutes!

All to no avail though because we were in no mood to relinquish our grip upon the game. Indeed, we might even have scored a very well deserved second had Cardwell's awesome spin and turn not been rewarded only by the ball hitting the post and running away to safety.

Three more point in the bag then and also a leap up the table to twelfth position. Mid table obscurity perhaps beckons then then, but after all that mayhem at the start of the season we have no problem with that. A tough away game at Wrexham this weekend and then two gentler home fixtures to close off the season. One that began with despair but is now going to finish, not with a boom, nor with a whimper, but instead a quiet air of optimism.

As things stand, we have the beginnings of a decent side. But no more than that. A lot of hard work will have to go on in the summer if we are to move beyond that stage. Some players will leave us, others will come in. A few departures will cause controversy, perhaps even concern, whilst arrivals could be celebrated or be completely unknown.

That is all to come though. For now, as the beckoning lights above the ground began to fade, it was enough to be returning home, warm in the knowledge that Blues have not only won again, but regained their va va voo!

Come on you Blues!!