



Matt Coughlan

# GROUNDHOPPER

Tales from  
Football's Equivalent  
of Trainspotting

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# Introduction

## *Grounds 1–65*

IT STARTS innocently enough. Someone asks you how many grounds you've been to and whether you're on the Futbology app. You think to yourself, I don't need an app to count the number of grounds I've been to. Then you wonder how many you have *actually* been to, and how close you are to completing a certain league or region, and before you know it you're watching Sporting Bengal United v Athletic Newham on a bitterly cold Wednesday night in January, but it's all harmless fun, right?

It should be harmless fun but, like many pursuits, there is always the danger of it becoming the source of mockery for being an anorak-wearing trainspotter-type, or it becomes an obsession that alienates friends and family. I confess I have been guilty of such behaviour in the past. In my defence, trainspotting was my dad's idea of a distraction, jotting down train numbers we happened to see, on extensive railway journeys as a child – Railriders Top 100 Super Traveller of the Year 1986, no less – rather than hours spent on a platform at Crewe. I have no such excuses for trying to visit as many pubs in CAMRA's (the Campaign for Real Ale) inventory of historic interiors, racking up as many parkrun courses as possible, or watching all the top-rated films in

the *Halliwel's Guide*. I would like to think pursuing such a variety of interests makes me less of an obsessive weirdo. In reality, it means I'm not very good at completing sets of things and have lots of small collections.

It was therefore only a matter of time before my interest in non-league football led me into groundhopping. Once I realised I had been to enough grounds to concern a non-football-mad wife, but not so many to impress dyed-in-the-wool groundhoppers, I was bound to be drawn in. Unlike the big hitters of the groundhopping world – think gold sequin cagoule, diamond-encrusted notepad, flask of weak lemon drink – my total stood at a mere 65 grounds visited. This is my quest to reach 100, which feels like a suitable qualification to consider myself a groundhopper. I expect weak lemon drink has been spat out in disgust by some readers at these figures. This may not be the last time that happens in this book, as I am bound to break many of the unwritten rules of groundhopping.

Groundhoppers tend to be at pains to say there are no rules to groundhopping, and then proceed to explain their own rules for what they will watch and how they will record it. This leads other hoppers to express their own rules, and online arguments ensue. It should be a simple case of watching a football match (to keep a total of games watched) at a new ground (to keep a total of unique grounds visited). The question of what constitutes a match becomes unnecessarily complicated if you don't see the full 90 minutes. What if you arrive late? What if you leave early? What if the match is abandoned? What if the result is annulled at a later date? Was that really a match at all? Does anything below step six really count? Should you count friendlies, schoolboy football or Sunday league games?

Then there's the question of what constitutes a new ground. What if parts of the ground are rebuilt? What if the whole ground is levelled and rebuilt on the same site? What if they rotate the pitch during rebuilding work? After that you get the even more obscure personal rules, where games must feature the ground's usual home team, the match can't finish 0-0 or you need to revisit, or that a printed programme must be available to warrant a visit. Can you say you've been to a game if you don't have a physical memento, like a programme or pin badge?

My own rules are likely to be incredibly loose. I will count most games, so I can tick off a ground. My totals already feature a friendly, youth-team games, a match at step seven and an abandoned game (albeit on a revisit). I have some standards. I won't count stadium tours of the Nou Camp or Bernabéu, running around the track at West Ham's new ground, attending a conference in a windowless room at Stamford Bridge or capturing a few minutes' play while at a children's party in a sports centre adjoining another ground.

All matches need to be recorded, and most serious hoppers will have a notebook, diamond-encrusted or otherwise, and keep extensive records of their 'ticks'. My record keeping until this point has been non-existent. I can't even be certain what the first game I attended was. I vividly recall my first Arsenal game at Highbury, but may have watched Burnham Ramblers in the Essex Senior League before that, and possibly even Charlton Athletic during their groundshare at Upton Park. I can't remember how many times I saw the Ramblers or the Addicks, or even Chelmsford City many years later, so I'll never know the exact number of games I've been to. Most of these games

didn't matter to me when all I cared about was Arsenal. I can blame them for my lack of grounds visited, with away tickets scarce, and then a long hiatus from football after I stopped going.

