

MOLTEN SPORTS SPARTAN SOUTH MIDLANDS FOOTBALL LEAGUE

NEWSLETTER No. 31

By *Bill Scholes*

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Just the two hat tricks this week – Lea Coulter for New Bradwell St. Peter and James Armstrong for Totternhoe

PREMIER DIVISION

Match of the day in this division was the clash between the top two clubs –second placed **Hanwell Town** hosting leaders **Harefield United** in front of 107 spectators, the second biggest crowd of the day. The result was a very even game, hotly contested in parts, but kept well in check by referee Jon Panconi and his two able assistants. Hanwell took the lead in the 50th minute through Chris Mills and kept it until the very last knockings before Joe Kelly equalised for the Hares. Any other result would have been unfair on either team, but both Hanwell and Harefield missed a penalty apiece, the scoring of either / both might well have affected the eventual result. **Chalfont St. Peter** kept their faint title hopes alive with a 3-2 win at **Cockfosters**, and look to be over their mini blip of the previous week. They moved back up to third in the league. The visitors got off to a quick start, and could have taken the lead in the first minute when Lee Togwell put a shot just past the post. A quick throw then saw the ball flicked on to Barry Brosnan, whose goal-bound shot was tipped around the post by Daley. The Saints took the lead after a quarter of an hour when an excellent long range pass was put over the top of the last defender by Jerome Okimo and Brosnan slotted it confidently into the far corner. Midway through the half Cockfosters almost equalized when Boxer shot into the side netting after a goalmouth scramble. Stack and Louth missed good chances to give the Saints a bigger interval lead, but it remained 1-0 at half time. The hosts equalized seven minutes after the restart when a long clearance over the top caught the defence napping, and Nathan Eno had the simplest of tasks in beating keeper Mark Oliver. However, parity only lasted for four minutes before Togwell restored the Saints lead. After Brosnan almost scored his second when he saw his header rebound off the bar, Eno again equalized after nodding in a flick on from a throw, but Chalfont only had to wait a minute before Wayne Rooney look-a-like, Charlie Strutton, came up with what could turn out to be a very important winner. Another club who could possibly feature in the end of season shake down are **Biggleswade Town** as they eased to a 2-0 win at home to **Kentish Town**, thanks to a goal in each half from Ryan Redford. As a consequence of other results, Kentish Town slip into the bottom two for the first time this season. Both Biggleswade and Chalfont have 5 games in hand, but of course these do need to win in order for them to be ready to take advantage of any possible slip ups from Harefield. **Brimsdown Rovers** are now rapidly moving away from the relegation zone and they continued their climb with an excellent 3-1 win away at **Kingsbury London Tigers**, courtesy of goals from Rob Teppett, Ryan Dear, and Ben Andreos. Franklin Manuel replied for the Tigers. Following an exceptional run of results **Tring Athletic** supporters were hoping for more from their home game with basement side **Holmer Green**, but in truth they were probably lucky to get away with just one point. Previous games between the two clubs have always been close over the years and this proved no exception. Unfortunately the game was scrappy, with very little good football played and was littered with free kicks. Tring took an early lead , with one of the few good footballing moves, Vinnie Iannone making good progress down the right wing before delivering the perfect cross for Ashley Addison to rise unchallenged and head home. There were a number of niggling fouls from both sides which upset any possible flow to the game, but there were a number of goalmouth incidents – largely due to indecisive defending rather than positive attacking. Holmer got their reward in the 69th minute when Andy Shed, who else, rifled home past ex Holmer keeper Dave Clark. Holmer had the best of the last 20 minutes or so and it would not have come as any

