

Simon Milton was there to see Danny Hay's latest injury in person in...

Milts (and Mel) go to Gillingham



So I finally get my act together to go and see some live football, now that I've been in the UK for three weeks...

I figure the best bet would be to go and see one of the Kiwi lads play,

to offer a bit of moral support etc. Check the fixtures, and discover that Walsall (featuring one Danny Hay) are playing at Gillingham, an hour east of London. So on Saturday morning, head off from London Bridge with fellow Bloc 5 veteran Mel...

Get to the rocking metropolis of Gillingham, and it is all that its exciting name suggests...

Wandering around trying to find a free toilet to use, we end up outside a pub with a crowd of Walsall fans. When we explain that we are from the other side of the world, and have come here to specifically see one of their players, they treat us like long lost relatives (without the inappropriate touching, thankfully...). Word soon spreads about these two insane Kiwis, who have come just to see Danny Hay, and we are then told he's on the bench rather than starting. No probs thinks us, he'll definitely get a run...

After buying lunch and drinks for us, the travelling Saddlers take us into the ground, in the seething pit of the Walsall away end...Gillingham's Priestfield Stadium isn't too bad, although the pitch is an

absolute dog.

With flags draped and All Whites scarfs donned, the match kicks off. Ian Roper, Walsall centre half, goes down injured, and Hay is on his feet warming up. Cue a two person chant in a silent ground, and then 500 Walsall fans pissing themselves laughing and disowning to two nutters in front of them...

Sadly, Roper plays on, but at halftime, the teams walk right past us to the tunnel. After yelling ourselves hoarse, young Daniel finally notices our flags. His initial 'What the f**k?' look soon melts into an excited grin, and he gives us a big thumbs up and wave. Emotional moment...

In the second half, he winds up fellow sub Corica by pointing at us and assumedly asking 'Where are the Aussie flags, Steve?'. But then the moment Mel and I had waited for - the original Ginga Ninja takes the pitch.

Having run from the sideline to the centre spot without aggravating any of his injuries, we were quietly confident. He then proceeded to play with strength, composure and skill, and the fans around us assured us he was one of their favourites, and a top player. As we began to think of post match autographs, and possibly a photo with the big man, he put his body on the line with a great tackle in the box.

We cheered his bravery, then ap-

plauded his grit at having taken a knock. We began to panic slightly when he was helped off the pitch by the physio, and then were quite annoyed when he was stretchered off down the tunnel by St Johns.

We tried to bribe a steward to let us see him after the match, but we were told he was in first aid with a suspected broken

leg (turned out to be an ankle injury)... not quite the end to the day we had imagined.

So having seen Danny Hay play live, we also saw him sustain an injury that may keep him out of the Confeds Cup...

So back to the drawing board to see another Kiwi play, and God only knows what injury that poor bloke will end up with....

Chapter 2 of the Milts Insanity Soccer tour

Travelled to Cambridge in order to see the locals take on Lincoln City, team of one Allan Pearce, former Junior International.

After a very touristy day in Cambridge, I headed for the ground with my host Mad Dog (former Bloc 5 stalwart) and Lori (Mrs Mad Dog). About 1000 travelling fans there, and we milled around outside what looked like a medium security prison (was in fact the away fans 'coralling' area...)

Got inside, standing in what looked like a former cow shed, and introduced ourselves to the Imps Red Army, as they call themselves... Like the Walsall guys, they considered me a bit disturbed to have travelled all this way to see a Kiwi play, but were generally very friendly, and spoke positively of Pearcey's play this season.

Anyway the team jogged out to warm up, we gave Allan a big yell, and waved the Kiwi flag. His look basically said 'Who the f**k are you muppets?'. Unperturbed, I wandered down to the sidelines, where he was signing autographs and said, 'Hi Pearcey, we've come from the other side of the world to see you play and give a bit of support'. His look, and lack of verbal response, suggested he really couldn't care less. So I said 'Good luck tonight', and he turned and jogged away...

He wasn't starting, which has been pretty standard this year, but as the game wore on, and a goal was needed, I figured they'd bring him on. The guys around me thought that would be so, but in the end the manager opted for another lad, Simon Yeo, who was abysmal (must be something in the name...)

So I had travelled to Cambridge, to see Pearce play, and he stayed on the bench all night...the rest of the team came over to salute the fans, and I thought Allan would wander over and say Hi, and thanks for coming. Instead, he turned and went down the tunnel...

I can understand that he was pissed at not getting on, and I know the team was upset at not winning. And perhaps I was misreading the situation, but frankly I won't be going out of my way to go and see him play, if that's the response I get (in contrast to Danny Hay, who sent an email of thanks and offered us tickets...)

Still, saw some more of England, and saw a Kiwi footballer - warming up... Better luck next time I guess, and at least he didn't get injured...