

SPORT ITALIA HELLENIC LEAGUE –PREMIER DIVISION

(Played on Wednesday 11th April 2007)

SWANS FALTER IN LATE DERBY DRAMA

SLIMBRIDGE 2 , SHORTWOOD UNITED 2

Slimbridge had to be content with a point after a dramatic last few minutes at Wisloe Road. Local rivals Shortwood United managed a last-gasp scrambled equaliser, with the Swans reduced to ten men after goalkeeper Ryan Chandler was dismissed for a professional foul in the 86th minute of the game.

The game maintained a lively tempo throughout and from an 8th minute corner, Peter Smith found Andy Hoskins to head in at the near post through a sea of players to put the visitors ahead.

Stung by going a goal down, Slimbridge responded positively and put tremendous pressure on the visitors with some quick-fire attacking that saw Will Morford twice go close and then hit the woodwork before an equaliser came on 16 minutes. Kacey Johnstone put a through ball down the right for Fred Ward to chase down and fire the ball from the bye-line across the face of the goal where Johnstone failed to connect, and James Coates diverted the ball into the net past his own wrong-footed 'keeper Martin Pearce.

Shortwood came back and Davis, showing some exquisite skill, turned his marker to go free on goal, but put his rising drive wide approaching the area with a hasty looking snatched shot.

Returning to the attack, the home side could have had two or three more goals before half-time when James Cole motored up the left and saw a skimming drive hacked away off the line with Pearce beaten, as did Morford a few minutes later, with a volley on target when the visitors failed to clear a corner. Johnstone then put a volley over an open goal whilst falling backwards after a delicate flick from Haddock had opened up the Shortwood defence. Pearce then made a smart interception with Johnny Meadows threatening, before Johnstone shaved the outside of the post as the ball took a bobble away from the goal-line when it looked to be going in.

After the break Slimbridge were soon pressing again with Morford bringing out a tremendous reflex save from Pearce, and shortly after denied Morford again, looking suspiciously to have held him back after losing out to a challenge. The referee waved play on and the ball was cleared.

Shortwood were living dangerously by then as Johnstone went close with a 25 yard effort that drifted off target and then audaciously put a looping chip over his shoulder that took one bounce past Pearce and hit the post.

The visitors then came back with a couple of relieving free-kicks, but efforts into the Slimbridge box from Ben Pugh and James Singh in turn, were repelled.

On 79 minutes Cole made progress up the Slimbridge left, but his long diagonal cross to the back post saw Ward head wide. Two minutes later Cole again found Ward who, with one touch sent the ball across the face of the goal for Morford to run into the net unchallenged, to put his side ahead for the first time in the game.

It was then do-or-die time for Shortwood and thus when Davis got clear on goal with four minutes of normal time remaining, Chandler met him on the edge of the box and was adjudged to have impeded him. Subsequently shown a red card he had been replaced in goal by defender Allton Axton by the time Davis had received treatment on the field. Play eventually re-started with Hoskins free-kick on the edge of the box going over the bar.

The incident was to change the game as Shortwood piled on some late pressure, and a scramble at the near post from a left wing corner, with almost the last kick of the game, saw the ball just nestle inside the post with a claim from Gloucester City's Dave Wilkinson for the last touch, to earn his side an unlikely point.

A good crowd had witnessed an entertaining game. Shortwood fought a good rear-guard action and Slimbridge must wonder what they have done to upset the gods to dominate a match so, but have to settle for a point! That leaves the gap behind North Leigh at four points with four games in hand. No doubt there will be a few more twists and turns to come as the last few weeks of the season unfold!

Slimbridge; R.Chandler, L.Sterling, J.Cole, J.Inch, Ashley Thomas, A.Axton, E.Ward, J.Meadows, K.Johnstone, W.Morford, T.Haddock.

Shortwood United; M.Pearce, J.Coates (J.Davis 84), P.Day, J.Clarke, W.Steadman, J.Singh, P.Smith, D.Wilkinson, C.Davis, A.Hoskins, B.Pugh.

Referee Mr. J. Lyon (Oxford)