surprise if they had scored – but they didn't! There was still time at the final whistle for a bit of argy-bargy, and Holmer's Andy Parry was shown the red card for violent conduct as the players left the field. Good job the brand new protected walkway was in place! **Welwyn Garden City** got back to winning ways as they beat **Aylesbury Vale** 3-0 at Hens Lane. The Citizens got off to the best of starts after just 2 minutes when Richard Morton converted a Jason Williams cross, but had to wait until the 56th minute before an Adam Wallace header doubled their lead. David Taylor scored the third just before the end when his shot crashed against the crossbar, but he followed up to slot home the rebound. The local derby between **Hertford Town** and **St. Margaretsbury** attracted the highest crowd of the day (109), but they were treated to only one goal- that being scored by Hertford's Owen Beale after 30 minutes. When **Colney Heath** scored four minutes into stoppage time to go 2-1 up at home to **Langford** it looked game over, but Langford's Joe Delasselle spoilt the party two minutes later to give the Reds a second successive draw. Langford took the lead on 40 minutes when John Coley picked up the pieces from a Ryan Nichol free kick and it was from another free kick that Aaron Clarke brought Colney back on level terms. As the game went into added on time a draw looked a certainty, but Neil Jordan bundled home a corner with 4 extra minutes played, and then up popped Delasselle with his late, late equaliser. **Broxbourne Borough V&E** surprisingly slipped to a 2-0 defeat away at lowly **Haringey Borough**, Bosun Adebaki and Karl Lewis scoring in the last half hour to move Haringey above Kentish Town and out of the bottom two. The game between **Leverstock Green** and **Biggleswade United** had a distinct end-of-season feel to it, (already!) as both teams produced a stalemate with no goals and few thrills to keep the small Pancake Lane crowd entertained.

DIVISION ONE

With leaders Royston Town not in action, second placed **Kings Langley** took the opportunity to close the gap to 8 points, returning from their visit to **Harpenden Town** with a 2-0 win, courtesy of a second half brace from Ian Felgate. **Bedford** entertained highflying **Hatfield Town** at McMullen Park, but it was the visitors that came crashing down to earth. In bright spring sunshine, all the early pressure came from Hatfield and indeed they had a shot cleared off the Bedford line in only the 12th minute. The Bedford keeper was being kept busy but he had no chance when Darryl Smith broke clear and rounded the stranded keeper to score on 24 minutes. Little was seen of the Bedford attack and the visitors should have increased their lead just before half time but the forward delayed his shot and the keeper saved. The second half saw a double substitution by Bedford which tipped the balance of play to the home team and a shot just went wide. However Hatfield had another gilt-edged chance to increase their lead, but their forward who was clean through on goal shot straight at the keeper. This let off allowed Bedford to break down the other end of the pitch and they scored when Charlie Ennis lobbed the ball over the Hatfield keeper on 52 minutes. It was mostly Bedford now and they missed a great chance to take the lead but their forward shot straight at the keeper when it seemed easier to score. But the winning goal was not far away and from a free kick deep in the Bedford half, the ball fell to Travis Joseph who turned and shot the ball into the Hatfield net on 84 minutes. Hatfield tried to bounce back and thought they had equalised in the final minute only to see the effort ruled out for offside. Whilst the first half was a little dull, the second was a great game of football and although Hatfield had the chances to win, Bedford deserved their 2-1 win and the three points for their persistence. Don't turn up late, and don't leave before the end would have been the mantra at **Tokington Manor** where visitors **Bedford Town Reserves** won 2-0 – they scored their first goal through Stacey Field after just 35 seconds and their second was a penalty from Anton Damien in the 90th minute! This win takes Town Reserves back up to third place, leapfrogging Hatfield in the process. The following four clubs all won to keep up the pressure on the leaders – amazing what just the smell of promotion can do. A hat trick from Lea Coulter helped **New Bradwell St Peter** overcome the spirited resistance of resurgent **Buckingham Athletic** to emerge as 4-3 winners. Athletic took the lead after 6 minutes through Gavin Hansell, but then Coulter's three goals put Peters in control – or so they thought. Back came Athletic with two quick goals not long after the break to bring them back on level terms, but Peters persevered and John Mulholland scored

