

Hellenic League Premier Division

Tuesday 21 August 2012

Reading Town 0-2 Slimbridge

Two classy strikes from Chris Fower and Shaun O'Connor were enough to maintain the Swans' 100% start to the Hellenic Premier League season, and keep them top of the table. Thanks to another committed and determined display by Keeper Dave Evans and the well marshalled back line, the Swans have not yet conceded a goal in 360 minutes of League football.

With two sides of the ground ringed by tents and caravans for staff who were working at this Weekend's Reading Music Festival, it was a slightly surreal sight to see a football take place on the pitch, and the game took a while to settle.

Shane Anson was pulled up by Referee Staynings for two early tackles on Shannon Jesson, and it was the visitors who had the first chance of the game. Freddy Ward's corner finding it's way to Tom Speers, but his shot was high and wide on seven minutes.

Slimbridge were beginning to settle and take control of the game, and after Alex Higgs went close with a header on 15 minutes, they took a deserved lead. Liam Harding played in Higgs down the right flank, and his neat cross was superbly guided home by the head of Fower

Reading tried to hit back, but were being kept at back by a Slimbridge back four well marshalled by Speers and Jamie Inch, and Omar Mohammed's long range effort on 18 minutes was an easy save for Evans to make.

Slimbridge nearly doubled their advantage when another dangerous cross, this time from Shane Anson, was fumbled by Reading Keeper Nathan Silver. Luckily for him, the ball bounced loose, hit the back of Will Wellon and went for a goal kick.

On half an hour, the home side had one of their best chances of the game - Tristram Dennis met a corner in space, and his header was just wide of the post, one of the rare occasions that the Swans allowed space to open up in their own penalty area.

We were now into a game of attrition between the two sides, on a very hard pitch, with a slew of misplaced passes breaking up the game.

Crosses still looked they would be the most likely route for Slimbridge to grab another goal, and it was a Ward Free Kick on 37 minutes that created the next chance. Ward's free kick was dropped by Silver as he clashed with one of his defenders, and as a scramble developed, Speers was penalised for push bringing the move to an end.

Evans had two more saves to make before half time, punching clear a cross from Josh Christopher, and then clearing a shot from the same player just as the clock hit 45 minutes, but the Swans went into the half with a one goal advantage.

The second half continued in the same vein as the first - Jesson was causing problems down the Reading left flank, but his final delivery was falling short of giving the home side some decent chances to pull the game back. As the game became more of a physical battle, Reading won a series of needless free kicks in dangerous positions, and crowded the box with attackers to put pressure under Evans and his defenders, but they held firm.

As Reading pressed, Slimbridge broke and picked up their second goal on 52 minutes. A wonderful surging run by Fower down the right flank saw him leave his marker for dead, and a pinpoint cross was swept home by O'Connor in easily the best move of the game to double the advantage for the visitors.

Slimbridge again started to gain the upper edge as Reading slumped, and Liam Harding was unlucky with a good shot from outside the box on 64 minutes, which just went the wrong side of the post.

Two minutes later, Ward's corner was met by Speers' powerful header, only for Silver to push the ball onto the post, and it was scrambled clear.

Reading nearly grabbed a goal back on 70 minutes, but Anson was on hand to clear the ball off the line in a goalmouth scramble.

The last chance of the game went to the home side, but Jesson's shot was easily saved by Evans, and the Swans returned back down the M4 with three valuable points.

Team: Evans, Anson, Wellon, Inch, Speers, Ward, Paterson, Harding (Robinson 64), Fower, Higgs (Twyman 59), O'Connor

Goals: Fower 16, O'Connor 52

Supporters' Man Of The Match: Jamie Inch