Once I started going to matches again, I spent far too long over one Christmas holiday manually adding all the old games I could recall to my Futbology record, making sure I logged Charlton games with my dad at The Valley, Fratton Park for a friendly, Kenilworth Road and Priestfield among others, albeit without recording the correct season or scoreline.

Most of the new grounds visited were instantly memorable. Arsenal's FA Cup runs took me to Wembley (old and new), the Principality Stadium (originally called the Millennium Stadium) in Cardiff, while Wembley was being redeveloped, and to the classic semi-final venues of Villa Park and Old Trafford. My futile quest to build away match credits led me to Selhurst Park to see tenants Wimbledon, Fulham's Craven Cottage, Portman Road for a League Cup semi-final first leg against Ipswich, and the old White Hart Lane for a couple of League Cup ties.

A visit to the Etihad to watch Manchester City v Arsenal was only possible using a friend's credits and continuing to boost his rating. It had all the makings of a great weekend away. There were plenty of historic pubs the night before with my brother. I saw Australia lose the Rugby League World Cup Final from my hotel bed on the morning of the game, and we added the Marble brewery tap before kick-off. Arsenal then surrendered meekly in a 3-0 defeat, with Nicklas Bendtner's performance even moving my Charlton-supporting brother to lose his rag with him.



My first Arsenal away game was over a decade earlier, when my northern uncle got tickets for a trip to Sheffield Wednesday at Hillsborough. Our tickets were in the home end, right in front of the irritating drummer and I was under strict instructions not to cheer for Arsenal. He needn't have worried as they lost 1-0 without registering a shot on target. Defeats on the road always seemed more likely, which didn't encourage me to go the extra mile to get hold of tickets.

The glamour of a European tie lured me in on a couple of occasions, when I got tickets for Champions League games at the San Siro and the Stade de France final in 2006. I also went to Barnet's Underhill to see Arsenal's reserves play their Spurs counterparts, and lose 3-0, so it was an eclectic mix of games.

Spurs featured unexpectedly when I visited Carrow Road to watch Norwich City v Spurs with my under-15s team, after we played at the Canaries' training ground in the morning. It would be a push to claim this was a trial, although if I had proven to be a big ginger Messi then I'm sure it wouldn't have gone unnoticed, but I didn't cut the mustard for them.

I wasn't League One standard either. In goal for another junior team, we faced Peterborough United's under-16s in a trial match. I kept a clean sheet in the half I played, albeit only showing that I took goal kicks rather poorly. A couple of team-mates were handy and had drawn the attention of scouts, but the nearest they made it to the first team was as ball boys for a game later the same day between Peterborough and Birmingham City. I wasn't minded to expose my dubious ball-handling skills in front of a rowdy away end, where they were positioned.

My mate Phil was behind several trips to see Leyton Orient at Brisbane Road, notable for an insufficient number of urinals at half-time, resulting in one of our group using a sink. We travelled to watch the O's play Bristol Rovers, Brentford at Griffin Park with its corner pubs, and Southend at Roots Hall with its heavy police presence. This included an Alsatian that made Big Sweaty Martyn shriek like a girl, after he peered into the back of a police van, wondering what it contained. There was Leeds at Elland Road, with what seemed like an unnecessary police escort to the ground, until one idiot on the top deck of the bus thought it would be clever to make a Galatasaray jibe at the home fans as we arrived. We got into the ground in one piece and found one of our seats was on the other side of a camera gantry; Orient were later denied a goal when the ball crossed the line in plain view of everyone bar the match officials. Away games further down the pyramid always promised variety if nothing else.

There was Phil's greatest moment as an Orient fan, when they clinched promotion at Oxford in a pulsating 3-2 win at the Kassam Stadium, which also condemned the hosts to relegation. It was easy to get carried away in the emotion of some of these games, which showed there was more to football than just the Premier League. A police officer nearly ruined our celebrations by sending us towards the notorious Blackbird Leys estate when we asked for directions back to the station. Luckily, someone noticed in time, otherwise it would have been bad news for a group of us, who a drunken fan accused of looking like a boy band, apart from me, who he singled out as looking more like Steve McClaren. We made it back to Paddington station and joined the chorus of 'Oh, Paddington is full of bears!

It's full of bears, bears and more bears. Oh, Paddington is full of bears.'

