

MOLTEN SPORTS SPARTAN SOUTH MIDLANDS FOOTBALL LEAGUE

NEWSLETTER No. 29 By Bill Scholes

Saturday 28th February

Just the two hat tricks this week- Jamie O'Donoghue for Brimsdown Rovers, and Denilson Vincente for Amersham Town

F.A. Carlsberg VASE – QUARTER FINALS

Needham Market 1 Chalfont St. Peter 1 (aet)

Chalfont's visit to mid Suffolk ended in stalemate, resulting in a replay at Mill Meadow this Saturday for the right to play Glossop North End in a two legged semi final. The first half was quite a struggle, with the visitors generally looking the better side but finding it difficult to play their normal passing game on a less than impressive pitch. The first chance of the game fell to Needham when Bexfield's shot went narrowly past. Chalfont's first chance came midway through the half, when Charlie Strutton blocked keeper Jones clearance but delayed his shot allowing a defender to clear. John Carroll headed a free kick just past the post, but generally defences were on top. The ball spent huge amounts of time in the air, with Needham content to play the up and under game – meat and drink to Carroll and Paxton. The rest of the half saw mainly long range efforts from both sides, none of which troubled the goalkeepers. The home side stepped up the pressure in the second period, creating a few early corners and generally looked the more likely to score. Butler had a volley brilliantly stopped by the diving Mark Oliver. Strutton charged down a clearance, and saw his shot tipped around the post by Jones. Oliver again did well to block Evans when clean through. Mickey Swaysland was leading the line well, but the anticipated threat from both Terrell Lewis and Charlie Strutton never really materialised and the industrious Lee Togwell put an effort wide when well placed just before the end. Typically, after 90 scoreless minutes, the deadlock was broken three minutes into extra time when a far post ball from Ben Stack was volleyed in by Terrell Lewis. Unfortunately the Saints lead only lasted for four minutes, as Tommy Smith took advantage of some defensive hesitancy to plant the ball just beyond the diving Oliver's despairing grasp. Connor almost put Chalfont back in front just before the interval when his shot was pushed around the post by Jones, and skipper Carroll nearly won it right at the end as he just failed to make good contact on a cross. By general consensus, this was not one of Chalfont's better performances of the season, and they will be pleased to get a second bite of the cherry back at Mill Meadow this Saturday.

Whitley Bay 5 Biggleswade Town 2

An enjoyable day out at the seaside in the North East was the appetising prospect for the players, supporters and officials of Biggleswade Town as they travelled to Whitley Bay. A kick-off delayed by ten minutes allowing a late rush of spectators at the turnstiles added to the tension, with a large, noisy, good natured and expectant crowd packed inside the ground. The home team started well with two corners in the first few minutes and gradually increased the pressure. Playing controlled football with pace down the wings and a dominant midfield, the visitors were pressed back and never allowed to get into a

rhythm. It was not until the 18th minute that the Waders had their first shot at goal that went well over the bar. It was not surprising when the home side took the lead in the 19th minute following a goalmouth scramble, after a great point blank save by the Waders keeper. The pressure continued with more excellent saves by the Wader's goalkeeper. They could not get into their stride and were reduced to long hopeful balls out of defence. The second goal duly arrived in the 38th minute, the home forward scoring from just inside the area. A header from close range made it 3-0 in the 44th minute and a needless handball following a corner in added time at the end of the first half made it 4-0. The Waders were looking down the barrel at a really embarrassing result. Although they had turned up to play, their football had not. Many players were well below par and only the keeper did himself justice. Despite two substitutions at half-time, the pressure continued with two more great saves by the Wader's keeper in the first few minutes of the second half. The home side continued to dominate with the Waders unable to mount any sort of challenge. However in a rare attack, Ryan Redford shot home from the edge of the area in the 51st minute to make it 4-1 and give them some hope. Alas, almost immediately Whitley Bay scored on a quick break to make it 5-1. For the rest of the match, the home side were content to keep their lead but were still creating chances. Two minutes from the end, Mark Webster, a late substitute scored a second consolation goal with a great shot from the edge of the penalty area making the final score 5-2. So, the match ended in bitter disappointment, particularly galling because the Waders had not played anywhere near to their potential. A day full of hope and expectation ended with a disappointing and long journey for the supporters back down the A1.

