

Hellenic League Premier Division

Saturday 8 December 2012

Slimbridge 2-2 Reading Town

For the second time this week, The Swans put themselves in a position where they needed to retrieve a two goal deficit, however, even though Fred Ward's two goals retrieved the situation, it was still a case of 'two points lost' rather than one gained for Slimbridge, who slipped one place to Third in the UHlsport Hellenic Premier League behind Marlow and Wantage who both won their weekend games.

Defensive mistakes had gifted Adam Jeffery and Graham Lewis with all too rare opportunities on goal for Reading, and both were taken, before Ward notched his brace to level things up. Despite intense pressure, Slimbridge could not gain the elusive winner, in a game where they could have and should have collected all three points.

The Swans got off to the worst possible start, going behind in the first minute - after a Slimbridge corner had been punched clear by Reading Keeper Nathan Silver, a counter attack developed. The Swans back four failed to deal with a relatively straightforward cross, and the ball ran to Jeffery on the edge of the box. He drilled the ball past Dave Evans to put the visitors in the lead.

The Swans regrouped, and began to apply pressure of their own. On six minutes, a nice break involving Saul Williams and Junior Maderner saw the latter's cross reach Stuart Gates, but he was judged to have just drifted offside and the chance was lost.

Liam Harding brought the first proper save from Silver three minutes later, when he got on the end of a Ward free kick which was headed back into the danger zone by Tom Speers, but his header lacked power and Silver gathered safely.

It seemed only a matter of time before the equaliser arrived, and Williams was next to try his luck - his shot being blocked after Silver had come and failed to collect Dominique Njoya's cross. From the resulting corner, Silver came and missed again, this time the ball falling to Speers, who saw his shot cleared off the line.

However, Slimbridge were being hampered by some sloppy passing, and despite having very few chances of their own, Reading held firm.

Reading could have taken advantage of a Speers miskick on 23 minutes, which left Sam Kailus well placed, but Njoya was alert to the threat and did some neat tidying up to nullify the opportunity.

A robust tackle saw Niall Halford and Lewis both given warnings by Referee John Graham, after a flare up in which half a dozen layers got involved, but no further action was taken.

All the action was still taking place at the Reading end of the pitch, and Njoya was unlucky to see his shot deflected over on 38 minutes following some neat passing involving Shane Anson, Maderner and Gates.

As The Swans continued to press, Maderner saw his effort again cleared off the line just before the break, but Reading went into the interval clinging to their one goal advantage.

One minute into the second period, another defensive mistake saw the home side two goals behind. Evans had gathered the ball after a back pass, and looked to spread the ball to his left where Njoya was in space. He miscued his kick and the ball went straight to Graham Lewis, who couldn't believe his luck, sliding the ball back past Evans for Reading's second.

All the pressure continued to come from the home side, with Harding's shot and then Maderner's header both going close, but it wasn't until the 56th minute when the Swans finally got on the scoresheet.

Slimbridge were awarded a free kick just outside the Reading box, and Fred Ward's shot cleared the wall and gave Silver no chance.

The goal boosted the Swans, and chances continued to present themselves - Speers was unable to connect with another Ward free kick, and Fower would have wanted to have done better when Njoya's cross found him in space, but again he just failed to connect with a good ball and the chance was lost.

With 15 minutes remaining, Slimbridge equalised in strange circumstances - Silver was penalised for picking the ball up after he had previously dropped it and dribbled to edge of his box, resulting in an indirect Free Kick to Slimbridge. The ball was touched back to Ward, who once again got his shot over the Reading wall and into the far corner to level things up.

The rest of the game became a test of whether Reading could firm against a string of Slimbridge attacks, and to their credit, they did so - Higgs had a good chance with four minutes remaining, but couldn't convert, before Ward's through ball saw Williams bring a great save from Silver. From the resulting corner, Halford's header was just wide.

Speers had an effort cleared off the line, and a shot went over off the top of the Reading crossbar, but despite the pressure, it was not to be and Reading made their way back up the M4 with a hard earned point.

Team: Evans, Anson, Njoya, Halford, Speers, Cole, Harding, Ward, Maderner (Fower 60), Gates (Higgs 62), Williams

Goals: Ward 56, 75

Supporters Man Of The Match: Freddy Ward