Bear-free, but certainly not beer-free, awaydays with other friends included Meadow Lane for Notts County v Shrewsbury, Layer Road for Colchester v Luton, and a game at St Neots Town, which took me a while on Futbology to work out must have been a 1-0 defeat to Kettering. Further afield were trips to KV Mechelen in Belgium and the Olympic Stadium in Munich for Bayern v Freiburg during Oktoberfest, which was either the coldest stadium I've ever visited or a testament to my all-round bad sense to only pack a small denim jacket. My poor judgement was eclipsed in Berlin when, for reasons lost in among the steins and schnapps, we visited the Stasi Museum rather than a Union Berlin game. We saw a couple of other cult clubs on trips to Germany, which took in games at St. Pauli's Millerntor-Stadion and Dortmund's Westfalenstadion.

My first book, *Turncoat*, covers most of the grounds I visited until now, except for Sporting Bengal United, Billericay Town, Stansted and Hornchurch. It was at Sporting Bengal's Mile End Stadium that I realised I was getting drawn into groundhopping, so let's revisit that experience.

It was after work, and a chance to both add to my ground tally and let rush hour die down. Most of all, going to games is enjoyable no matter what the level. There's the excitement of travelling somewhere new and the tiny sense of adventure that comes with that. Made tinier still in this instance, since I've done Mile End parkrun in the park adjoining the ground, so I'm familiar with the stadium. Looking into the history of the ground and the

teams is always of fascination to me, expanding my wider knowledge of the game and getting the sense of another community.

Sporting Bengal were set up in 1996 to promote football among the Asian community in London, which is a laudable aim given the paucity of Asian players making it at the higher levels. A few Bengal players have gone on to represent the Bangladesh national team, but the current side was languishing at the bottom of the table with one win all season.

Opponents Athletic Newham were formed more recently in 2015 and were doing much better in the league. They went into the game sat in sixth place with games in hand and the league's top scorer, Richard Kone, in their ranks. Newham started out as a youth team, then called Lopes Tavares London after their founder, and were playing their first season at this level. The Kings were also the last remaining side from the Essex Senior League in the FA Vase.

It promises to be a one-sided encounter. Part of me hopes that any game I go to will end 5-4, with screamers into the top corner, missed penalties, sendings off, a late twist and maybe something for the 'What happened next?' round of *Question of Sport*. In short: drama. The prospect of goals and avoiding a dreaded 0-0 was a more realistic expectation, but even that didn't matter. The joy is in the unscripted. I could just as easily have spent the evening in a warm cinema watching the latest half-baked interpretation of the same storyline, but here I didn't know exactly what would be in store.

I walk from the office, which revealed another part of London I would normally bypass on the tube. I approach

the sports centre in front of the pitch. There is nothing to indicate a competitive fixture is about to take place, and I make my way around the perimeter fence in search of the entrance. I pass several five-a-side pitches. On the first, most of the opposition team surround a player in possession, a Karel Poborsky scoop takes them all out and sets up a team-mate to blast it in. On the second, a more straightforward ball down the line tees up a presentable chance, but the shot is straight at the legs of a keeper who seems to be trying to get out of the way of the ball. If nothing else, I have now at least seen one goal on my night out.

When I reach the entrance, it appears to be another way into the leisure centre, with a large reception desk and not-at-all clicky-clacky turnstile. I pay £7.50 for entry and a programme. I do like a programme, even if it's a few disappointing pages like this one, as there's usually something of interest about the club but, unlike many others, I'm not too worried if it's online only. I like a 50-50 draw even more than a programme, but there isn't one here. Neither is there any catering. The club can't have expected enough of a turnout to make it worthwhile. I do like to buy something at the ground and put a bit extra into club coffers, even if it's a soggy burger.

There's no danger of getting soggy myself at this ground, with its large 1950s cantilevered grandstand, offering a splendid view of the pitch. I take one of the bench seats, towards the back of the stand, as close to the halfway line as I can manage. I look for the team sheets online, having not seen one on the way in. There's nothing on Twitter and no tannoy announcement. I complete my rituals of checking into the Futbology app and taking

some cliched photos, making sure I get some of Canary Wharf in the background. I can't do a lap of the pitch as it's fenced off, so the groundhopper who reputedly likes to touch both crossbars at each ground he visits would have difficulty doing so here. It denies me my standard photo of a corner flag.

