

MOLTEN SPORTS
SPARTAN SOUTH MIDLANDS FOOTBALL LEAGUE

NEWSLETTER No. 28
By Bill Scholes

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Normal service again resumed with four hat tricks this week. Once again Lawrence Bunker was in the news as he scored four – for the third game in a row - against Wodson Park. Allan Arthur hit three for Kings Langley, Gavin Hansell notched three for Buckingham Athletic, and Lee White scored three times for Padbury United.

PREMIER DIVISION

It's all beginning to look like an interesting end to the season, as leaders **Harefield United** lost again, this time to **Leverstock Green**, who bounced back from their midweek defeat against Tring Athletic, travelling to the league leaders and coming away with an excellent 2-1 win. Green soaked up a lot of pressure from the Hares, but two goals, from Dale Sears and Steve Hawes, in six second-half minutes put them in control. Jamie Houliston replied for the Hares in the 90th minute, but by then it was too late. The win moves Leverstock back up to sixth place, with games in hand on most of the sides above them. Second place **Broxbourne Borough** could only manage a point as they were held to a goalless draw away at basement side **Holmer Green**, who are now 5 points adrift of **Cockfosters** who now have Brimsdown Rovers in their sights, following their 2-0 win at home to **Hanwell Town**. Both Cockfosters goals came in the first half, firstly from Aaron Ewing, followed by Danny Curbelo. **Chalfont St. Peter's** excellent run of form continues, hopefully boding well for the FA Vase game this Saturday, as they beat **Biggleswade United** 2-0, thanks to goals from Lee Togwell and Mickey Swaysland, and they move into the top three for the first time this season. They still have 5 games in hand on the leaders, but of course they still need to be converted into points if they are to mount a serious challenge for the title. Also with 5 games in hand are **Biggleswade Town**, and they also warmed up for their Vase game with a 1-0 home win over **Welwyn Garden City** – the only goal coming just three minutes into the game, from Ryan Redford. There was a slight hold-up at the end of the first half, as a tackle on Redford resulted not only in a yellow card for the offender, but also a dismissal from each of the benches. The down side for the Waders was the loss of defender Mark Webster with an ankle injury, which looks certain to keep him out of the Vase game on Saturday. **Kingsbury London Tigers** and **Oxhey Jets** battled out a 2-2 draw, with the Tigers twice having to come from behind to gain their point. Paul Turner got the Jets off the ground in the 23rd minute, but an OG brought the Tigers level 6 minutes later. Turner's second, ten minutes after the break, again gave the Jets the lead, but it was short-lived as Marco Tagbajumi levelled it up five minutes later. **Tring Athletic's** down and up season continues as they won their second difficult away game in 4 days, beating **Langford** 3-2. It was all square at one apiece at the break, Ben L'Honre's opener for Langford being nullified by Chris Salmon, but L'Honre put the hosts back in front virtually on the hour mark. Up popped hero Andy Mullins with a two goal burst inside seven minutes, one a penalty, to secure all three points for Athletic. **Aylesbury Vale's** hopes of a realistic title challenge have fallen away recently, but they had an emphatic 4-0 win at home to struggling **Brimmsdown Rovers**. John Bentley scored an early brace, and Aaron Usmani followed it up with a brace of his own. John Barker's goal just before half time gave **St. Margaretsbury** all three points in their away game at **Haringey Borough**, which was actually played at Broxbourne Borough. **Kentish Town's** home game with **Hertford Town** was postponed, leaving them a massive 9 games adrift of the leaders.

DIVISION ONE

Royston Town's lead at the top of the table has been cut to five points (although they do have 4 games in hand) as **Kings Langley** enjoyed a major run-fest at struggling **Brache Sparta**, running out 10-0 winners. Allan Arthur hit a hat trick, Jack Jackson came up with a brace, Richard Harvey, Craig Preston and Lee Bircham (pen) were on the score sheet, and Brache also contributed two OG's of their own. **Bedford Town Reserves** moved up into third place with a 2-1 win over promotion hopefuls **London Colney**, with a goal in each half from Stacey Field and Ashley Deverell. Ian Cooper had earlier given Colney a 27th minute lead. In third place on Saturday morning, **New Bradwell St. Peter** slipped back a place as they lost 2-1 at home to in-form **Amersham Town** (seven wins from their last 9 games). Martin Wells gave Peters a first half lead, but Amersham bounced back in the second half to take all three points with a brace from Denilson Vincente. **Hoddesdon Town** kept themselves on the fringe of the promotion battle with a 3-0 win away at **Crawley Green**, thanks to a first half brace from Omer Omer, and a third from Nick Newbury just after the break. **Stony Stratford Town** were in the goals as they thumped **Bedford** 5-1 with a pair from Lewis McBride and singles from Shaun Carr, Stuart Young, and Dan Walker. Travis Joseph replied for Bedford. **Tokington Manor** and **Harpenden Town** shared six goals between them, in front of a crowd of three. Although going behind to a Gino Sufi goal, Harpenden fought back with goals from James Warner, Chris Gregory and Jack Cartwright to take a 3-1 lead at half time. Back came the Manor in the second half and goals from Dan Owen (pen) and Andy Watson levelled the game at 3-3. **Buckingham Athletic** picked up their 4th point from the last two games as they came away from **Sport London e Benfica** with a 3-2 victory. A hat trick from Gavin Hansell gave Athletic a comfortable lead, but SLB fought back well with goals from Saulo Nascimento and Albert De Matos. Benfica's last victory came back in only three points clear of second from bottom Buckingham. **Arlesey Athletic**, who are fourth from bottom, have opened up a 7 point gap over Benfica following their 3-0 win away at **Amphill Town** –goals from Dave Kiddie (2), and Terry Lock, but all three sides below them have games in hand.