There were also big wins in the other two Quarter Final matches – Lowestoft Town made home advantage count with a 4-0 win over Bideford, whilst Glossop North End, also at home, beat Marske Utd 5-2.

SEMI FINAL DRAW – TWO LEGS –HOME and AWAY

The two seaside towns – Lowestoft and Whitley Bay have been drawn against each other in a repeat of one of last years Semi Finals, whilst the inland clubs will face each other. Chalfont St. Peter, should they win their replay on Saturday, will face a long charabanc trip to the Derbyshire Peak district to play Glossop North End in the away leg on 4th April. The home leg will be played the week before, on 28th March.

PREMIER DIVISION

Leaders **Harefield Utd** rediscovered their shooting boots with a 5-0 win away to **Haringey Boro** – goals coming at regular intervals from Murray Williamson, Jamie Houlston, Tom Kirk, Denzil Morris, and And Alex Brown. Their lead at the top goes out to 10 points, and although there are clubs with games in hand, the Hares are looking the bookies favourites. Second placed **Broxbourne Boro** dropped a couple of points in their 1-1 draw at home to **Biggleswade Utd**, in fact they nearly lost all three and were indebted to a late, late equaliser from Robert Kemble. **Kingsbury London Tigers** had to settle for a 2-2 draw away against **Welwyn Garden City**. The visitors took the lead in the 19th minute when Issac Mofi beat Welwyn keeper Rob Blackburne, but the Citizens were back in the game after 39 minutes when Adam Wallace squared for Fabio Valenti to lash home, and they went into the lead after Adam Wallace latched onto a Vince Rispoli pass to slot home. City seemed set for all three points, but with 10 minutes left Edson Cata brought the scores back level. **Langford's** disastrous week on the road continued as they suffered a

second successive heavy defeat, the 6-0 walloping at Brimsdown Rovers being followed by a 5-1 loss away to **Hanwell Town**, who move back up to 5th as a result. At the other end of the scale, **Brimsdown**'s fortunes continued to rise as they beat **Kentish Town** 4-0, including a hat trick from Jamie O'Donoghue, and they are beginning to remove themselves from the basement zone. **Tring Athletic** didn't appear to suffer too much of a hang over from reaching the Challenge Trophy Final, as they despatched **Colney Heath** 2-1 at home. **Leverstock Green** lost for only the second time in 8 games as they went down 1-0 at home to **Aylesbury Vale** – Aaron Usmani scoring the winner in the second half. **Holmer Green** took their dinghies to **Hertford Town** expecting the worst, but it was really a lifeboat they needed as they lost 3-0 to a brace from Alex Scriven and one from Chris Spiteri. The gap to second from bottom **Cockfosters** remains at 5 points as the Reds went down 2-0 away at **St. Margaretsbury**. Haringey Boro remain in the danger zone, as do Kentish Town, but they do have a few games in hand.

DIVISION ONE

In front of their biggest crowd of the season, 139, league leaders **Royston Town** recorded their third win of the season over promotion rivals **Hatfield Town** – this time the margin being 2-0. Royston were on top for the majority of the first half with Ricky Young working hard down the right flank playing neat and tidy football. Craig Hammond had the best chance of the first half when he rose above defender and keeper to head the ball on to the bar and out. In the second half the Crows had the majority of possession for long periods of time and really pressing the Hatfield defence into making a mistake. It was from a Young cross that a Hatfield defender could only slice high and straight up into the air on the 6 yard line. With the keeper not claiming the ball Hammond eventually headed home to give Royston the lead. Hammond scored his 40th goal of the season in all competitions when he ran through and chipped the ball over the advancing keeper with a real classy finish. For the remainder of the game Royston kept pushing for a third but Hammond, Young and Ryan Lockett all squandered chances. **Kings Langley** remain in second place, only two points adrift, but they have played 4 games more. They kept up the pressure with a 3-0 win at home to troubled **Sport London e Benfica**, who drop into the bottom two for the first time this season. Benfica replace **Buckingham Athletic** who move out of the bottom two as their recent resurgence continues – 2 wins and 2 draws from the last 4 games. Although going behind to an early Eamon Sweeny goal for **Crawley Green**, Athletic fought back well to take the spoils with goals from Ollie Prentice, Andy Hammond, and Lee Watts. **Amersham Town** recovered from their surprise 3-2 defeat in mid week at Brache Sparta and bounced back with an emphatic 6-0 drubbing of **Winslow Utd**. Denilson Vincente scored a hat trick, Liam Farrell got two and Jude Eboji weighed in with a single. **Stony Stratford** was also in the goals, winning 4-0 away at **Arlesey Athletic**, whilst **Bedford** beat **Amptill Town** 3-0 at home. An Andy Watson goal just before half time was enough for **Tokington Manor**, fresh from their midweek win over Royston Town, to defeat **Hoddesdon Town** 1-0. The other three games all finished with honours even – **Cranfield Utd** and **Bedford Town Reserves** ended 1-1, as did the game between **Harpenden Town** and **New Bradwell St. Peter**, whilst both goal keepers remained unbeaten in the game between **Sun Postal Sports** and **London Colney**.