The teams come out with little fanfare, as most of the crowd seems to consist of groundhoppers taking in a conveniently timed game. Newham start by keeping the ball on the ground and building with neat passing triangles up the wing. Mistakes creep in, and robust challenges are made. Newham create a half-chance as Joel Appiah hits the post with an attempted bicycle kick. Bengal keeper Kevin Rrushi clears into the night sky above the floodlights, causing the full-back trouble picking the ball out when it drops back to earth.

The game stops for an injury, and Newham rather unsportingly contest for the ball after kicking it back to their hosts. This might have provoked outrage in a packed stadium. Instead, it just edges Newham further upfield. A few throw-ins later and Newham play the ball inside to Benjamin Bodipo. He looks like he's about to hit one far on to the running track, but checks inside, composes himself and drives it low into the corner. Rrushi gets down, but it squirms past him for 1-0. Folders are opened around me and records are updated.

No sooner have folders been stowed away and a deep cross finds three Newham attackers against a lone defender at the back post. The ball falls to Rasheed Salau, and he pokes it home for 2-0. Half-time arrives before the score increases further. I could leave satisfied now I've seen goals and ticked off another ground, but

am keen to see if Richard Kone can pad out his stats at the top of the scorers list. I let the game wash over me. Newham hit the woodwork from a corner and quickly revert into defensive positions to stop any threat on the counter. It's a relaxing experience just sitting back watching the game ebb and flow. Kone is getting more and more irritable as he tries to get on the scoresheet. He wins the ball in midfield and races clear of the Bengal back line. He rounds the keeper but, with the goal at his mercy, he skews it well over.

I sense his growing frustration, as he continues to be foiled like a five-a-side player thwarted by a cowering rush goalie in a high-scoring kickabout. He looks to shoot more and more often. He cuts in from the right and can only send a tame shot from distance straight at Rrushi. It's not his night. The folders don't need to be opened again before full time, as it ends 2-0. It hasn't been a classic, but there's been absorbing moments watching Newham's neat approach play, and Kone's travails.

For the assorted groundhoppers it's another game done, and more goals witnessed and logged. 'That's six I've seen this week!' I overhear an old boy say on the way out. The stats are a shorthand for the experience of seeing a game. There's no confirmed number of those in attendance, but it can be no more than 100 people. It's a shame there aren't more home fans, as something akin to the atmosphere generated at Test cricket with touring sides from the Indian subcontinent would be incredible and the catering would surpass the supermarket I find myself using. Then again, the five-a-side games still going on are testament to the various local communities being more interested in playing than watching, which is no bad thing either.

I've had my entertainment from seeing a game and getting a feel for a new ground. The experience added some variety to my week and helped me learn a bit more about a couple of clubs. It's that search for variety, novelty and entertainment which is behind me wanting to go to more grounds, rather than just logging grounds for the sake of it – although the numbers are nice to know and it's easy to find ways to give those numbers importance. I've half an eye on visiting all the grounds in the Essex Senior League and all the other senior grounds in Essex.

The main aim is to reach 100 grounds, which is easily doable. The challenge will come from selecting games that fit around family life. It will be a pyrrhic victory if I end up divorced by the end of this book. Trying to get to a mix of old, new, loved and loathed grounds, mostly on odd weekday evenings when the kids are tucked up in bed, will add some degree of difficulty and hopefully give you a sense of the appeal of groundhopping. I'm also aware that some level of gatekeeping can apply to hobbies, so I will need to make sure I don't fall foul of any of the unwritten rules and fail on those grounds over the next couple of seasons.



## *Ground 66*

### White Hart Lane

THE 2021/22 season has only just concluded and while serious hoppers are hunting around for any grassroots fixture or obscure summer league, I've got a trick up my sleeve. I'm ticking off a big one and, by my own rules, it counts as a new ground. Spurs' rebuilt stadium fits most hoppers definition of a new ground and would warrant a revisit. It's a giant spaceship of a stadium that bears little resemblance to its predecessor and the pitch has been moved, as far as I can work out.

The controversy is the type of football I'm going to watch. I'm not going to see association football. I'm going to see rugby football league, or rugby league as it's more commonly known. It is undoubtedly a different sport and I'm not going to argue about the shared heritage of both games, nor am I going to manually add it to the Futbology app. I am going to include it here, because I've no time for Spurs, and there's a lot about rugby league that should appeal to groundhoppers, although maybe only the northern ones.