DIVISION TWO

Hadley moved up into second place following their 3-0 win away at **Risborough Rangers**. A brace from Danny Gruar and one from Ian Kirkwood did the damage. **AFC Dunstable** could only garner a point from their very local derby game with **Totternhoe**, the game ending in a 1-1 draw, and as a consequence they drop back to third. Ross Scott gave Totternhoe the lead, but Michael Laws equalised for Dunstable. **Wodson Park** remain in fourth spot, despite losing 5-3 away in the "home" game with **Pitstone & Ivinghoe** who move up to 6th. This was one of those occasions where a lovely bright sunny afternoon was spoiled by a game of football! Wodson Park were well and truly "bunkered" as the League's leading goalscorer established a new club record by scoring 4 goals for the third game in succession. Pitstone were well marshalled at the back by Danny Ripley and Simon Jackson, but two late goals in the last minute from Wodson gave a degree of respectability to the scoreline, which in truth it didn't really deserve. Neither side was at their best (I hope!) with both sides continually questioning the official's decisions –Pitstone's Kevin Temple being particularly culpable. The Respect campaign has clearly not yet reached this part of Buckinghamshire. **Tring Corinthians** beat **Caddington** 3-0 away, with goals from Lee Herring (2) and a Phil Hawkins penalty, and just edge out Pitstone on goal difference. The third club on 33 points are **Bucks Student Union**, who staged a spirited comeback from two goals down to beat **Kent Athletic** 3-2. Kayamba Prosper and an Alex Forward OG put the Luton side two up, but the Students fought back in the last 30 minutes with goals from Coby Johnson, Harry Baxter and Daddy Moses. **Aston Clinton** and **Mursley United** drew 1-1 at Green Lane, Ed Mills putting Mursley in front after just 3 minutes, but Peter Thorne salvaged appoint with his 62nd minute equaliser.

ANAGRAM TROPHY – QUARTER FINALS

Padbury United hosted **White Ensign** in this quarter final and it proved an interesting and exciting match. In the end, a hat trick from Lee White secured the tie but it was a rollercoaster ride for Padbury. The opening 20 minutes saw an equal balance of play from both sides but in the 25 minute, following a 50/50 challenge, Padbury had a player sent off for the tackle which seemed a little harsh given the nature of the challenge from both players. White Ensign then took the advantage and they scored on 37 minutes when a failure to clear the ball by the home defence allowed Ensign to score. The lead only lasted a minute as Padbury's Andre Brown raced through to equalise on 38 minutes. Thus the game was finely balanced at half time at 1-1. The second half saw Padbury take the game to Ensign and although the visitors missed a great chance it was Padbury that took the lead. The goal of the game was scored by Lee White who volleyed in a right wing cross on 72 minutes. The ten men were more than holding their own but with the clock ticking down Ensign scored on 87 minutes with a lob over the advancing home keeper to tie the match. The final few minutes were frantic and following a goalmouth melee, Padbury were reduced to 9 men after a punch was seen to be thrown. The referee blew the whistle almost directly afterwards and the match went to extra time at the 2-2 scoreline. Directly from the kick off in the first period of extra time, Ensign scored on 92 minutes as Padbury were slow to react. The tie looked all over for the home team now as they trailed 2-3 and had just 9 men. But, as often happens, the team with the least players began to dominate and equalised on 113 minutes with a penalty kick from White following a foul by the Ensign keeper. Padbury went on to win the match when White waltzed through the Ensign defence to score his third and Padbury's fourth goal on 119 minutes. The remaining hectic ten minutes saw Ensign attack but they could not break through the Padbury rearguard and it was the home team that progressed into the semi final. It was excellent value for money for the 40 or so spectators on a bright sunny day in the Buckinghamshire countryside. **Winslow United's** game away to **Epping** was postponed.

