

Hellenic League Premier Division

Wednesday 24 October 2012

Hook Norton 3-3 Slimbridge (Slimbridge win 4-2 on penalties)

An entertaining evening filled with incident saw the Swans progress to the next round of the Floodlit Cup, but they were given an almighty scare by their Hellenic League Division One West opponents.

After Saul Williams and Alex Higgs had put the visitors into a comfortable lead, a spirited fightback saw Hook Norton pull level with two minutes of normal time remaining. The home side took the lead in the first period of extra time, and it took a deflected goal from Dean Barnard to level the tie again on 105 minutes.

With no further goals, the game went to penalties, and Swans Keeper Dave Evans turned in a match winning performance, saving two penalties before netting the deciding spot kick himself to clinch the tie.

A very open first period saw both sides go close, but it was Slimbridge who took the lead when Saul Williams cottoned onto a through ball, rounded the Keeper and netted on 20 minutes.

The Swans doubled their lead on the hour mark, when Alex Higgs chased down a clearance to leave himself through on goal, and his neat shot gave Norton keeper Joe Murrell no chance.

The home side raised their game and starting exerting real pressure on the Swans, and seven minutes later had a great chance to get back in the game - Jamie Wyatt's mazy run into the box was halted by a clumsy challenge from Dan Holloway, and a spot kick was awarded. Captain Chris Tillcock blasted his shot the wrong side of the post, but the momentum had swung to the home side, and it only took another 3 minutes for Hook

Norton to score their first goal - a great shot from the edge of the box by Jason Tillcock, leaving Evans no chance.

With the Swans completely pinned back in their own half, an equaliser seemed inevitable, and it finally arrived on 88 minutes - Dan Watkin's header from a cross again leaving Evans clutching at air.

The game was deep into stoppage time when Hook Norton thought they had clinched the tie, but Referee David Nicholson ruled out a strike from Watkin, saying that the ball had gone out of play during the build-up.

Extra time was only 6 minutes old when Watkin notched his second - a superb long range strike, but on the stroke of half time, a neat Slimbridge move involving Fower and Higgs, saw Tom Paterson set to shoot. His miscued effort bounced off Dean Barnard and into the net to again level the scores.

With Tom Paterson being given his marching orders in the last minute for his second yellow card, the tie went to penalties.

Although Hook Norton converted their first two penalties, successful kicks from Will Wellon, Dean Barnard and Liam Harding meant that Dave Evans' two saves had given Slimbridge the edge. Evans stepped up himself to convert the decisive kick long into the night, to put the visitors into the next round.

The Swans travel to Witney on Saturday (3.00pm)

Team: Evans, Sheppard, Coombes, Sterling (Collard 65), Wellon, Bennett (Robinson 56), Paterson, Harding, Fower, Higgs, Williams (Barnard 52)

Goals: Williams 20, Higgs 60, Barnard 105

Supporters Man of the Match; Tom Paterson