



[Jumpers for Goalposts](#) at [Oldham Coliseum](#)

by Tom Wells

Reviewed by [John Waterhouse](#) Oct 2016

The synopsis for this play seemed to suggest that it is about football and the gay community. Loosely speaking, what I saw broadly covered both these two topics but neither was dealt with in any incisive or meaningful way, and I left the Coliseum wondering what the play was really about and who it was really aimed at. One player did say he had been hit outside his flat for being gay but this was really just in passing and homophobic abuse is certainly not what this play is about.

Having assumed that gay people play football in any case (and why wouldn't they play football?), it was never really explained why there was any need for an LGBT football league, as opposed to having anything else specifically for the LGBT community (with or without token straights) and the fact they happened to be playing football seemed almost incidental since none of them seemed to have any real passion or interest in the game. The set-up is straight

forward enough; an LGBT football team composed of a lesbian coach, three gay men and a 'token-straight' in the net. There are only four teams in the league and their team, 'Barely Athletic' are struggling to make much headway. And that's virtually as far as it goes, although they do go on to win some matches as the play progresses.

On the positive side, the play was well cast with all five actors displaying convincingly different characters. **Sally Carman** stood out for me as the frustrated player coach, trying to bring life into her team and **Adam Barlow, Luke Bailey, Graeme Hawley and Will Mytum**

all did what they could to bring interest to their character; the problem was that there was not much interest, with none of the characters having much depth. Neither was there ever any significant conflict amongst any of the characters, with nothing much standing in their way about anything, other than a desire not to finish bottom out of four teams. Two of them did, eventually, start a romantic relationship but it was frankly insipid with no opposing factors other than their inherent shyness having made it take its time to get going. It must also be said that the set was very convincing, save the fact that the large stage area was used to the full, giving for a very minor league football team a changing area the size of which any Premiership club would be proud of.

The scenes of this one-set play were nicely interspersed with commentary of the latest scores in the LGBT league alongside snippets of mainly 80's music. The attention to detail was keenly observed right down to a red break-glass fire alarm, overhead aircon ducts, and the costumes really, such as they were, looked the part. However, with us having all been informed right at the start that this was a gay team, I thought it was a bit ludicrous that a team member comes on stage with a pink guitar. If it was a Little Britain-style satire of the gay community, that would have been fine and I would expect Daffyd Thomas to have played nothing less than. Elton John whilst being very openly gay sees no reason to play a pink piano and the pink guitar here just seemed silly.

It must also be said that a rendition of 'You'll never walk alone' on the guitar at the end seemed very misplaced. That song, in its original form in the musical 'Carousel', famously filmed in 1956, was making a powerful statement to a young woman who had grown up never knowing her father and Liverpool football fan's adoption of the song in the 1960's symbolised the defiant spirit of a city who had suffered a great deal since the war. In 'Jumpers for Goalposts', the song seemed to have just been slotted in to fill five minutes, presumably because of the tenuous football association.

It has been said that 'Waiting for Godot' is a play without a beginning and an end with nothing happening in between but it does raise important questions about life, its meaning and it is widely regarded as one of the great plays of the last century. 'Jumpers for Goalposts' has both a weak start and a weak ending with very little happening in between and effectively raises no important questions about anything.

'Jumping for Goalposts' is on until Saturday 22nd October.