the winner with 14 minutes left. **Hoddesdon Town** did their bit with a 3-0 win at home to **Stony Stratford Town** but they left it late with all three goals coming in the last 17 minutes – one from Colin Metivier and two from Jason Sorial. After a couple of disappointing results, **Amersham Town** got back to winning ways with a 2-1 win at home to **Arlesey Athletic**. Jude Eboji put Town in front only for Adam Furness to equalise just before the break, but Adamson Ajayi scored the winner ten minutes after the restart. **Cranfield United** have climbed the table in the last few months but they had to bow their knee to visitors **London Colney**, sitting just one place above them, and going down to a 3-0 defeat. On the scoresheet for Colney were Ian Cooper, Craig Shaw and Paul Danslow. **Sport London e Benfica** are still winless since early October and they sunk deeper into relegation trouble with a 3-0 defeat away at **Amphill Town**. Lee Erswell, Lee Hayward and Paul Munday (penalty) were on target for the hosts. Bottom club **Brache Sparta** did take the lead at home to **Crawley Green** through George Bambridge, but the visitors turned the game around with three goals from Craig Savage, James Potter and Rian MacDonald.

DIVISION TWO

With Hadley involved in cup action, **The 61 FC** took the opportunity to move level with the leaders on points as they returned from nearby **Caddington** with a 4-2 victory. A brace from Ryan Smith and singles from Aaron Lewis and Aaron Brown were The 61 FC's scorers, whilst the much travelled Grant Carney and Jon Cooper notched for Caddington. **Wodson Park's** challenge has faltered somewhat in recent weeks but nearly took all three points from their home game with **Old Bradwell United**, only for a Daniel Broad penalty 2 minutes from the end to ensure the game ended 2-2. Wodson's nearest challengers **Bucks Students Union** could not take advantage as they themselves were held to a 1-1 draw at home to **Aston Clinton** – an Ian Nickels goal 6 minutes from time gaining the point. In the division's only other game, **Risborough Rangers** took all three points with a 1-0 win at home to **Kent Athletic** – Martin Griggs scoring after just 10 minutes.

DIVISION TWO CUP –SEMI FINALS

Second from bottom **Totternhoe** are the surprise Cup package this season as, having put out AFC Dunstable in the Quarter Finals, they disposed of **Tring Corinthians** 3-0 in the Semi's with a first half hat trick from James Armstrong – no, not the Leverstock Green Armstrong, I checked! Current league leaders **Hadley** were clear favourites for their tie at home to **Mursley United** and when they took a 13th minute lead through Bruce Hutchinson, it looked a formality. Hutchinson was first to seize on a mistake by visiting custodian Ben Donaldson, who could not hold on to a firm drive by Danny Gruar and spilled the ball at Hutchinson's feet. Hadley had a number of chances to increase their lead before half time, but their finishing was unimpressive and it remained 1-0 at the break. To their credit, Mursley came out fighting for the second period, and were desperately unlucky when a fierce drive crashed against the crossbar. They continued to more than match their hosts, but could not score, despite introducing striker Martyn Shaw to assist top scorer Ed Mills up front. Inevitably the hosts' top scorer Danny Gruar made the game safe on 73 minutes, and dashed Mursley's hope of a second successive Final appearance.

ANAGRAM RECORDS TROPHY

Padbury United went out at the Semi Final stage, going down 2-1 at home to **Park Street Village**, despite taking the lead through Lee White after 52 minutes. In a delayed Quarter Final game, **Winslow United** made the sure that the long trip home from **Epping** was a happy one as they triumphed 1-0, a 9th minute goal from Phil Martin ensuring their place in the Semi Final.

250 UP AND STILL GOING STRONG

Before the match between **Hertford Town** and **St. Margaretsbury**, the Hertford Town Chairman Mick Clarke presented Captain Glenn Draper with an engraved salver to commemorate the Blues player having notched up 250 appearances for the club.

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

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