Southerners don't seem to appreciate or understand rugby league. They have an inexplicable attraction towards the ball hiding and end-to-end kicking of the 15-man

version of the game. My mate Phil calls league 'basketball for northerners' and pretends there's some sort of nuance to all the rucks and mauls of union. I grew up in Yorkshire in the 80s and have fond memories of going to see local rugby league side Bramley play. I recall standing on what felt like a vast terrace (which old photos reveal was only about six steps) with my dad and his friend. We would all be in cagoules, as it was still a winter game, although, latterly, as a summer sport, I remember snow at a Leeds Rhinos match in June. There would always be a bag of sweets and a distinct feeling of wanting to get on the field and burst forward with the ball. I was there when Bramley held the mighty Wigan to a draw in the Challenge Cup, or so I'm told.

It was gritty. The urinals were four walls with no roof and a trough in the floor on three sides. This sort of basic facility perhaps explains why I'm drawn to non-league football, which has a similar charm, albeit with slightly better toilet facilities. Like a lot of non-league football teams, Bramley's McLaren field was sold to developers, and the club folded before being reformed.

After moving down south, I tried to get along to the odd game. I watched London Broncos host the likes of Wigan, St Helens and Leeds, until the Broncos became less competitive. I also went to a couple of Challenge Cup finals at Wembley (which, along with seeing American football there, I don't count in my total for that ground). Like football's showpiece FA Cup Final, it's played in May, they sing 'Abide With Me' and the national anthem before the game, and fans of most teams tune in to watch. The big difference is that as a neutral you can buy tickets before the competition starts and the game tends not to sell out, even with tickets costing as little as £25, which is how I ended

up at this year's final at the Tottenham Hotspur Stadium to see Huddersfield v Wigan.

Huddersfield Giants are looking for their first win in the competition since 1953. They are up against record 19-time winners Wigan Warriors, who haven't lifted the trophy in nine years, but that won't stop most neutrals backing the Yorkshire side. The Challenge Cup Final is an excuse for a day out in London by fans of all clubs and plenty of other teams' colours are on display as I catch the train to the general vicinity of the ground.

Quite a few of them find their way to the industrial estate containing the Beavertown and Pressure Drop breweries (two more trading estate breweries I can tick off that list), where I catch up with northern mate and Giants fan Adam. Talk turns to player wages and how a lot of talented academy players are leaving the game, as they can get better money in the army for fewer injuries.

After being told about a few players to watch, we head off to separate parts of the ground. The one part of the ground I'm glad not to be going to is the roof walk, which is where the poor girl singing the national anthem is stationed. I could probably hit a few high notes myself if I was up there. Instead, I take my seat in the second tier of the steep-sided bowl for an excellent view. I'm loath to admit, but it is very impressive. I may love a ramshackle non-league ground, but seeing the pristine turf from upon high in a new stadium is always a thrill. It is better still in the absence of 60,000 Spurs fans. The walk up Tottenham High Road could even be described as pleasant. The glorious sunshine and carnival atmosphere was in stark contrast to my previous visits, skulking into the away end on a cold winter's evening.

There wasn't my usual nostalgia for the old ground. I didn't miss a place I considered a dump, with its police control room looming over the away end. I did miss the old prices for refreshments, as I pay £6.75 for a pint of Beavertown's Neck Oil, which is brewed on site and filled from the bottom of the cup upwards, in order to fleece thirsty fans at the fastest possible rate. I can take my alcoholic beverage to my seat, as I'm not at a professional football match, although not before I double-check with a steward that it's OK. He doesn't seem to care either way. I'm soon walking back past the steward since the block number on my ticket doesn't lead me to my seat, as there's a camera gantry position blocking the way. It's another black mark against the ground. I'm willing to find any sort of fault I can, even if the RFL did the ticketing.

Before I upset Spurs fans finding more faults with their shiny new ground, the game gets under way and the Giants start stronger, looking to cause their own upset. They gain an early territorial advantage, but their probing finds no chink in the Warriors' defence. The underdogs can't find an opening and when Wigan concede a penalty Huddersfield settle for the two-point kick. Wigan fans taking up the large single-tier stand behind the goal boo as Tuimoala Lolohea opts to go for goal. It's an obvious choice, to convert territory into scoreboard pressure and he duly converts to make it 2-0.

