



## **NADS Roving Report by Matthew Law**

### **Stoke City v Chelsea, Britannia Stadium 27.09.08**

Chelsea had played once before at the Britannia Stadium in the FA Cup a few years ago but this was my first visit. To Stoke City FC. I was picked up from my home in Surrey by Harry my carer at 11 and we got to the stadium via the M3, M25, M40, M42 & M6 three hours later.

The stewards and police guided us to the car park which was restricted to the away club but used exclusively by the disabled and the official club transport (the coaches).

We were charged £5 but as it was directly next to the stadium this was extremely good value for money. However we did have to wait for half an hour after the game before we were allowed to leave it.

There was a burger stall directly outside this 'away car park' and the atmosphere around this area was fantastic; doubtless helped by the beautiful warm sunshine we were blessed with all day.

The disabled access was through a large metal doorway, across a small concourse and up a ramp. This lead to a disabled viewing balcony that was located behind a goal and about 10 rows back. You could say that this was an ideal location with good sightlines to the pitch. However, there were seats directly in front. The seats themselves were low enough to cause no viewing restriction but as with nearly all football stadia, the seats are used to allocate the sale of tickets and not to sit in.

If someone in the front row stands up, then understandably the person behind them will want to see so stands also. Likewise all the way to the back row and the result is that wheelchair users cannot see the game because people stand throughout the entirety of the match.

One of the more discerning of fans noticed the problem and asked me if he could stand behind me. Of course I said 'please do'. But there were six others in front of me and far more in front of the whole area who were not so understanding.



The way of solving the problem?:

1. Stoke City do not sell tickets in the back two rows in front of the disabled viewing area.
2. Stoke City raise the height of the disabled viewing area by about 150 cm.
3. Every wheelchair user intending to watch his/her team play at Stoke City buys a Balder wheelchair that raises the height of your seat (cost: £15,000 each).

There was a very spacious and fully Health & Safety compliant disabled toilet right outside the disabled viewing area. I would say my wheelchair probably only clocked up about 100 meters between leaving and returning to the car. All ground covered was perfectly flat and smooth. Plenty of stewards were on hand to point us in the right direction.

Other than not being able to see the game (sort of the whole point in paying a carer £120 to take you, £50 petrol, £5 car park, £5 burger & drink, £4.50 toll road one way and £24 for the ticket), it was a comfortable visit to the Britannia Stadium. Until Stoke make some much needed alterations I will not be going again.

Summary/Description	Cost	Matt's Mark	Comment
Journey – Car	£59	9/10	Just a small delay on M6 on the way
Car parking	£5	9/10	Very close but a wait to get out
Food/Drink	£5	9/10	Standard burger – I'm easy to please
Comfort	-	10/10	Good stewarding
Access	-	10/10	Close to car, smooth & ramped
Toilets	-	9/10	Wet floor. No hand dryer
View	-	3/10	Great location, poor view
Stewarding	-	10/10	Could ask no more