

**DISPUTED PENALTY GOAL THE DIFFERENCE  
SLIMBRIDGE 0 , NORTH LEIGH 1**

**Simon Futchter netted from the penalty spot in the 49<sup>th</sup> minute after the referee adjudged Swans defender Ashley Thomas had put 'hand to ball' in dealing with a non-threatening cross into the box, to earn the visitors the points in this top of the table clash. As a result, North Leigh resume the lead by two points from Slimbridge who went down to their first home League defeat of the season, but do have three games in hand still.**

The game produced few chances although both sides put in plenty of effort, and in all truth, Slimbridge spurned three good scoring opportunities to get something from the game. However, it was a game that North Leigh had to win to keep their own Championship hopes alive, and the fact that it came in somewhat controversial circumstances will not be lingered on for long. A win is a win, however it comes at the business end of the season!

A good crowd were treated to a frenetic start as the visitors were first on the attack but failed to create an opening in the first ten minutes, before Ashley Thomas and Andy McCabe were given a lecture from the referee after locking horns. The first real chance came on 16 minutes when Will Morford fed Fred Ward to put his angled drive over from ten yards with only Richard Barrett in the visitors goal in his way.

There was much slick passing in the mid-field from both sides, but congestion usually mean't one pass too many, with both defences by and large coping admirably.

On 27 minutes, Joe Tustain's long diagonal cross to the left reached Tim Haddock unmarked, and running into the Leigh area, dragged a good opportunity, narrowly past Barrett's far post.

Futchter then went down the left at the other end to put a pin-point cross on to the head of an incoming Danny Wise who put the ball straight into a grateful Ryan Chandler's arms from eight yards.

The last ten minutes before the interval saw little goalmouth action as the mid-field battle intensified with Swans' Ross Casey and Leigh skipper Joe Burnell catching the eye with impressive work-rates.

On the resumption, the pace of the game never dropped and the breakthrough came in a most unfortunate way for the home side. Was it ball to hand or hand to ball? The referee made his decision, and the rest they say is history, although the debate lingered on round the rails long after.

Slimbridge naturally upped their game to try for a quick reply and on 52 minutes, Morford pulled the ball back across goal only to see Tustain blast over from eight yards out.

On the hour, the hard-working McCabe held the ball up well to give James Mortimer-Jones a sight of the home goal to no avail.

Further huff and puff from both sides in turn failed to create much thereafter, although to their credit, North Leigh kept looking for a clinching goal rather than try and sit on their narrow lead.

In added-on time Kacey Johnstone who had earlier come on for Tustain, put in Morford on the run, but a scuffed shot past Barrett into the side-netting brought a big groan from the heavily disappointed partisan crowd.

**Slimbridge; R.Chandler, J.Inch, J.Cole (J.Cant 82), R.Casey, Ashley Thomas, A.Axton, J.Tustain (K.Johnstone 65), J.Meadows (C.Cole 76), W.Morford, E.Ward, T.Haddock.**

**North Leigh; R.Barrett, J.Wood (M.Threlfall 69), A.Helby, L.Hope, S.Huxley, J.Burnell, J.Mortimer-Jones, S.Futchter, A.McCabe, D.Wise, K.Lewis.**

**Referee; Mr.J.Maskell (Oxford)**

**Att; 197**