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Rachel smiles as she recalls that glorious trip to Wembley

RACHEL'S WEMBLEY DAY OUT

AS the fireworks were unleashed and the national anthem bellowed around the packed stadium, Rachel knew she was in for a day to remember.

Since moving to Oxford two years ago, Rachel Briggs, who is supported by the Ridgeway Social Care Division, has followed the trials and tribulations of Oxford United, eagerly awaiting a season to relish. This duly came earlier this year, when the team reached the National Conference Play-Off Final against York City.

The date of destiny was set and all that remained was 90 minutes of football at one of the greatest arenas on earth. So, the opportunity for Rachel to visit Wembley Stadium was too good a chance to miss out on.

With tickets to hand and a long bus journey ahead, Rachel and support worker, Mark O'Neil, joined fellow fans for a mouth watering day of football that lay ahead. Fully dressed up in her team kit, tracksuit, scarf, flag and hat, Rachel certainly stood out from the crowd as a good advert for Oxford United.

Clambering up the steep steps looking for that elusive seat number will be a pre-match memory that sticks with her for some time.

"The stadium was huge, bigger than I ever expected and we got lost just trying to find our seats. We had a good journey down with crab sandwiches and the Oxford United song "Man Oh Man" playing on repeat for some time," said Rachel.

"There were so many people in the stands and when we eventually found our seat, the view was great."

Rachel's love of football goes along way back and it doesn't matter which team is playing, if it is on the television, she is glued to the screen. However, experiencing Wembley for the first time is in a different league.

She said: "The atmosphere was amazing and really fun. It has been a dream of mine to visit Wembley for many years, so to be there and to see my team win was such a good feeling."

As Rachel roared on her team, Oxford did their talking on the pitch taking a two goal lead. Despite going close to a third, United handed York a lifeline just on half time when the keeper fumbled the ball over the line.

However, it was to be Oxford's day and even though York pushed for an equaliser, it was Oxford who scored the decisive fourth goal late on in the game.

"I was very nervous near the end of the match when York were pushing for another goal, but Oxford played very well and deserved to win," said Rachel. "It was a special day and I lost my voice from shouting and cheering the team on for the full match."

Since the enduring spectacle, Rachel has created a scrapbook with photos, press cuttings and a diary of the day's events. She is already looking to the start of next season and believes Oxford have every chance of staying in the football league after a four year absence. She said: "It was an overwhelming experience to see my side win and I'm looking forward to visiting the Kassam stadium next season. It will be tough in a new division and I think they need a bigger squad to survive. ■"

"We went to Wembley heads held high to see our team Oxford score goals high! We watched the players on the pitch score two goals in 20 minutes quick."

The fans were happy jumping and cheering with joy because Oxford had made their day. We came away from Wembley so proud. Our team we had supported won. All in all it was a really good day!"