

SPORT ITALIA HELLENIC LEAGUE –PREMIER DIVISION

(Played on Tuesday 3rd April 2007)

FAIRFORD COME-BACK KEEPS SWANS AT BAY

FAIRFORD TOWN 3, SLIMBRIDGE 3

Slimbridge built up a three goal lead in the first 25 minutes, but Fairford Town, who may have their worries off the pitch, showed an amazing spirit exists on it, to stage a late rally and claim a well-earned draw with two goals inside the last nine minutes.

In yet another game affected by a strong wind, Slimbridge started well with the following wind and after a couple of near misses went ahead on 17 minutes. Wisloe Road Old Boy, Martin Booth, still showing good pace, chased a Kacey Johnstone flick-on that left the Fairford back-line behind him, to calmly drive a rising shot just inside Kyle Murdoch's post from just inside the area.

Five minutes later and Johnstone got on the end of a wind-assisted clearance to half-volley across an exposed Murdoch to double the visitors lead.

Fairford then had their first effort on goal from distance, but Kevin Coles shot went straight to goalkeeper Ryan Chandler.

Three minutes after scoring his first goal of the night, Johnstone was on hand to finish off a flowing move down the left and drive low into the corner of the net to make it a 0-3 score-line.

Booth had a good claim for a penalty turned down when he burst through again and was held back, but the referee missed the it.

After the visitors dominated most of the first half play, in hindsight, a crucial decision came two minutes before the break when Fairford pulled a goal back with a well-struck penalty from skipper Coles, after the ball was running away from Ashley Edenborough in a foray into the visitors box, but Ashley Thomas caught him in the same instant, to concede the spot-kick.

The second half began with the wind now behind the home side, and John Edmunds shot went wide of Chandler's goal, but for a long spell Slimbridge coped admirably and this allowed them to press up the other end more frequently than Fairford had in the first half. Johnstone went close with an overhead kick and a dangerous looking Johnny Meadows free-kick was turned behind for a corner, Ady Roper heading over his own bar.

On 74 minutes Booth was unlucky to see his shot clip Murdoch's far post and elude an incoming Craig Cole, before nine minutes from time a tremendous angled dipping 20 yard shot from Edenborough went in off the stretching glove of Chandler and the underside of the bar to signal a grandstand finish to the match.

After Matt Green was dispossessed in the home box by a desperate, saving tackle, Fairford got the equaliser on 85 minutes from a Coles free-kick that travelled fully 35 yards and dipped towards the top corner of the net, with Chandler unable to keep the ball out.

A late free-kick on the edge of the area in front of the Fairford goal after Murdoch stepped out of his area with the ball, was beaten away, and as the final whistle went, the home side could be proud of their second half come-back. For Slimbridge, it will seem like two points thrown away, but both sides were below full strength and deserved praise for playing the game in a hard fought, but good spirit!

Fairford Town; K.Murdoch, G.Davies, J.Montague, A.Snook, A.Roper, D.McCluskey (R.Whitefield 77), C.Chessell, R.Lovegrove, A.Edenborough, K.Coles, J.Edmunds (P.Griffiths 66).

Slimbridge; R.Chandler, Mike Green (T.Haddock 46), J.Cole, J.Inch, Ashley Thomas, A.Axton, E.Ward, J.Meadows, K.Johnstone (Matt Green 79), M.Booth, C.Cole.

Referee; Mr. P. Smith (Barnet)