

Hellenic League Premier Division

Saturday 10 November 2012

Slimbridge 4-0 Highmoor Ibis

The last time these two teams met earlier in the season, it took two stoppage time goals to nick the three points for the Swans, but today's game was a far more comprehensive victory for Slimbridge, who maintained their position as second in the UHlsport Hellenic Premier League behind leaders Marlow. Two first half goals from Dan Holloway put Slimbridge firmly in control, and second period strikes from Saul Williams and Chris Fower sealed a comfortable win for the home side.

Highmoor started the brighter side, with Shane Small-King at the heart of many of their best moves all afternoon - his neat pass forced Evans into a save at the feet of Anthony Alleyne with just two minutes on the clock, and then Small-King himself went close with a Free Kick after Dan Robinson has been penalised for a foul on Stephen Peacock after four minutes.

Highmoor continued to press, but after a Peacock corner was cleared a minute later, a quick break saw Slimbridge create their own opportunity - Alex Higgs saw his shot well saved by Highmoor Keeper Dan Smith

This chance swung the momentum of the game towards the hosts, and as the side settled, Saul Williams started to flourish on the Slimbridge right flank. After 11 minutes, his ball aimed for Higgs was just too far ahead of the Swans striker, but Williams was to prove instrumental in the first goal of the game.

Williams gave Highmoor another warning with a superb run and cross just before the quarter hour, but saw his delivery cleared. Eventually, the ball worked its way back to Williams, and this time, his pinpoint cross found Dan Holloway in space, and Holloway finished in style to put the home side ahead on 15 minutes.

Williams continued to torment Highmoor, and he combined well with Shane Anson to set up Freddy Ward for a dangerous cross into the box four minutes later, but Ward's ball was just too close to Smith, and Smith gathered safely.

Still the pressure came from the home side, and after Higgs and Holloway both created problems with good balls into the Highmoor box, Slimbridge saw another good chance when Ward's cross was headed onto the Highmoor Bar by Niall Halford, signed this week from Lydney. Halford had a very impressive debut for the side at Centre Half.

It seemed only a matter of time before Slimbridge picked up their second goal, and Williams, Holloway and Halford all had decent efforts close, while Highmoor struggled to get into the game - their most promising effort was a Michael Porter run which was halted by a superb Shane Anson tackle.

The second goal, although well deserved on the balance of play, came about as a result of a stroke of luck for the home side - Smith slipped as he went to take a Goal Kick for Highmoor, and Holloway found himself with the ball at his feet through on goal. Although Smith made a good block from Holloway's first effort, Holloway followed well and netted up to double his tally, and the home side's lead.

Holloway had a further chance to record his hat trick before the half, but Smith saved well, after a neat 1-2 with Williams had created another chance for Slimbridge, who went into the break with a thoroughly deserved lead.

The first minute of the second half may well have decided the outcome of the game - Highmoor were immediately on the attack, and Small-King won a free kick on the edge of the Swans' box almost immediately after Kick Off. Small-Kings' kick across the goal, made contact with both the Swans' bar, and then Evans' far post before dropping out into play. A follow up then rocketed back off the Slimbridge bar for the second time to maintain the home side's two goal advantage. It was a massive let off for the home side, and proved to be Highmoor's best chance of the match.

Saul Williams continued to cause all sorts of problems for the visitors, and his run and cross on 48 minutes saw Alex Higgs just unable to direct his header into the net as the Swans created another good chance. Williams, then played on Robinson, whose effort to record his hat trick brought another good save from Smith.

Slimbridge thought they had been awarded a penalty on 51 minutes, when Liam Harding was clearly felled in the box by Calam Gallimore, but the Linesman's flag was raised and Harding was adjudged offside. Holloway continued to press for his third goal, and was unlucky when Smith again thwarted him with yet another good save on 53 minutes.

Just before the hour, Slimbridge had their second penalty shout turned down - Holloway was brought down and the Linesman signalled a penalty, but he was overruled by Referee Ollie Ballinger, who saw no infringement and play continued.

In the end, though, the decision didn't matter, as a minute later Slimbridge scored their third - Harding split the Highmoor defence with a precise pass, and Saul Williams remained cool when one on one to slot past Smith and record the third score of the day. On 72 minutes, Slimbridge scored their fourth - Williams this time turned provider, playing in Chris Fower, whose neat lob over Smith gave the scoreline a more realistic look based on the afternoon's chances.

The fourth goal killed the game off as a spectacle, with Highmoor well beaten on the day, and few chances in the last period for either side, but it was a convincing performance by the Swans, who face a tricky trip to Flackwell Heath next Saturday, in what is bound to be a close encounter. Prior to that, Slimbridge entertain Newbury on Tuesday at Wisloe Road in the Floodlit Cup 7.45pm)

Team: Evans, Anson, Njoya, Wellon, Halford (Sterling 74), Bennett, Harding, Ward, Higgs (Fower 60), Williams, Holloway (Gates 64)

Goals: Holloway 15, 40 Williams 60, Fower 72

Supporters Man Of The Match; Saul Williams