

SPORT ITALIA HELLENIC LEAGUE –PREMIER DIVISION

(Played on Saturday, 2nd December 2006)

JOHNSTONE STRIKE SECURES THE POINTS

SLIMBRIDGE 2, BICESTER TOWN 1

Kacey Johnstone scored the winner for Slimbridge after a spirited Bicester Town side forced their way back into contention, Adam Doyle's early second half strike cancelling out a first half goal from Robbie Colwell.

On a heavy surface, both sides took time to adapt, although Bicester had a lucky escape on three minutes when Tim Haddock prodded home from close range, only to be thwarted by an off-side flag.

The well-organised visitors defence frustrated the Slimbridge attack for great periods of the first half with Teg Jones and Lee Henderson outstanding at times. The latter being only 16 years of age, surely will go on to greater things in football if current progress is anything to go by, playing with a maturity well beyond his years.

John Cant supplied a cross into the Bicester box on 27 minutes that had defenders and attackers piling into the six yard area, but several hacks later the visitors line was cleared. This seemed to energise the home side into a sustained spell of attacking for the first time in the match.

Johnstone wriggled free to have his shot blocked from eight yards before he teed up Colwell, who put a low forceful drive from ten yards through a crowded area into the net, to break the deadlock on 34 minutes.

Bicester's Dean Smith then let fly from 35 yards, being only just wide of goalkeeper, Ryan Chandler's post, which was the closest the visitors came to scoring in the first half. It ended with Johnstone shooting wide after being put in by Haddock, and then vice-versa, when Haddock's first time volley went over the bar from six yards.

From the re-start, Bicester surprised their hosts by coming forward more and after Paul Spittle's free-kick was parried away by a diving Chandler, the ball came swiftly back across him from Luke Kelly and was turned in by a delighted Adam Doyle for the equaliser on fifty minutes.

At this point it seemed that the sticky conditions might be more to the liking of the visitors, especially when Chandler made a one-handed diving stop from another close range effort from Doyle on the hour.

Colwell limped off just past the hour to be replaced by Will Morford, and immediately his pace started to unsettle a Bicester defence hitherto gaining in confidence, to the point that on 64 minutes Slimbridge scored what proved to be the winning goal, with a piece of magic from Johnstone.

A mis-hit clearance was headed forcefully back into the Bicester box by Allton Axton and found Johnstone, who turned his man, side-stepped goalkeeper Jeff Simmonds, and planted the ball into the empty net.

It was now Bicester's turn to look sapped, and they never seriously threatened Chandler's goal again. In a last hectic five minutes when they went for broke, they could have conceded more goals when Morford and Haddock went close. Ashley Thomas struck a fierce volley from twenty yards that clipped the far post and Johnstone dragged his shot wide. A hard-working three points for Slimbridge on the day, over a Bicester side who worked particularly well as a defensive unit and proved very difficult to break down.

Slimbridge; R.Chandler, L.Sterling, Mike Green, T.Haddock, Ashley Thomas, A.Axton, Matt Green(J.Meadows 74), C.Cole, K.Johnstone, R.Colwell (W.Morford 62), J.Cant.

Bicester Town; J.Simmonds,D.Smith, V.Byfield, T.Jones, L.Henderson, P.Spittle(J.Kyberd 86), A.Doyle, S.Bott, J.McKay, P.Harvey(A.Hamp 88), L.Kelly.

Referee; Mr. M. Treadwell (Banbury)