

Norwich — the »match» report...

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The following text is a slightly edited version of a post on the official Seagulls messageboard January 11 2003; the match it refers to was to be played in the FA Cup, and was scheduled for the 4th of January. When it eventually was played, Norwich won quite comfortably, but that is a completely different story...

Saturday morning I set out from my temporary base in Luton at about 9.30 and after having experienced the London Underground on a Saturday morning with no direct connections between King's X and Liverpool Street I made it to Norwich at about 13.00, found the stadium, got a ticket and something to eat and drink &€" in a word, perfect.

So far, the weather had been excellent; the temperature was around zero, not a trace of snow, blue sky &€" nice spring weather, if you ask a Swede (it's getting warm here in Sweden, too &€" currently, it's only minus ten. But they say that winter will soon return...).

I entered the ground early, almost an hour before KO. The sky was changing colour, and sure enough, a few minutes later it started snowing, almost at the same time as the first players started to warm up. By the time the rest of the team appeared, the snowing was quite heavy, and as I refused to leave my excellent seat in the third row, I must at times have looked like a snowman (I thought I heard someone sing »there's a snowman here», instead of »there's noone there», at one time, but I might be mistaken...).

As the players started to warm up, three people put some kind of cloth in the centre circle; you have to excuse my ignorance of the purpose of it, probably some kind of advertisement. The funny part, from an audience point of view, was when they tried to take it away half an hour later. A cloth with an area the size of the centre circle picks up quite a lot of weight if you put a cm or two of watery snow (»blötsnö» in Swedish) on it. Finally some eight or nine men managed to drag it off the grass, to helpful shouts from the Brighton fans (»You don't know what you're doing!«).

At that time, I don't think anyone, except possibly the stewards, had realised the seriousness of the incident that had happened while the players were warming up &€" suddenly, the power was gone. It came back fairly quickly, maybe five or ten minutes later (even if the first announcement on the PA system went something like this: »We've had a power failure... apologize to the ... eep you informed. Thank ... derstanding.»), but the floodlights stayed off. When, five minutes after the original KO, it was announced that kickoff would be delayed fifteen to twenty minutes, I think some had the creeping feeling that there might be a postponement &€" I certainly had &€" but that did of course not stop the Brighton fans from telling the world what they thought about the decision when it eventually came.

After wandering about for a while, asking people where I could get a refund, I finally made it to the box office. There I was told that they did not start refunding tickets until Monday, but when I informed him &€" rather politely, I think, considering the circumstances &€" that I had come from Sweden to see this match, that I had no possibility to see the rescheduled match, and that I had no intention to returning to Norwich in the foreseeable future, he agreed to make an exception. Good for him; I was in no mood for compromises...

On the train back from Norwich I chatted to four Brighton fans (well, three-and-a-half is maybe more correct); if you read this, thanks for making the trip shorter and more enjoyable! I remember one of them getting an SMS from someone, which had the two letters »o» and »n» swapped (»There's on need to...«). They sent lots of messages with those letters swapped, and got »on replies», so the final (?) message was »Talk to us! We're noly joking»...

Anyway, after surviving the London underworld for a second time, I made it safely back »home» to Luton. A memorable day, but maybe not for the right reasons...