

SPORT ITALIA HELLENIC LEAGUE –PREMIER DIVISION
(Played on Saturday 31st March 2007)

GREEN STRIKE SETTLES TIGHT GAME

SLIMBRIDGE 2 , MILTON UNITED 1

Matt Green secured the points for Slimbridge with a well-struck goal twelve minutes from time, after improving Milton United had taken a first half lead through Martin Fox that was quickly cancelled out by Ross Casey.

The talking point of the match however, was another sort of strike,- a high intensity lightning strike- off the pitch in an adjoining field with the game goalless after 25 minutes, which came without warning, and went literally, in a flash! That aside, high gusting winds made life very difficult for both defences throughout the game.

Improving as the season has progressed, Milton, in sixth place overnight, were always prepared to come at the hosts in this match and certainly provided a tough test, with the first threat to the home goal coming after 12 minutes. Ryan Chandler had to be quick off his line to grab the ball from the high-scoring Vince Rusher, about to pull the trigger from eight yards out. Six minutes later and Darren Howell completely missed his kick in front of goal after a thrusting run up the left by Matt Styles had played him in.

It was then the home side's turn to cause palpitations in the Milton defence, with Matt Green and Joe Tustain firing over when well set up. Back at the other end Rusher broke down the left, and cutting in, drew a good flick round the post from his low drive to Chandler's right.

The lightning strike then intervened, but play continued with a Slimbridge break that saw Fred Ward's attempted lob over goalkeeper Graham Coultard catch the wind and carry just over the bar. Tustain then got under the ball when free on goal to drive over after good build-up play involving Kacey Johnstone and Ward.

There was just a hint in the play that Slimbridge were beginning to get on top when they went a goal down on 39 minutes. Matt Shelton swung in a free-kick from the right and tall defender Martin Fox, out-jumped the crowded box to put his pacy downward header into the corner of the net.

Three minutes later the home side equalised when Tustain laid-off to Ward on the right who put in a low cross for Casey to stab high into the net.

Slimbridge came out strong at the beginning of the second half, with Casey only just off target, throwing himself at a header from a good cross by Matt Green.

On the hour, Styles had a chance at the other end, bursting clear, but firing over the bar with only Chandler to beat from 12 yards. Minutes later, the dangerous Rusher worked himself an opening but put his shot wide.

Slimbridge then returned to the attack with some delightful footwork from Green, wrong-footing his marker, but then shooting straight at Coultard. Craig Cole, replacing Tustain at half-time through injury, then set up an incoming Casey who snatched his shot over the bar, rushed, through the attentions of the obdurate Fox, playing the wind and the Slimbridge attack with commitment and no little panache.

On 73 minutes, some good build-up down the right saw Milton move the ball slickly to Rusher, who from a tight angle hit the outside of Chandler's near post. In an immediate response, Casey fired over at the other end, Johnstone providing a deft flick-on.

The winner for Slimbridge was well worked. Ward took a quick throw-in, Casey fed Johnstone, who stepped over the ball for it to run to the unmarked Matt Green to drive low across Coultard into the corner of the net from 16 yards.

Slimbridge; R.Chandler, Mike Green, J.Cole, R.Casey, Ashley Thomas, A.Axton, E.Ward, J.Meadows, K.Johnstone, J.Tustain (C.Cole 46), Matt Green.

Milton United; G.Coultard, N.Smith (R.Sadler 48), M.Shelton, D.Flockton, M.Fox, D.Kirby, M.Styles, C.Hooper, V.Rusher, D.Howell, P.Malone.

Referee; Mr. S. Wales (Tewkesbury)