HERTS SENIOR TROPHY – SEMI FINAL

The thrice postponed semi final between **Park Street Village** and **Hatfield Town** finally took place in blustery St. Albans, and Hatfield booked their place in the Final with a hard fought 2-1 win aet. Trevor Golder headed Hatfield into the lead early on, but Andy Ruck equalised for PSV just after the break. Jason Caldwell scored early on into extra time and Hatfield held on to set up their meeting with holders Hoddesdon Town in the Final.

BEDS SENIOR TROPHY – SEMI FINALS

There was mixed success for the two SSMFL sides. **The 61 FC** moved easily into the Final with a clinical 6-1 demolition of **Oakley Sports**, helped by a brace each from Ryan Smith and Aaron Lewis and singles from Haydn Wills and Ricky Clark, but **Cranfield United** suffered a disappointing 5-0 reverse at home to **AFC Kempston Rovers**.

MOLTEN SPORTS TEAMS OF THE MONTH – JANUARY

Congratulations to the three winners of the Divisional Team of the Month Awards, who will all win a brand new Molten Match Ball plus an engraved plaque for the clubhouse:

Premier Division: **Leverstock Green**
Division One: **Cranfield Utd**
Division Two: **Mursley Utd**

TUESDAY 24th FEBRUARY - LEAGUE CHALLENGE TROPHY SEMI FINALS

Despite starting slowly, **Chalfont St. Peter** eventually overcame **Cockfosters** 5-2 to win through to the final and earn the right to defend their title against Tring Athletic, but the night ended

worryingly, as Mickey Swaysland was taken to hospital with concussion following a clash of heads two minutes from time which saw him leave the pitch heavily bandaged. It is hoped that he will recover in time for the crunch Vase quarter final at Needham Market on Saturday. After Gareth Paxton was denied by Daley, Cockfosters took the lead after fourteen minutes through Matt Kearney, who slotted into an empty net. And ten minutes later Danny Curbelo added a second from a cross. This appeared to wake Chalfont up, and they dominated the rest of the half. Luke Brook-Smith had a shot deflected out for a corner, and then Swaysland saw his header from a corner cleared off the line. Finally Charlie Strutton reduced the arrears after connecting with a through ball, and they were level by half time when Mickey Swaysland headed in a cross from Terrell Lewis. The visitors took the lead seven minutes into the second period when a long throw from Ben Stack was flicked in by Paxton. Another throw saw Lewis take advantage when a defender misjudged the bounce, and substitute Rimmell Clarke rounded things off seven minutes from time with a solo effort from the touchline. An enthralling end to the second semi-final saw **Biggleswade Town** go down 4-3 to **Tring Athletic** on a last kick of the game penalty at the end of a most exciting match. Jack Weeden opened the scoring for the Waders on 37 minutes but Tring drew level through David Whicker just 3 minutes into the second half. A deflected free kick from Trevor Gibbs took the visitors into the lead on the hour mark but with the match really coming alive now, Scott Field made up for an earlier error by knocking home the equaliser 15 minutes from time. Just 60 seconds later though Tring were back in front through substitute Vinnie Iannone. Right on full time Nick McFarlane brought the Waders back on level terms at 3 a piece and extra time looked inevitable. With 4 minutes of added time played Tring thought they had secured their cup final place when they scrambled the ball over the line only to see the linesman flagging for an infringement. But a minute later and with the referee's whistle about to blow for full time, Waders 16 year old keeper George Anderson felled a Tring player in the box and the subsequent spot kick was scored with confidence by Whicker to the accompanying sound of that final whistle.

F.A. Carlsberg VASE -6th ROUND

The very best of luck to both Biggleswade Town and Chalfont St. Peter as they attempt to win through to the Semi Finals of the FA vase this Saturday. The Waders face the long trip up north to face Whitley Bay, semi finalists last season, whilst the Saints have to travel to deepest Suffolk to face Needham Market, who also reached the semi's last season. Both clubs are running coaches for supporters – further details can be obtained by ringing the following numbers:

Biggleswade Town: 01767 317140
Chalfont St. Peter: 01753 885797

GROUND GRADING INSPECTIONS

Yes, we are rapidly approaching crunch time as the FA deadline of 31st March looms ever closer. The League's Ground Grading Inspectors will be out and about in the next couple of weeks, viewing all Premier Division clubs (except those who already have a grading) plus those Division One clubs who have requested inspections with a view to possible promotion. Remember, lashings of hot coffee, croissants and bacon sarnies often work wonders!

SUMMER'S NEARLY HERE

The sky was blue and I could almost see those green shoots on Saturday, particularly when Postman Pat arrived bearing my 2009 Sussex CC membership card, and a flyer for the new 2009 edition of Wisden, the Playfair Cricket Annual and the Cricketers Who's Who.

All items of news, interest, tittle-tattle, etc. re your club, are very welcome.

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