Blyth Spartans FAT3Q 26.11.16

**THE RECORD P W D L F A**

Home 7 5 1 1 14 7

Away 10 2 5 3 14 15

Overall 17 7 6 4 28 22

**THE CUP-TIE MEMORIES**

We entertain the Spartans for the first time in a knock-out competition this afternoon; our three previous such encounters have all taken place at Croft Park and all went the way of the home side. The first two were in this competition, a 3rd Round tie in 1983 ending 2-0 after the Robins were reduced to ten men within two minutes of the kick-off (don’t talk to Graham Heathcote about that!) and a 2nd Round tie in 2011 seeing the Spartans again victorious, this time by the odd goal in three. The other game is a more recent and even more painful memory as Blyth won an FA Cup 1st Round tie a fraction over two years ago 4-1 with a very professional display, exploiting the Robins’ weaknesses quite ruthlessly. Indeed, the only way in which the home club might have been said to fall short of the highest standards that Sunday afternoon was in the fact that a good hour before kick-off they had run out of match programmes. I don’t imagine that today’s *Robins’ Review*, high quality production though it is, will ever have the rarity value of a programme from that game!

**LOOKING BACK**

Elsewhere in this programme you may find details of the Robins’ record in this round of the Trophy, whether as the 3rd Qualifying Round or the 2nd Round (1998-2004). As it is 13 years since we had a home tie at this stage of the competition (as distinct from replays) an excursion into history may be justified. I can just about recall our first ever Trophy tie, a 3rd Qualifying Round game on this ground against Buxton in December 1969. From memory, the late, great Jack Swindells missed a penalty (these things did happen!) in front of a crowd of 1,518 and Mick Walker eventually secured Alty a replay at the Silverlands, which we lost by the odd goal in five with Walker and Johnny Worth (who is, sadly, also no longer with us) netting for the Robins.

Three years later came an epic encounter with Leek Town, then of the Manchester League, when Alty came back from the dead to win by the odd goal in seven, but the following year saw a real humiliation as Pwllheli & District came to Moss Lane on the afternoon of Wednesday December 5th 1973, after a postponement due to bad weather (the early kick-off being dictated by the power emergency measures in force at that time) and scored the only goal of the game to take a totally unexpected scalp back to the Lleyn Peninsula. This must surely rank as the biggest banana skin it has ever been the Robins’ misfortune to slip on in a national competition.

The opportunity for revenge over Buxton came in 1976 when Alty secured a 3-1 win here at the same stage of the competition thanks to a Jeff Johnson strike and a brace from John Davison, opening a campaign which was to lead to an epic quartet of semi-final games with Scarborough which the Yorkshiremen finally won after extra time by the odd goal in three at Doncaster Rovers’ old Belle Vue ground.

22 years were to pass before we next staged a game in this round, a 2-2 draw with Burscough when Alty’s blushes were saved by Phil Power and Paul Robertson. Power was also on target in the replay, which went the Robins’ way 3-1, and the following year when he scored the only goal in a home win over Gateshead. In 2000 Bishop Auckland came to Moss Lane at this stage and a 2-2 draw resulted, Danny Murphy and Mark Ward being the Robins’ scorers; the Bishops won the replay 3-1.

Finally, Peter Band was the Alty hero against Southport in 2003, netting the only goal of the game.

***Mike Garnett.***