

Hellenic League Premier Division

Wednesday 17 October 2012

Winterbourne United 0- 3 Slimbridge

After a goalless first half in a game played in continuous rain, Slimbridge progressed to the Third Round of the GFA Challenge Cup with three second half strikes that topped off a very entertaining game at GFA HQ in Almondsbury. Two early second period goals from Chris Fower and Liam Harding put the visitors in control, and Harding's second sealed the victory late on. The Swans now entertain another Bristol side, Hallen, in the Third Round at Wisloe Road, in a tie which has been arranged for Tuesday November 27th (7.45pm).

It was a game that was full of chances for both sides, and the scoreline could have been much higher - the home side created the first opportunity with three minutes on the clock, but Tom Speers did well to shepherd the ball away from Joe Galsworthy to deny Winterbourne the first chance of the game.

The first half was very much end-to-end, and Slimbridge's first good chance was created two minutes later, when Ward's Free Kick was narrowly missed by Tywman's dive, as the ball shot across the Winterbourne goal.

Sam Vile and Galsworthy combined for the next good chance for the hosts, but Galsworthy's shot on six minutes was easily gathered by Dave Evans in the Slimbridge goal as the game flowed back and forth in a rainfall that turned torrential as the night wore on. A minute later, Shaun Bennett's header cannoned off the Winterbourne bar as he met another well placed Ward Free Kick, but the game remained goalless.

The increasingly slippery conditions made both sides have to work harder to control and pass the ball, and both teams are to be commended for the football they played as the pitch collected more water.

The best chance of the game so far came on 20 minutes - when Will De Wet found himself in space in the Swans' box, but he overran the ball in the condition as he closed in on goal when in a very dangerous position.

Marvin Roberts, who led the Swans' front line superbly all night was the next to try his luck, but his header from Ward's cross drifted just the wrong side of the Winterbourne post on 21 minutes.

A spell of good Slimbridge pressure followed, and two minutes later, Harding was unlucky when he tussled with Winterbourne Keeper Chris Simsek after Ward and Alex Higgs had combined well to deliver a dangerous cross into the Winterbourne box. The ball ran free and was cleared, and then Roberts saw another good header just slip past the post as the game approached the half hour mark.

Alex Higgs was next to try his luck, and he brought a good save from Simsek with 30 minutes gone, as the Swans sought to drive home their advantage.

Back came Winterbourne, and Galsworthy would have been disappointed to miss a decent header chance on 35 minutes, following good work from Vile down the left flank.

As the momentum swung to the home side, Tom Speers made two very important headers to repel attacks as the home began to look dangerous coming towards Half Time.

Slimbridge could still have nicked a goal before the interval though, and Roberts continued to prove hugely influential, clipping the ball over Simsek, but again seeing his effort go just wide.

Vile for the home side, and Fower for the visitors both saw efforts go close in the last few minutes of the first period, but the game remained goalless at the break.

Two minutes in the second half, the deadlock was finally broken - a long Slimbridge clearance skimmed off the head of Winterbourne's Dale Peckham towards his own goal, and Chris Fower beat his man for pace to pick up the through ball and net to give the visitors the lead.

Winterbourne nearly had an immediate response, with a point blank shot on the turn from Vile well saved by Evans for a corner which was cleared by the Swans defence.

Again, the game went end-to-end, and Bennett went close with a chip over Simsek, only to see his shot squelch just wide of the Winterbourne goal.

With 56 minutes played, Slimbridge grabbed a second goal - After Higgs and Roberts had combined to win a corner, Harding met Ward's cross with a superb header to double the advantage, and put the Swans in the driving seat.

It was to Winterbourne's credit that they continued to push forward as the conditions worsened, and James Mainstone's long range effort smacked the Slimbridge crossbar and went over on 62 minutes, before De Wet failed to meet a superb cross from Tony Perry as the ball whipped across Dave Evans' goal.

Slimbridge thought they had nailed down the win on 66 minutes, when Speers header from another pinpoint Ward corner was cleared of the line in a goalmouth scramble.

As the game entered the final period, Harding went close with a 25 yarder which was just too high, before the same player latched onto an Evans clearance to slide the ball past Simsek to seal the victory on 83 minutes.

As both sides continued to press right up to the final whistle, Gavin Lang went close for the visitors, while Aaron Wilson was unlucky not to get on the end of crosses as Winterbourne pressed forward.

It was a tribute to both sides that they produced such an entertaining encounter given the conditions, but in the end, the clinical finishing from the Visitors' proved to be the difference between the two teams.

Team: Evans, Robinson, Wellon, Sterling, Speers, Bennett, Harding, Ward, Roberts, Higgs (Lang 58), Twyman (Fower 37)

Goals: Fower 47, Harding 56, 83

Supporters Man of The Match: Liam Harding