

SPORT ITALIA HELLENIC LEAGUE –PREMIER DIVISION

(Played on Saturday 14th April 2007)

MORFORD & HADDOCK FIRE DOUBLES

AS SWANS DO THE BUSINESS

SLIMBRIDGE 5 , ABINGDON TOWN 1

After Abingdon Town had surprised Slimbridge by taking an early lead through Paul Jezzard, the visitors had no answers to Will Morford and Tim Haddock scoring a brace apiece, with a solo effort from Joe Tustain completing a good day for the Championship-chasing home side. This was enhanced after the game with the news that rivals North Leigh had been held to a draw by Highworth Town, that leaves the Swans only two points behind Leigh with four games in hand.

An apprehensive start to the game at a warm, sun-drenched Wisloe Road, burst into life with the first attacking threat from either side. A sloppy defensive mis-understanding between Ashley Thomas and goalkeeper Ryan Chandler allowed Town's alert Paul Jezzard to nip in and slide the ball home to give the visitors a shock fourth minute lead.

Slimbridge replied with a run up the left from Tustain who put a narrowing-angled shot just over the bar.

It looked like it was going to be a hard afternoon's work for the home side as Town employed the off-side trap to good effect for a while, and another attack on the break from the visitors saw Tom Larman bring Chandler to his knees with a strong low shot from just outside the box.

At the other end Haddock was unlucky when he rapped the bar from a free-kick on the edge of the area after Kacey Johnstone had been brought down on 15 minutes.

Johnstone went close twice more with shots on the turn before the returning Ross Casey fired in a thunderbolt free-kick from fully 35 yards that visiting 'keeper Gareth Tucker scrambled away.

Regular bursts of attacking into the visitors half often saw the off-side flag raised, but an equaliser came on 34 minutes. James Cole, who was still in the throes of recovering from an earlier heavy challenge, put over a long diagonal cross to the back post where Morford took one touch and drove into the net from close range, under the diving Tucker.

A minute later, Casey drove low from 20 yards at Tucker, who spilled the ball, but Johnstone netted the rebound, only to turn and see the off-side flag raised.

The home side went ahead for the first time three minutes before the break. Tustain curled a free-kick from wide right into the box for the lively Haddock to rise and head firmly under the bar.

It was all Slimbridge in the second half as Town wilted in the hot sun. It was 3-1 on 51 minutes when Johnstone broke free down the right and unselfishly drew Tucker for Morford to slot in his second goal of the game.

Three minutes later and Craig Cole set Tustain free over the half-way line, to run unchallenged towards goal where he skilfully went round Tucker and rolled the ball into the net to make it 4-1 and effectively kill off any chance of a Town revival, with protestations of off-side from the visitors receiving no sympathy from the referee.

On 63 minutes Johnstone was brought down in the Town box, jumped up to take the resultant spot-kick and duly blazed over the bar. Although contributing a lot of good work in the Slimbridge cause, Johnstone cannot seem to buy a goal at the moment!

The home side then saw a series of efforts on the Town goal either miss the target or bravely thwarted, before Haddock got his own second goal of the game and at the same time conclude the scoring by gently lobbing Tucker, when the ball stood up for him with the 'keeper caught in no-man's land, four minutes from time.

Slimbridge manager Doug Foxwell rotated players for this game and after the slow start, put in a commendable team performance. To be fair to Town though, they were missing some of their more influential players, a harder game being expected by the Swans when they visit Culham Road for the reverse fixture on Tuesday evening. This is before the big clash with Championship rivals North Leigh on Thursday at Wisloe Road.

Slimbridge; R.Chandler, L.Sterling (Matt Green 61), J.Cole (J.Cant 53),R.Casey, Ashley Thomas, A.Axton, J.Tustain, T.Haddock, K.Johnstone (J.Meadows 79), W.Morford, C.Cole.

Abingdon Town; G.Tucker,A.Bartram, M.Lyford (S.Harris 79), I.Smith, C.Antcliffe, D.Thomas, J.Thomas, O.Wright, P.Jezzard, T.Larman (J.Lister 72), A.Hough.

Referee; Mr.K.Bushnell (Witney)