

Match Reports

Lymington Town 2-3 Slimbridge **Pitching In Southern League Div. One South** Saturday 19th February 2022

Ethan and Raiyan make it three wins on the bounce

The Swans picked up their third win on the bounce with a hard fought battle at The Sports Ground in Hampshire. After a disappointing first half performance on a dreadful pitch, the Swans went in at the break 2-1 behind, but a second half revival topped by goals from Ethan Dunbar and a 94th minute winner from Raiyan Ahmed turned things around and saw the visitors head back to Gloucestershire with three priceless points.

Manager Tom Speers was forced to shuffle his pack with the loss of both Myron Turner and Marley Thomas to injury following the win against Cirencester Town, to add to the continued absence of Will Hawes. Ethan Dunbar came into the starting eleven, with new signing Aleks Novakovic appearing on the bench following his signing from Wantage Town in the week.

There were huge puddles of water on the pitch when the team arrived at The Sports Ground, but Referee Antony Smith gave the hosts every opportunity to get the game on, and after some pitch forking from the home side's ground staff, he deemed the pitch suitable for the game to start.

Unsurprisingly, given the conditions, the game was not a pretty affair, as both sides struggled to adapt to the surface. Ethan Dunbar looked very sharp early on for the visitors, forcing a scrambled clearance from the hosts with five minutes on the clock, while on 15 minutes, Lymington's first real chance saw Harrison Cable fire off target.

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Lymington took the lead on 25 minutes, when Lewis Adams in the Slimbridge goal was caught trying to play the ball out of the box with his feet. Cable hunted him down and dispossessed him, before sliding the ball into the empty net to put the hosts ahead.

A minute later though, the sides were level - After Dunbar was unceremoniously pulled over breaking down the Slimbridge right, Jordan Yeo's Free Kick into the Lymington box was turned into his own net by Callum Davis to level the scores up.

As the game approached the half hour mark, it was still an incredibly scrappy affair, with Dunbar's set up for Don Ogbeifun which ended just wide being the best effort from either side.

With ten minutes to go before the break, Lymington took the lead again, after Toby Lawrence's clearance header ended up at the feet of Freddie Bullard, and he drilled the ball past Adams to restore Lymington's lead.

The sides exchanged chances before the break - Cable was wide for the home side, while Nathan Dennis' header was just off target for the Swans.

The second half was a very different affair, with Slimbridge very much on top. Edji Mbunga saw his effort blocked before Dennis saw another good header cleared off the Lymington line, as the visitors began to control the game. All across the pitch, individual battles were being won, and the complexion of the game looked very different.

Dennis had another header just off target, Mbunga had an effort saved by Lymington Keeper Nick Jones, and Ben McLean was just off target as the Swans pressed for an equaliser.

Jamie Martin came on for Ogbeifun on 71 minutes, and immediately set up Dunbar, whose effort forced another save from Jones.

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Finally, on 75 minutes, Slimbridge's pressure was rewarded, when Dennis' through ball saw Dunbar one on one with Jones, and the youngster held his nerve to bury the chance and level things up.

It was all Slimbridge now - McLean saw a good effort deflected for a corner, Mbunga had another effort saved, although Lymington went close when Jason Brookes saw his effort hit the wrong side of the Slimbridge post and go for a goal kick with two minutes of the ninety still to play.

The Swans made their last roll of the dice in the final minute minute, with McLean being replaced by Raiyan Ahmed, and in a glorious finale, Ahmed saw the ball rebound to him after a blocked shot in the fourth minute of stoppage time, and he drilled the ball past Jones to nick the points for the visitors.

The victory lifts Slimbridge up to 13th in the league, and effectively secures their place in the Southern League Division One South for another season with nine games left to play. Manager Tom Speers was understandably delighted - 'It was a great second half effort from the lads, after a poor first period. But I was so proud of the boys, they dug deep, and thoroughly deserved the points in the end. It was especially pleasing to see two goals scored by lads who joined the club at Under 18 level, and have worked their way into the first team'

Slimbridge have a midweek GFA Senior Cup Semi-Final on Wednesday when they host Cirencester Town at Thornhill Park (7.45pm), before hosting Paulton Rovers in a League encounter on Saturday (26th, 3.00pm)

Team: Adams, Spark, Hands, Ford, Dennis, Lawrence, Yeo (Novakovic 90), Ogbeifun (Martin 71), Mbunga, McLean (Ahmed 89), Dunbar

Goals: Davis (OG) 27, Dunbar 75, Ahmed 90+4

Supporters Man Of The Match: Ethan Dunbar