

Slimbridge 1-3 Cirencester Town

Wednesday 16th August 2017

The Swans were very unlucky not to take something from this game after a very impressive performance at Thornhill Park. After falling behind to an Alan Griffith penalty, Slimbridge struck back with a Joe Stokes strike, before Adam Connolly restored the visitor's advantage before the break. With the Swans bossing the second half, a 90th minute breakaway goal from Ben Whitehead meant the scoreline did not really reflect the balance of play, but Swans Manager Freddy Ward saw many encouraging signs from his young side as they worked their way into the new season.

The first half was two teams going toe-to-toe, and was very entertaining to watch as the game swung from end to end - Jordan Stoddart was off target for the Centurians with an early effort, while Stokes just failed to reach Marley Thomas' cross a minute later.

Stokes was again unlucky in the sixth minute, charging down a clearance from Ciren Keeper Matt Wieczorek, but he recovered to gather the ball safely. With 12 minutes gone, Sam Turl had a dangerous effort blocked, before Alan Griffiths took a tumble in the Swans box as he chased a cross from Jake Watts.

Referee Scott Tallis awarded a spot kick for the visitors, and Griffin stepped up to convert the kick to put the Centurians ahead. Three minutes later, Slimbridge were level - Alex Hoyle played a superb crossfield ball to Marley Thomas, and his cross was swept home by Stokes to level things up.

After Thomas had again gone close, Ciren had their best chance of the half, but Henry Spalding's header was cleared away by Swans Keeper Ollie Hall for a corner with a good stop. From the resulting kick, Stoddart header over.

Thomas and Stokes were continuing to cause havoc in the Ciren back line, and Thomas' effort which was deflected for a corner was a whisper away from an own goal, while Wieczorek and the post somehow combined to keep out a point blank Stokes header as Slimbridge pressed for another goal.

But the Swans were punished for not taking their chances on the half hour, when Mace's clearance fell to Adam Connolly on the edge of the box, and he hit a superb strike past Hall to restore the visitors' advantage, which they held to the break.

The second period started with a bang for Slimbridge, with Sam Turl being denied by the post, as the home side continued to apply pressure.

Luke Payne was next to try his luck with a run and shot that was eventually deflected wide, and Thomas, Stokes and Twyman were all unlucky with chances, with Max Harper-Emerson particularly influential in much of their play.

At the other end, chances for Ciren were few, but Ben Whitehead's effort on the hour saw a great block from Corey Pring, as the Swans held firm.

Slimbridge Skipper Alex Hoyle had a header cleared off the line, before Nathan Payne was off target as Slimbridge continued to press.

It was cruel on the hosts when a last minute break from Ciren saw Whitehead notch the third for the visitors, but as Manager Freddy Ward noted afterwards 'It was a good lesson for a young side about the need to take your chances when they arrive'

Slimbridge return to Thornhill Park on Saturday, when they host Cinderford Town in the FA Cup Preliminary Round (3.00pm)

Team: Hall, Turl, Mace, pring, Hoyle, Luke Payne, Twyman, Turner (Nathan Payne 60), Stokes (Wilton 68), Harper-Emerson, Thomas (Thwaite 87)

Supporters Man of the Match: Max Harper-Emerson