

Saturday 16th September 2006 F.A.CUP –First Qualifying Round

SWANS HISTORIC CUP RUN CONTINUES

JOHNSTONE AND COLWELL GOALS SEE OFF YATE

Yate Town 1 , Slimbridge 2

Kacey Johnstone gave Slimbridge a half-time lead at Lodge Road and Robbie Colwell headed in the winner after Yate had equalised through Darren Edwards.

The Wisloe Road side turned in a battling performance that overcame their Southern Premier hosts, who should have forced a replay but for a glaring miss in front of an open goal from Jimmy Cox in added-on time. That though, is part and parcel of the magic of the F.A.Cup, a knock-out competition that has no equal in the football world.

Slimbridge were well worth their interval lead as the home team were well contained by some spirited play defensively, that kept the dangerous Yate attack pairing of Cox and Edwards away from any clear openings. For this, much credit must go to the visitors back line of skipper Leon Sterling, Ashley Thomas, Allton Axton and James Cole.

Cox was squeezed out in an early run on the Slimbridge goal, before Johnstone brought out a terrific save from home 'keeper Tony Court. However, with pressure mounting on the Yate defence pre-eminently through some good exploitation of the wider than average Lodge Road pitch by Fred Ward and John Cant, the ball reached Johnstone, who took it on and lashed a fierce, dipping drive from 20yards over the back-peddalling Court and Slimbridge were ahead on 16 minutes.

Yate persisted in using the long ball to find their attackers but were having no joy, and their first real chance came on 25 minutes, a long, hanging ball from Dave Elsey from the right, finding Mark Summers at the back post to head just wide.

Three minutes later, Slimbridge should have doubled their lead, Colwell chasing down the left, losing, then recovering the ball and swinging a cross to the far post, where the late-arriving Johnny Meadows put a firm header the wrong side of the post.

Visiting 'keeper Adam Thomas then had some lengthy treatment after bravely diving to thwart a charging Edwards, before the half concluded at the other end when Ward flicked on to Johnstone who shot strongly, but straight at Court from 12 yards.

On the resumption, Yate came forward more, but frustration built up with a couple of needless cautions, as again they were not finding the elusive final ball to anyone in space. Meadows and Mike Green in front of the back line, were putting in a huge work rate by this time, but on 59 minutes Yate were back on level terms. A Slimbridge attack broke down. The ball was swiftly moved up the field with good inter-passing movement catching the visitors out and with a man over, it fell to Edwards to drill in from 14 yards past a diving Thomas.

For the next ten minutes, it was all Yate, tails up and at this point looking the likeliest winners, as Slimbridge were really pressurised for the first time in the match, but four forced corners in as many minutes came to nothing and the game gradually went into a phase of comparative calm as Lee Jefferies and Paul Chenoweth stood out for Yate in trying to urge their side to find the killer blow.

Both sides then resorted to substitutes to try and change things a bit, Aaron Blakemore looking threatening with a couple of long-range efforts on the visitors goal, and Cox, coming out of a relative quiet spell with a firm drive at Thomas.

Back up the field, Johnstone and Colwell were still needing attention by the Yate defence, Colwell in particular must have covered every blade of grass in harassing defenders on the ball. All his effort was rewarded with seven minutes left on the clock, when the next round beckoned for Slimbridge with what proved to be the winning goal. Court parried away a terrific half-volley from Johnstone straight at the incoming Colwell to head firmly into the empty net, and euphoria gathered momentum from the group of Slimbridge fans behind the goal.

Yate responded with some strong attacking in the last few minutes, their best chance coming right at the end when Cox managed to flick the ball over the on-rushing Adam Thomas, but skewed his rushed shot wide of the open goal, which literally seemed to make the whole crowd stop breathing for a few seconds. With the miss, came the final whistle and a moment to savour for the visitors! An historic and biggest ever success in the short senior history of Slimbridge AFC!

In all fairness, the vanquished hosts deserve a mention for the way they took their obvious disappointment, but for Slimbridge, as the fairy tale continues, attention will now focus on the traditional Monday lunch-time draw for the next round, and who awaits them on Saturday 30th September. An elated Slimbridge manager, Doug Foxwell could only say, ' After three away ties, a home game would be nice.'

Yate Town; A.Court, A.Mayo, D.Elsey, S.Brice (O.Clark 84), L.Jefferies, M.Summers, M.Wyatt (A.Blakemore 67), P.Chenoweth, D.Edwards, J.Wood, J.Cox.

Slimbridge; Adam Thomas, L.Sterling, J.Cole, M.Green, Ashley Thomas (J.Inch 78), A.Axton, E.Ward (W.Morford 80), J.Meadows, K.Johnstone, R.Colwell, J.Cant (S.Badham 67).

Referee; Mr. R.J.M.Greenwood (Plymouth)

Assistants; Mr.M.H.Whaley (Plymouth), and Mr. D.Symons (Exeter)

Attendance 190