

Slimbridge 2-2 Barnstaple Town

Wednesday 28th March 2018

Both sides had to settle for a point after an eventful evening at Thornhill Park, although both teams could make the case for why they should have nicked the three points. The result leaves both clubs where they started in the bottom three, but a point further from Bishops Cleeve at the foot of the table.

It was a frantic start to the game, and the best of the early chances went to the visitors – the lively Billy Hopcroft was at the heart of most of Barum's early attempts, and it took a good block from Korey Pring to stop a goalbound effort with six minutes gone. Hopcroft felt he should have been awarded a penalty a couple of minutes when his effort was stopped by a Swans' arm in the box, but Referee Michael Halford waved away the Barnstaple protests.

With 14 minutes gone, Slimbridge had their best chance of the game so far, when Adam Mace's effort brought a great save from Barum Keeper Aaron Screech, after good work from Edji Mbumnga and Dean Turner. As Slimbridge pressed, there was a second call for a penalty to be awarded when Screech clattered Mbumnga as he was through on goal, but again, the Referee allowed play to continue.

As the game flowed from end to end, George Nancekvell was just off target for Barum, while Marley Thomas missed a great opportunity on 25 minutes after some neat play from Henry Birkett. At the other end, Hopcroft then brought a superb save from Ollie Hall in the Swans' goal, and Robin Knight headed the rebound over the bar.

The home side took the lead on the half hour – a Luke Payne effort was saved by Screech, and the rebound was headed in by Mbumnga to put the Swans ahead.

Barnstaple reacted well to going behind, and had a sustained spell of pressure up until the break, but with Steve Jackson and Korey Pring combining well, the Swans held out to take a lead into the half.

The second period started very much as the first had ended, with the visitors in the ascendance. After a series of corners early on, Mace made a superb goalline header to deny the visitors and equaliser, as Barum pressed to level things up. Hopcroft had a glorious opportunity on 58 minutes when through on goal, but his effort beat Ollie Hall, and drifted just the wrong side of the post.

On the hour, there was another big talking point. Mbumnga was played through and felled by Screech as he went to take the ball round him. There was a lengthy delay while Screech received a red card from the referee, with Centre Half Tony Radford taking over the Keeper's jersey. As Adam Mace waited to take the kick, there was then a further delay as the Referee was called to the halfway line by one of his assistants, and the pair then proceeded to have a loud and very public disagreement about the red card decision, in front of the bemused fans in the main stand. When Mace eventually did get to take the kick, Radford guessed the right way, and palmed the ball to safety.

With 11 minutes remaining, Barum were back on terms, when Hopcroft was allowed too much space in the Slimbridge box, and levelled things up.

Five minutes later, the Swans were back in front – the ball was cleared to Korey Pring on the edge of the Barum area, and his effort took a slight deflection to end up in the top corner.

After Mbunga was just off target as the clock hit 90 minutes, in the fourth minute of stoppage time, with Radford playing upfield as an outfield player again, Nathan Cooper turned and drilled the ball home from six yards out to snatch a point for the visitors.

The Swans host Larkhall Athletic on Saturday (3.00pm) before making the short trip to Cinderford Town on Easter Monday (3.00pm)

Team: Hall, Payne, Mace, pring, Jackson, D Turner, Twyman, Birkett (M Turner 75), Mbunga, Wilton (Mann 66), Thomas (Martin 85)

Supporters Man of the Match: Edji Mbunga