Huddersfield continue to make the early running and keep Wigan on the back foot which, as someone from the white rose county, is pleasing to see, especially as Wigan are the game's equivalent of Manchester United. Their wingers do no better than the likes of Beckham and Giggs would manage against Ricky Leutele, as he jinks his way

over the line for 6-0. Lolohea misses the conversion, unable to hit the target from out wide. Perhaps a garish advert for Dragon Sloop on the electronic hoardings distracted him. The equally garish-sounding 7.5 per cent vodka and caffeine drink is clearly targeted at northerners for whom some London-based marketing exec deems Stella to be too soft. An advert for mushy peas then follows.

Wigan don't play up to northern stereotypes of grittiness to get back into the game and show real guile to create their first chances. First is an offload out of the back of the hand to create a pocket of space out of nowhere. Then they quickly shuttle the ball, with a sharp pass and an offload to Harry Smith, who goes over for the try. He converts to level the score at 6-6. If there's a sense Wigan will have it their own way from now on, the Giants are having none of it. They continue to get forward. Wigan's defence seem to have them covered and Huddersfield lack a certain inventiveness to their play until a dummy run leaves Chris McQueen with an overload. He skips past a defender and is in for a try, restoring the Giants' advantage. The conversion is missed, leaving the score 10-6 at the interval.

The feeling is tense with the underdogs holding a narrow lead, or that may just be the fact there's a large queue for the toilets. I've reason to be glad rugby is five minutes a half shorter than football. I decide against another pint, having already taken advantage of legally being able to drink within view of the pitch in a Premier League ground. If I expected more tension in the second half, then Jai Field suggests order will be restored. He goes over three minutes after the restart, with the conversion putting the Warriors up 12-10. Giants keep their heads up and soon have a chance to draw level. Lolohea misses

a kick that appears more straightforward than his earlier missed conversions.

It doesn't appear to be Huddersfield's day when a high tackle goes unpunished. Most of the not-entirely-neutral section appeals for a sin bin against Morgan Smithies. On the next play, Giants work the ball to the opposite flank. It reaches winger Jermaine McGillvary. He holds off three defenders to force his way over the line to give Giants a 14-12 lead, which Lolohea can't extend.

It's late in the game. An attendance of around 51,000 is read out, which is as exaggerated as Spurs' claim to be a big club. Huddersfield's McQueen receives the prestigious Lance Todd Trophy as the man of the match. There are only a couple more sets of six tackles to see out until McQueen's side will lift the Challenge Cup itself. Wigan appear to be contained on the last tackle of one of those sets. Suddenly, Tommy Leuluai throws a long pass that opens up the field. Smith has time and space to put a grubber kick in between the defensive line, and Liam Marshall is in for a try out of nothing. It's 16-14 to Wigan after the conversion is missed. I'm hoping for one last twist, but Giants can't get close to the try line on their possession. A hopeful up-and-under kick on the last tackle doesn't put the Wigan defence under any pressure and they claim the ball and with it their 20th title.

On the way out, there is fatalism, disappointment and confusion that Giants didn't win. One fan is so bemused that he bought a hot dog he didn't want and offers it to those who pass him on the stairs. Another tells his kids not to be disappointed and that Huddersfield don't do winning. He expects the football team will lose the play-off final the following day. Adam planned to watch this as well,

but noted few fans followed both teams, despite sharing the John Smith's Stadium. The Giants' support is largely restricted to the Far Town area.

Far from White Hart Lane are the nearest train stations, so I stop at the ORA brewery on another trading estate. A few other fans make their way here for craft beer and pizza. ORA was originally set up in Modena, Italy, before being transported to north London. It's another successful import to the capital and makes for a perfect end to the day in the same way a rugby match is perfect for my groundhopping needs. I visited Spurs' new ground without having to watch them, or put money in their coffers. The game was also a back-and-forth spectacle, full of sporting drama.

There's little drama to be had in pre-season fixtures, so I resist the lure of Hendon v an Arsenal XI. It represents a chance to see a historic non-league team, albeit one who left their historic ground, against the mighty Arsenal. Their might appears diminished when anyone vaguely close to the first team is away on a summer training camp, so it's a team made up of youngsters I struggle to identify. I don't want to go to a game for the sake of it. There has to be something riding on it, so I bide my time until the 2022/23 season starts in earnest.