

Saturday 27th January 2007 F.A. CARLSBERG VASE –Fourth Round Proper
COOL MORFORD STRIKE SEES SWANS THROUGH
COLWELL INJURY CAUSES CONCERN

Slimbridge 1, Whitley Bay 0

This F.A. Carlsberg Fourth Round game was settled by Will Morford, coming off the bench to telling effect by coolly lobbing stranded goalkeeper Terry Burke with the only goal of the game three minutes from the end. Ryan Chandler in the Slimbridge goal had kept his side in the game with two outstanding first half saves to deny the 2002 F.A.Vase winners from the 'Arngrove' Northern League any reward for their first half supremacy.

The ground-breaking cup run for the Swans come at a price though. Star striker Robbie Colwell was stretchered off after 79 minutes following a collision with a defender after seeing a rasping drive excellently turned round the post by Burke as a strong finish to the game from the home side was gathering momentum. Ankle damage looks the likely scenario for Colwell as he was taken to hospital for X-Rays.

Bay made an impressive start on a playing surface still not fully recovered after last weekend's downpour that caused the initial postponement. After five minutes James Cole deflected a strong shot from Lee Kerr away from Chandler before Mark Sheeron followed through a Wayne Phillips cross with a bar-rapping header, but was ruled off-side in the process.

Dominating possession, Bay could not find a telling pass through a composed home back line until on 17 minutes, Chandler pulled off an instinctive flick over his own bar from a powerful Phillip Bell header, this following a pin-point cross by defender Wayne Phillips who had made good ground down the left.

It was 20 minutes gone before Slimbridge threatened, when Kacey Johnstone won a free-kick on the edge of the visitors area. The cross into the box fell to Ashley Thomas who hit the ball wide from the opposite flank.

Kevin Walton then brought Chandler to his knees with a low drive, before the imposing goalkeeper made another great save. Good inter-passing down the right saw a cross into Damon Robson only six yards out, but his stooping header was clawed away at full stretch.

As the half went into its last ten minutes, Slimbridge started to look more co-ordinated going forward and three minutes from the interval nearly took a surprise lead. Tim Haddock flicked on to Johnny Meadows who volleyed on the run, inches wide of an unguarded post from fully thirty yards.

Just as Bay dominated the first period, so did Slimbridge the second.

On 50 minutes Colwell's thunderous drive knocked defender Darren Timmins off his feet in deflecting away from goal, but after treatment he continued. Meadows then took charge of a free-kick on the edge of the area and managed to thread the ball through a packed area without anyone getting a touch.

Good chances remained scarce though, with strong defending winning out on any threatening breakthrough.

On 62 minutes, a break-out from Bay saw the ball swiftly moved up-field where Bell finished weakly straight at Chandler, before Kerr went close, forcing a corner to be conceded.

Johnstone then set up Fred Ward at the other end, before an impressive defensive tackle prevented him from pulling the trigger from close range.

Slimbridge then camped in the Bay area, but wasted three corner kicks in as many minutes as Bay made two substitutions that didn't seem to change their fortunes, whereas Morford came on for a tiring Tim Haddock and his pace started to worry Bay even more.

Then came the injury to Colwell that stopped the game for seven minutes, with Craig Cole eventually replacing him.

More pressure from Slimbridge could still not force an opening until Morford seized on what proved to be a fatal hesitation for the only time in the match among an erstwhile highly disciplined defensive performance from the visitors, nipping in to place a one bounce lob into the empty net, following a tired looking backpass that fell short of Burke.

With ten minutes of added-on time, the atmosphere round the ground built-up as both sides went head to head, but for all the effort that Bay put in, they only created a late header from a corner by substitute Brian Smith that went straight at Chandler through a crowded area.

Perhaps not a classic encounter between two footballing sides, due to the heavy conditions, but what the game did provide was a thoroughly engrossing game of cup football between two well-matched sides, played in good spirit generally, with the football saying of a 'game of two halves' being a good way to describe it!

Next up for Slimbridge in the Fifth Round, is an attractive looking home tie in two weeks time, when big-spending Truro City will be coming to Wisloe Road after their success over Newcastle Benfield in another tie postponed through the weather the previous week-end.

Slimbridge; R.Chandler, L.Sterling, J.Cole, T.Haddock (W.Morford 73), Ashley Thomas, A.Axton, E.Ward, J.Meadows, K.Johnstone, R.Colwell (C.Cole 79), J.Cant.

Whitley Bay; T.Burke, M.Taylor, W.Phillips, D.Timmons, D.Coulson, R.Livermore (B.Smith 69), D.Robson, K.Walton (A.Dugdale 64), M.Sheeran (B.Rowe 79), P.Bell, L.Kerr.

Referee; Mr. J. Flynn (Calne)

Attendance; 219