

Hellenic League Premier Division

Saturday 17 November 2012

Flackwell Heath 0-3 Slimbridge

The Swans returned from one of their longest trips of the season with a thoroughly deserved three points after a classy performance marred only by the dismissal of Will Wellon in the second half. Dan Holloway's penalty following a foul on Marvyn Roberts put the visitors ahead, and Roberts himself added a second just before the break. Tom Speers stoppage time third sealed the victory, which maintained Slimbridge's second spot in the UHlsport Hellenic Premier League behind leaders Marlow.

The Swans made a good start to the game, and nearly got on the scoresheet in the first minute - Shane Anson's long throw was flicked on by Roberts, and Saul Williams beat Flackwell Keeper Sam Southerden to the ball and knocked it goalwards, but Williams was penalised for a foul by Referee Ivan Gelov and the chance was lost.

After Sean Bennett had gone close with a header from Fred Ward's corner, Flackwell created a couple of chances of their own - Firstly, Paulo Ciccero had a long range effort drift over Dave Evans' crossbar, before the same players free kick caused a scramble in the Slimbridge box, but Lewis Cordice blasted his shot high and wide as the ball came to him on the edge of the box.

With 20 minutes gone, Niall Halford and Marv Roberts went for the same Ward cross, and Halford saw his header go wide, as the Swans upped the tempo and began to control the game. Bennett, Liam Harding and Williams combined in a lovely move to set up Holloway on 24 minutes, but he was well tackled in the Flackwell box and the chance was cleared.

Momentum had definitely swung towards the visitors, with Flackwell not creating too much in the way of chances - Dave Evans was forced to come and punch Jeff Brown's cross under extreme pressure, but the

defensive unit was performing very well and held firm when Flackwell did come forward.

Halford and Wellon were solidly dealing with everything that Flackwell threw at them, and with Njoya and Anson making clever runs down the flanks to support the midfield, it was turning into a very impressive performance by the Swans.

The first goal came on 26 minutes when Marv Roberts turned John Isaac in the Flackwell box and was floored by a late tackle. Dan Holloway drilled the penalty home to give Slimbridge a deserved lead.

The visitors continued to press and again, winning all the midfield battles, some lovely interplay between Harding and Roberts set up Holloway for a cross into the box, but the ball just drifted out with Saul Williams waiting to pounce at the far post.

Williams had a great opportunity to double the lead on 31 minutes when he was sent clear on goal, but good defensive pressure saw his shot go wide of the right hand post, and the difference remained a single goal. Flackwell continued to create the occasional chance, but good defensive work by Bennett was snuffing out their opportunities, his clearing header from John Case's cross on 33 minutes being an important intervention to keep Slimbridge in front.

Bennett was also contributing at the other end, his superb ball sent Williams away for a chance which was deflected for a corner, before Williams' long range chip beat Southerden, but went just the wrong side of the post.

Harding and Ward were running things in the middle of the park, and Harding nearly played in Williams again five minutes before the break, but Southerden just beat the Swans' man to the through ball. Flackwell were reduced to long range efforts, with Isaac's effort from 25 yards well off target.

Two minutes before the half, Slimbridge got the second goal that their play deserved - another lovely passing move down the left flank involving Njoya and Williams saw the latter's cross reach Marv Roberts on the far post, and his header squeezed between Southerden and the angle of the post and bar to double Slimbridge's advantage.

Two minutes into the second period, the strength of Roberts nearly brought a third goal, as he held up play superbly before setting up Holloway, who was unlucky to see his effort hit the bar with Southerden well beaten.

The chances continue to come for the visitors, with Harding going close after a misplaced defensive pass, and Bennett volleying the ball just wide as it was cleared to him on the edge of the Flackwell box.

A rare chance for the home side came on 51 minutes, when Case shot wide after a free kick was cleared out to him, but Slimbridge were dominating the game.

Both sides were reduced to ten men on 55 minutes - Lewis Cordice tangled with Will Wellon in the Slimbridge box, but Wellon held firm and the ball was cleared. Cordice then reacted to the challenge and had to be pulled away from Wellon by Swans Keeper Dave Evans. Play continued in midfield, and eventually the Referee's attention was drawn to the altercation. After a long consultation with his linesman, who had also moved up towards the halfway line following the play, Cordice was shown a red card, along with the mystified Wellon, who appeared very much the innocent party in the incident.

Manager Leon Sterling reacted to the situation by withdrawing Dan Holloway and bringing on Tom Speers to plug the gap in central defence. Ciccero was lucky to escape with a rash challenge on Liam Harding on 63 minutes, which forced Harding off with a nasty looking knee injury as the game threatened to boil over.

Harding was replaced by Chris Fower, with Roberts moving into midfield, where he continued his massive contribution to the game. With 20 minutes remaining, Slimbridge made their last change, with Higgs replacing Williams in a straight swap up front, and subs Fower and Higgs

combined well to continue the Slimbridge pressure - Fowler's cross forcing a good punch from Southerden, before Ward played in Higgs. His shot was saved by Southerden and ran free to Fowler, who couldn't quite get his shot away in time.

As the game entered 90 minutes, Evans was given a simple save after Riccardo Cannon drilled in a long range effort, before the Swans got the third goal their play deserved - three minutes into stoppage time, Ward's corner was met by the head of Speers, who steered the ball home to give the score line a more realistic look.

The Swans have two home League games coming up this week, at home to Abingdon on Tuesday night (7.45pm) and Shrivenham next Saturday (3.00pm)

Team: Evans, Anson, Njoya, Halford, Wellon, Bennett, Harding (Higgs 65), Ward, Roberts, Williams (Fowler 69), Holloway (Speers 60)

Goals: Holloway (Pen) 26, Roberts 43, Speers 90

Supporters Man of the Match: Marv Roberts