

NON-LEAGUE INTERNATIONAL

Report by Dave Finch

Tuesday, 2nd March. ENGLAND 2 WALES 1

England had to come from behind to beat a spirited Wales side at Cheltenham Town's Whaddon Road ground. All four Wycombe players were given their full International debuts and the England team also contained three Dagenham & Redbridge men. Wales raised a few eyebrows by selecting their squad entirely from the new Konica League of Wales. Any thought of an easy England win was dispelled in the first half. The visitors caused a few problems in an entertaining first quarter of an hour. From the whistle they won a corner which was fisted nervously away by Ryan Price with Steve Thompson completing the clearance. In the next few minutes England's David Leworthy first found himself free but finished weakly, then had a header blocked by keeper Morgan, with Terry Robbins hoisting the rebound well wide of an open goal. Robbins and Thompson then fired shots wide from the edge of the area, while, at the other end, Colville's shot bobbled across the area. Steve Guppy featured well in the opening spell and continued to do so for the rest of the half. However, England found it increasingly difficult to break down the resolute Welsh defence, marshalled by the towering O'Brien. Simon Stapleton dragged his shot wide in the 21st minute after working his way into the area and then sent a swerving shot over two minutes later. Then Robbins had a low shot turned aside by Morgan. The game turned scrappy for a while before an action-packed five minute spell as the half came to a close. A 40th minute free-kick by Guppy was met at the far post by Robbins, but his header lacked any power. A minute later Wales took a surprise lead on the break. With the England defence stretched, Colville and Paul Watts gave chase to a long ball. Watts appeared to knock the ball towards his own goal. Price made a one-handed save on the line, but Colville followed up to score from a very tight angle. England equalised at just the right time; dead on the half-time whistle. Robbins badgered a defender into losing the ball. Thompson broke clear and rounded Morgan, only for the Welsh keeper to haul him down. Surprisingly, Morgan was neither cautioned nor dismissed for his offence. Robbins scored from the resulting penalty kick. Eight minutes into the second half England scored what was to be the winning goal. Guppy's

corner was headed on by Paul Richardson for Leworthy to head in at close range.

After this there was a spell of pressure from Wales, prompted by the balding Glover in midfield (he was surprisingly substituted) and Davidson on the left flank. They had a great chance in the 65th minute when Davidson went past two England defenders and crossed to Glover, who was left unmarked at the back of the area. Price made a good save with his legs. After weathering the storm, England finished the match strongly. Thompson had a shot deflected over, while Richardson, who had a good second half, saw a superb shot miss by inches. Thompson, whose clever balls into the area always caused problems, then saw his low cross deflected goalwards by Blackie, only for Morgan to pull off a brilliant save. Finally, in the last minute, he sent a fierce shot across the face of the goal.

Summary:- A competent enough performance from England, who might have scored more goals if they had used a taller target man like Keith Scott. The four Wycombe players all performed very creditably. Andy Kerr formed a solid defensive partnership with Mark Shail, born in Sweden (local press please note), while Simon Stapleton, Steve Thompson (my man-of-the-match) and Steve Guppy always tried to create chances for front men Leworthy and Robbins.

Teams

England - R.Price (Stafford), P.Shirtliff, P.Watts (both Dagenham), M.Shail (Yeovil), A.Kerr, S.Stapleton, S.Thompson (all Wycombe), P.Richardson (Dagenham), D.Leworthy (Farnborough), S.Guppy (Wycombe).
Sub:- B.Ross (Marine) for Robbins

Wales - D.Morgan (Aberystwyth), H.Knight (Haverfordwest), K.Lloyd (Caersws), N.O'Brien (Aberystwyth), J.Blackie, N.Parselle (both Cwmbran), J.Gummer (Inter-Cardiff), C.Glover (Afan Lido), N.French (Aberystwyth), B.Colville (Bangor), P.Davidson (Llanellie).
Subs:- A.Thomas (Aberystwyth) for Gummer, J.Morgan (Inter-Cardiff) for Glover, S.Woods (Ebbw Vale) for Colville.

Attendance:- 650.