DIVISION TWO

Hadley are the new leaders after they recorded a 1-0 home win over **Kent Athletic**, but they were made to wait until the third minute of added on time before Bashir Elsawahli hit the vital goal. They are however only ahead on goal difference from **The 61 FC** and have played a game more than the Luton side who were held to a 3-3 at home to **Risboro Rangers**. There were two penalties in the game - one apiece- but all the excitement came in the last two minutes as John Ross scored what he thought was the winner for The 61 with two minutes left, only for Risboro to equalise a minute later with a penalty from Martin Griggs. Three points back are **AFC Dunstable** who lost 2-1 away at **Pitstone & Ivinghoe** – Lawrence Bunker scoring the winner with three minutes left. **Wodson Park** won 1-0 at home to **Aston Clinton**, thanks to Sam Leader, and remain in fourth spot. **Bucks Student Union** have moved into 5th place, their highest place yet, and head the chasing pack as they had a comfortable 4-0 home win over **Markyate** – Harry Baxter, Gerald Kelly, Daddy Moses and Chris Cox being the scorers. Tring Corinthians, with games in hand remain a threat to the chasing bunch, as they beat Old Bradwell Utd 3-0 at home. Both of the bottom two clubs lost – **Totternhoe** losing 3-0 away at **Padbury Utd** and **Bletchley Town** going down 2-0 away at **Mursley Utd**.

AGE CONCERN – IS THIS A RECORD?

Mr Bill Hamilton, the well known referee, with a distinctive regional accent, was in the middle of the derby game between Bedford and Ampthill last Saturday. His two assistants (care helpers) were Terry Jeyes and Martyn Meadows. The combined age of the three officials was – whisper it softly – 184 years!!! There is no truth in the rumour that the 4 corner flags had been replaced by oxygen tanks.

DO YOU HAVE A DRINK PROBLEM?

As the warmer weather (hopefully) approaches, there is a massive temptation for spectators to enjoy a tippie out in the fresh air as they support their favourite teams. However clubs are reminded that alcoholic drinks are not allowed outside of the clubhouse – this is not the league being spoilsports, but it is an F.A ruling, and if ignored could well result in a club being shut down. Please note that this rule applies to all forms of containers – obviously glasses but also plastic containers and also cans. The League Management committee have been perturbed by a number of occasions whereby alcohol has been spotted around ground perimeters and would ask clubs to take every precaution to ensure that this doesn't happen in their backyard. Most clubs don't have a surplus of stewards to patrol the grounds, but strategically placed notices can at least negate the oft heard reply – "I didn't know, where does it say that!"

PREMIER DIVISION CUP SEMI FINALS

Tring Athletic capped an excellent 7 days for the club as they qualified for their second League Final with a 3-1 win over **Biggleswade Utd**. They will meet **St. Margaretsbury** in the Final as they beat **Aylesbury Vale**, also by 3-1.

Thanks to Tony Weight for the Biggleswade report. All items of news, interest, tittle-tattle, etc. re your club, are very welcome.

Bill Scholes Tel No. 01494 713867 Email: billscholes@hotmail.co.uk