

Hellenic League Premier Division

Monday 27 August 2012

Slimbridge 1-1 Newbury

Newbury paid the first ever visit to Wisloe Road, and were disappointed not to leave with all three points following a stuttering second half display from the Swans, in a game which was played mainly in a torrential downpour. Ray Spence put the visitors ahead 51 seconds into the second half. It then took a Man of the Match display from Keeper Dave Evans to keep the home side in the game, before, four minutes from time, Tom Speers knocked home an equaliser that was beginning to look highly unlikely, to maintain the Swans' unbeaten start to the season.

Slimbridge remain in top spot in the UHlsport Hellenic Premier League, but they are being followed closely by Witney Town, a point adrift of the leaders, but with a game in hand.

The game had a scrappy opening, with both sides struggling to master the conditions, but the home side made the early chances. After Liam Harding's ball aimed for Alex Higgs was just too far ahead of the striker, Harding's cross on nine minutes saw Karl Nash in space, but he skied his shot.

The home side continued to press, and Chris Fower's lay off to Higgs saw a superb blocking tackle as he powered a shot in on goal. On 18 minutes, a quick break following a Newbury corner saw Harding, who was involved in many of the most promising first half moves, again just over hit his pass to Nash, and Newbury Keeper Andy Bayliss was able to gather.

The nearest the home side came to taking the lead came on 21 minutes - after Nash neatly turned his man and crossed, Higgs' saw his header drift just wide of the post with Bayliss beaten.

At this point in the game, it seemed only a matter of time before Slimbridge got on the scoresheet - Tom Paterson was the next to try his

luck, with a shot that was just too high after good work and a smart cross from Will Wellon.

It was a good half hour into the game before Newbury found their feet, but when they did, the visitos immediately began to look dangerous - Ray Spence, who caused no end of problems for the home side for the rest of the game, was unlucky to see his shot wide, after he turned Jamie Inch on 28 minutes.

As Newbury built up a little momentum, the next good chance also went to the away side - it took a classy sliding tackle from Will Wellon to stop a dangerous shot, after Ben McCready found himself bearing down on goal. The ball fell to Harry Goodger, who shot over the bar.

The game was becoming a lot more even, and at the other end, Higgs won a dangerous free kick turning his man on the edge of the Newbury box, but Nash's shot was weak and cleared for a corner. The pressure was maintained as Nash's corner was headed back into the Newbuey box by Freddy Ward, and the ball fell to Speers, whose shot was again deflected behind. This time the corner was cleared safely.

The Swans continued to look the team more likely to break the deadlock though, and two good opportunities went begging in the space of 90 seconds on 36 minutes - firstly, good work from Dan Robinson down the Swans' right flank saw a dangerous cross come in from Tom Paterson, but Fower's header was wide. Then Higgs had another powerful effort blocked by a great tackle as Slimbridge looked for the opening goal of the game.

Back came Newbury, and following a foul on Spence, the striker took the free kick himself, but his shot was simple for Evans to collect.

In the last 5 minutes of the first period, the home side had two more opportunities, but Nash's cross was scrambled away, and Higgs had a header cleared off the line following Ward's free kick to leave the game scoreless at the half.

As the rainfall became heavier, the second half started badly for the home side, when Paterson's back pass to Evans was seized on by Spence, who

rounded the Swans' Keeper and drilled the ball home to put Newbury ahead.

This gave the visiting side an added impetus, and Spence nearly nicked a second in the 47th minute, but Evans made the first of a series of important saves, beating the shot out into the penalty box, where it was cleared.

Nash's shot wide on 52 minutes, which followed good work from Higgs and Paterson was a rare opportunity for the home side in the second period, but Newbury were the team creating the better chances.

On 54 minutes, Spence was again involved in a dangerous move, laying the ball off to Barry Elmore who played in Goodger. Luckily for Slimbridge, his shot was high when he may have expected to do better with the opportunity.

Slimbridge lost Jamie Inch to a hamstring injury on 56 minutes, and the subsequent reshuffle of the back four did nothing to help settle Slimbridge nerves, and Newbury continued to press, now with Will Wellon joining Speers at centre back, and Paterson dropping into the left full back role.

On the hour, Nash's mishit cross managed to evade everyone to reach Shaun O'Connor, but Bayliss was quick off his line to nick the ball from O'Connor's toes.

As conditions worsened in the rain, Callum Wilmoty shot wide when well placed on 63 minutes, before Evans pulled off a superb stop to deny McCready after a swift Newbury break down the right hand side.

Chris Collin thought he had doubled the advantage for Newbury on 73 minutes, but the goal was ruled out for offside.

In the final 15 minutes, Evans pulled off some superb stops to keep the home side in the hunt - Kalief Madden on 78 minutes and Elmore on 83 both could have been forgiven for thinking their shots were going to score, but the Swans' stopper was up to the task.

With four minutes remaining, the home side grabbed an equaliser. - Speers met a cross with a great header six yards out, but saw the ball hit the post and come back out into play straight back him. Speers rammed home the equaliser to the relief of the home crowd.

The danger was still not over for the home side, and it took two more saves from Evans, the second a wonderful tip over to an Elmore Free Kick, to keep the scores level at the final whistle.

The Swans now travel to Ascot for an FA Vase 1st Qualifying Round tie next Saturday (3.00pm), and travel to Highworth Town the following Tuesday (September 4th, 7.45pm)

Team: Evans, Robinson, Wellon, Inch (Twyman 56), Speers, Paterson, Ward, Harding, Fower (O'Connor 58), Higgs, K. Nash (A. Nash 70

Goals: Speers 85

Supporters Man Of The Match: Dave Evans