

GLOS. F. A. CHALLENGE TROPHY - SEMI FINAL

(Played on Saturday 10th March 2007)

SWANS WIN CHANCE FOR TROPHY DEFENCE

HENBURY O.B. 1 , SLIMBRIDGE 2

Holders Slimbridge won through to the G.F.A. Challenge Trophy Final, after Glos. County League leaders, Henbury Old Boys had pushed them all the way. The visitors scored a goal in each half through Will Morford and Tim Haddock, with a consolation at the death from the home side's Nathan Baird.

Henbury have surprised many pundits this season, their run to the Semi-Finals being their best Trophy challenge since season 1989/90 when they lost out to Lawrence Weston Hallen in the Final, and although they came into this match as underdogs, they gave a good account of themselves, making Slimbridge work hard for their win.

Both sides took time to adjust to the blustery cross-wind and the early play was scrappy. There were eighteen minutes on the clock before the first meaningful strike on goal, the visitors James Cole getting forward to unleash a rising shot from the edge of the Henbury box that went narrowly over the bar.

Seven minutes on and Henbury's Jermaine Wright went down in the Slimbridge area but was cautioned for diving as the home side pressed. Shortly after, Baird set up Ian Milne in the clear, who dragged his shot wide from 14 yards.

Slimbridge then raised their game as the interval beckoned with Craig Cole cutting in from the right and drawing a good save from goalkeeper Matt Hodges, before a couple of corners came to nothing. However, almost on the half-time whistle, Mike Green's cross into the Henbury box was not cleared, and after bobbling about, Morford took advantage, to hit a rising shot across Hodges into the net and the visitors had got their noses in front.

After the break a flowing move ended with Matt Green dummieing to allow Haddock a clear sight of goal, but Hodges hung on to the shot from ten yards.

At the other end Wright ran on and saw his final shot deflected away, the resulting corner coming to nothing.

Semi-Finals are notorious for stop-start football, and this game was proving no exception, as both sides tried to keep things tight, with efforts on goal few and far between.

By the hour-mark Morford forced Hodges to turn round his post after Craig Cole had headed-on, while Ryan Chandler in the visitors goal saw action with a smart take from a lone run and shot by Adam Russell.

The crucial second Slimbridge goal came on 74 minutes, a pin-point diagonal through-ball from Matt Green, saw Haddock race between two defenders and slot into the net past the despairing dive of Hodges.

With the two-goal cushion, Slimbridge started stroking the ball about for the first time in the match, but some solid defending in front of Hodges and a good piece of play out of defence which ended with Chandler pushing a shot away from Milne, saw the visitors retract to their previous safety-first football.

As the game was running down deep into added-on time, Henbury got a deserved consolation goal when Baird volleyed sweetly in from some 20 yards, wrong-footing everyone in front of him. The game barely re-started before the final whistle blew, and Slimbridge had booked their place in the Final at Oaklands Park in May against the winners of the, as yet unplayed, other Semi-Final tie between Bitton and Almondsbury Town.

Henbury O.B. ; M.Hodges, A.Lock, L.Smith, G.Clark, M.Baird, J.Dutton, A.Rosser (N.Simons 66), J.Wright (R.Wardlow 62), N.Baird, R.Timms (E.Howells 45), I.Milne.

Slimbridge ; R.Chandler, Mike Green (J.Cant 77), J.Cole, Matt Green, Ashley Thomas, A.Axton, E.Ward, J.Meadows, W.Morford, C.Cole, T.Haddock.

Referee ; Mr. S. Wales (Tewkesbury).