

Larkhall Athletic 2-2 Slimbridge AFC

Saturday 9th September 2017

Swans Manager Freddy Ward professed himself 'delighted' as his young side fought back from being two goals down within the first nine minutes, to picking up a point at Plain Ham with a much improved second half display. The comeback was even more notable as Slimbridge were forced into a reorganisation with twenty minutes remaining, losing Skipper Alex Hoyle to a suspected broken ankle.

'I told them a few home truths at Half Time,' Ward reflected after the game, 'and I was delighted the way they responded, and we could even have nicked it right at the end.'

It was a definite game of two halves - Larkhall bossed the first period as the Swans didn't settle into any rhythm and struggled to cope with the host's long ball attacks, and after six minutes, with their first real attack, Larkhall took the lead. A long ball forward found Matt Groves, who fed George King, and King gave Slimbridge Keeper Marcus Beauchamp no chance to open the scoring.

Three minutes later, it was two - Joe Tumelty went on a mazy run, and was allowed to create far too much space for himself, before drilling the ball home to double the advantage.

It was not until the 15th minute that Slimbridge managed to have an attempt at the other end - Joe Stokes' attempted lob beat Larks Keeper Shaun Semmens, but was just too high.

Larkhall were continuing to create good chances, and it took a smart Beauchamp save at the feet of Alex Lambert to prevent another goal, before King's header was just off target after good work from Geraint Bater.

On 26 minutes, Henry Birkett attempted to emulate his long range scoring effort against Shortwood on Tuesday night, but was just off target, and Larkhall went straight down the other end, and Mason Winter's effort drifted just the wrong side of the post.

Slimbridge's best opportunity of the half came on the half hour, when Marley Thomas saw his effort blocked, and then Birkett's effort from the rebound was saved by Semmens.

Larkhall had two good chances to increase their lead before the break, but Beauchamp was again alert to deny Tumelty, before Bater saw his effort rebound off the Slimbridge post and back into play, leaving the hosts two goals to the good at the half.

Slimbridge came out for the second half with a purpose, and immediately began to control the game far better than in the first period.

Five minutes in, Thomas brought a good save from Semmens, but a minute later, a Jack Twyman through ball was seized on by Thomas, who beat Semmens one on one to get the visitors back into the game.

After Twyman had forced Semmens into another good save, Thomas struck again in the 59th minute, latching onto Birkett's pass and beating Semmens for the second time one on one.

The momentum had definitely swung to the visitors, and Sean Lawson was just wide with an effort three minutes after the equaliser.

On 70 minutes, a late tackle from Jay Adams left Swans Captain Alex Hoyle in obvious discomfort, and ended with Hoyle being stretchered off the pitch after a ten minute delay with what appears at this point to be a broken ankle.

Slimbridge reacted well to the lengthy stoppage, although Larkhall were trying their luck with some robust challenges, including one that left Sam Turl on the deck just a couple of minutes after play restarted. But, to his credit, Referee Declan O'Shea handled the situation well, and defused the obvious high tensions that followed Hoyle's injury.

In the second of ten stoppage time minutes, Matt Britton shaved the Swans' bar with a good effort, and there was plenty of time for Thomas to try and complete his Hat Trick, but his 95th minute effort was off target, and the sides shared the points.

Slimbridge now return to Thornhill Park to host North Leigh next Saturday (3.00pm)

Team: Beauchamp, Turl, Mace, Pring (Ward 70), Hoyle (Squires 70), Birkett, Twyman, Stokes, Lawson, Harper-Emerson (Nathan Payne 55), Thomas

Supporters Man of the Match: Marley Thomas