

SPORT ITALIA HELLENIC LEAGUE –PREMIER DIVISION

(Played on Monday 7th May 2007)

CANT STRIKES TO END MEMORABLE SEASON

AFC WALLINGFORD 0 , SLIMBRIDGE 1

John Cant scored the only goal of the game to ensure a winning end to the most successful season to date in the relatively short senior history of Slimbridge AFC. Shortly after the final whistle, the presentation of the Hellenic Premier Division Championship Shield to Skipper Leon Sterling and Manager Doug Foxwell was made by League Chairman, Bob Dalling, with League General Secretary, Brian King in attendance.

Both sides unsurprisingly, considering recent playing commitments, looked a bit weary in the early stages of play in this final game of an extended season, and seemed happy enough to pass the ball around with the minimum of fuss.

There was an off-target effort from the visitors Joe Tustain, before he had to depart the action suffering a dead leg, with only 15 minutes played. Replacement Craig Cole did last a little longer, before departing the action on 57 minutes after going down following a heavy tackle, and subsequently being replaced by Cant.

Johnny Meadows jinked his way into the home area on 16 minutes, but his chip over goalkeeper Musa Mannah was headed off the line by a covering defender.

The returning Fred Ward, who missed Saturday's celebrations due to work commitments, eventually found space to cross into Kacey Johnstone to volley just over the Wallingford bar.

The home attack were comfortably contained until a 36th minute run down the left from defender, Paul Massaquoi, saw the ball slipped to speedy striker, Zinzee Taha, who broke through the back line and saw his dipping shot go over the exposed Ryan Chandler and just skim the bar from 20yards.

This combination was tried again shortly after, with Taha's lightning speed looking dangerous, but this time Ashley Thomas diverted for a corner, but the ball went swiftly to the other end where Ward put in Meadows, who had his low drive turned round the post.

The second half continued in much the same vein, occasional bursts from both sides, but very little creativity to make defences look uncomfortable, until the home side won a free-kick on the edge of the Slimbridge box. Skipper Ross Tyler's effort avoided the wall, but Chandler took confidently. The swirling wind was not helping either side's efforts to retain mastery of the ball, with an air of frustration appearing to be signalled by two long range efforts over the home bar from Slimbridge's Ross Casey.

Taha was distinctly unlucky not to open the scoring, when he volleyed from distance over Chandler, the ball bouncing on the hard surface and crashing against the bar of the unguarded net with twenty minutes remaining.

This narrow escape saw a concerted effort develop from the visitors, resulting in Slimbridge taking the lead on 72 minutes. Meadows burst through the mid-field and let the ball run to Cant who swivelled and hit a half-volley into the corner of the net from 22 yards with defenders in front of him and Mannah arguably un-sighted. As it turned out, a memorable winning goal and the last of the season!

This inspired Slimbridge to go up a gear, but to no avail as the Wallingford defence stood firm, the game seemingly destined to finish as it had started!

AFC Wallingford; M.Mannah, S.Barlow, P.Massaquoi, I.Fenn, A.Strudwick, R.Tyler, P.Touray, A.Styles, A.Baker, Z.Taha, F.Touray.

Slimbridge; R.Chandler, L.Sterling, J.Cole, R.Casey, Ashley Thomas, A.Axton, E.Ward, J.Meadows, K.Johnstone, J.Tustain (C.Cole 15) (J.Cant 57), T.Haddock (Mike Green 78).

Referee; Mr.W.Christie (Marlow)