

Hellenic League Premier Division

Saturday 1 September 2012

Ascot United 1-0 Slimbridge

Slimbridge again fell at the first hurdle of this season's FA Competitions, losing to Ascot United at the Racecourse Ground, but the score line doesn't reflect the full story of a torrid afternoon for the Swans.

Leon Sterling's pre-match plans were thrown into disarray when he lost both Stuart Gates and Jamie Inch who pulled up with injuries during the pre-match warm up, and a hasty reshuffle saw Dan Holloway and Sterling himself drafted into the side, leaving the visitors with only one available substitute as the team kicked off.

With both Inch and Tom Speers missing from the Swans' back four, it was always going to be a difficult afternoon defensively, and Ascot nearly scored with only 9 seconds on the clock, as the rearranged back line backed off to allow Lee Boon to have a decent shot, but luckily for the visitors, he shot high over Dave Evans' goal.

In a scrappy opening period, Ascot held the advantage, with both Jack Smillie and Ian Brooks creating chances early on. With 12 minutes on the clock, Alex Higgs was played through on goal, and was fouled by Ascot Keeper Chris Grace as he rounded the Keeper. Higgs kept on his feet, and then saw his shot cleared for a corner. Despite protests from the visitors, Referee Marcus Carmichael deemed that an advantage had already been gained and denied Slimbridge a penalty.

Buoyed on by that opportunity, the Swans came back into the game, and Karl Nash was at the heart of three good moves, playing in Chris Fower, and Alex Higgs twice with probing diagonal passes, but the visitors were unable to take advantage of their period of good play. For Ascot, Dave Hoar looked dangerous all game, and his two shots on 19 and 25 minutes went close to putting the home side in front.

Ascot regained the initiative, and, with 28 minutes on the clock, Ben Knight headed over with another good opportunity for the home side. Some neat work involving Shane Anson and Dan Holloway saw the ball break to Liam Harding with just under half an hour on the clock, but his shot was wide.

Ascot should have done better with a Free Kick on 35 minutes, when Will Wellon was harshly adjudged to have fouled Jack Smillie, but Joe Gritt's Free Kick was wide of the target. Slimbridge replied just before the half, with a super move from Holloway, which played in Higgs, but his shot was well saved by Grace, resulting in a corner which was cleared to leave the game even at the half.

Ascot had the first good chance of the second half, and it took a goal line clearance from Leon Sterling to deny Smillie with 54 minutes gone, but eventually the home side broke the Swans resistance with 63 minutes gone. Lee Boon's header from a free kick put the home side in front. With Ascot pressing forward, it took a great save from Dave Evans to deny Hoar, before the same player hit the bar with a shot as the home side tried to kill the game off.

With 15 minutes remaining, a Will Wellon header which drifted just wide was the best chance of the second period for the visitors, as Slimbridge pressed for an equaliser. Fower and Holloway both had shots which went close, before Hoar again tried to get on the scoresheet, with two more efforts which Evans dealt with comfortably.

The last chance of the game went to the visitors, when Nash's corner was met by the head of Harding, but his header was wide, and the final whistle followed shortly afterwards.

As a result of Highworth's draw in the FA Vase this afternoon, our League game on Tuesday has been postponed which means the Swans are now lined up for three home games on the bounce - at home to Wokingham & Emmbrook next Saturday, before entertaining Flackwell Heath and then Kidlington on the next two Saturdays.

Team: Evans, Paterson, Anson, Sterling, Wellon, Harding, Holloway, Twyman, Fower, Higgs (A. Nash 69), K. Nash

Supporters Man Of the Match: Shane Anson