

MOLTEN SPORTS
SPARTAN SOUTH MIDLANDS FOOTBALL LEAGUE

NEWSLETTER No. 35

By Bill Scholes

Easter Weekend - Saturday 11th and Monday 13th April 2009

There were four hat tricks scored over the week end – three on Saturday and one on Monday. Saturday's heroes were Danny Buckle for Harefield United, Ryan Wade for Broxbourne Borough V&E and James Warner for Harpenden Town, whilst Mark Allan of Pitstone & Ivinghoe had the field to himself on Monday.

PREMIER DIVISION

Well, well, well, the battle for the title is really hotting up, as for the first time since the end of October there is a new name at the top of the table. Long time leaders Harefield United have seen their comfortable lead slowly eroded over recent weeks, and on Monday night Biggleswade Town went to the top, albeit with a goal difference of +2, following their emphatic 6-0 win in the local derby against Biggleswade United. It's all building up for one of the most exciting finishes to the Premier Division for a few years – particularly now there is just the one promotion place available. The Waders have now caught up with their games in hand, and both they and Harefield have just 2 games left. Biggleswade do have probably the more difficult run in, having to play Hanwell Town and finally, Chalfont St. Peter. There has been no shortage of goals as the battle at the top intensifies – Biggleswade have scored 17 without reply in their last three games, winning 7-0 at **Kentish Town**, 4-0 at home to **Colney Heath**, and 6-0 at home to **Biggleswade United**. Harefield have also been finding the net – beating luckless **Kentish Town** 8-2 and **Kingsbury London Tigers** 3-0. Almost certainly **Chalfont St. Peter** hold the destiny of the league title in their hands – they could of course still win the title themselves, if they can win their 4 games in hand – a difficult ask at this stage of the season as they also have to play Hanwell as well as travelling to Biggleswade for the Waders last game. They have put their Vase disappointments behind them as they maintained their challenge for the league title with a stirring second half comeback at home against **Tring Athletic**. After an even first half hour, Ben Stack and Lee Togwell both went close before the visitors struck twice in quick succession, firstly when David Salmon converted with a tap-in from a corner, and then David Whicker scored with a header from a free kick. Just before the interval Whicker blotted his copybook by stupidly being sent off for kicking out at a home player. With little choice but to throw caution to the wind, the Saints threw on an extra striker and it soon paid dividends. Alan Hedley pulled one back from Lewis's cross, and then Barry Brosnan equalized with a bicycle kick from close range. Brian Cumberbatch then had a great run and cross which was again finished off by Brosnan, and finally the old war horse, Mickey Swaysland, rounded off the goal fest with a storming twenty-yarder which left the keeper with no chance! Two days later Chalfont won their 6th league game in a row, beating **Kingsbury London Tigers** 3-0 away. An even start saw Adam Louth's shot deflected wide, but then Kingsbury missed a great chance to take the lead when Edson Cata picked up a cross from the right, but struck the bar with the goal gaping. They were made to pay when Lee Togwell scored with a deflected shot which took the ball past the ex Chalfont keeper Power-Simpson. The second half saw the visitors dominating the contest, and after Charlie Strutton and John Carroll had seen their shots blocked, Strutton scored the second with a rebound after Swaysland almost put in the original effort. Five minutes from the end Ryan Welsh rounded off the scoring from the spot after being fouled in the area. Chalfont's task has not been helped by being unable to fulfil last night's (Tuesday 14th) fixture away at Holmer Green due to a floodlight malfunction at Watchet Lane – another game to be rearranged! Whilst the Saints have won 3-0 against **Welwyn Garden City**, 4-2 against **Tring Athletic** and 3-0 against **Kingsbury**. Down at the foot of the stairs it is just as tense, as **Holmer Green** are making a last-

ditch effort to avoid the wooden spoon spot with two wins on the trot – something not achieved all season. Both victories had the same scoreline – 2-1; both were at home, to **St. Margaretsbury** and **Cockfosters**, and both goalscorers were the same – Andy Shed and Dean Allen. Only two points separate the bottom three clubs, although Cockfosters and Kentish Town both have a game in hand on Holmer. Having been sucked into the bottom three recently, **Haringey Borough**, under new management, are now making strenuous attempts to move clear, and their 1-1 draw with **Hanwell town** and a 4-2 win over **Aylesbury Vale**, has given them a three point cushion over third from bottom Kentish Town.

DIVISION ONE

Congratulations to Royston Town who clinched the Division One title last Tuesday, and a welcome return to the top flight, with an emphatic 5-2 win away at Winslow United, with leading scorer Craig Hammond helping himself to four goals. The Crows celebrated their title win at home on Saturday in front of a jubilant crowd of 147, demolishing Bedford 5-0. Hammond only managed the one, but it brings his total for the season to 56, and he still has at least 5 League and Cup games left! Brains are being racked and attics searched to see where this feat fits into the history books. The chase is now on for the runners up spot and Kings Langley, having beaten Hatfield Town 2-0 last Tuesday in front of a crowd of 100, now look to have the edge, with a four point lead over their nearest rivals. Both teams won on Saturday, **Kings Langley** beating **Amersham Town** 2-0 and **Hatfield** gaining revenge for an earlier defeat by **Cranfield United**. At the beginning of April it looked as though **Brache Sparta** were attempting to escape bottom spot, but two disastrous defeats - losing 7-0 to **Sport London e Benfica** and 11-0 to **Harpenden Town** have confirmed their place as wooden spoonists. The other relegation spot lies between **Buckingham Athletic** and **Sun Postal Sports** – one point separating the two teams but Buckingham do have a game in hand. They were looking to ease their relegation fears by beating **Amphill Town** at Stratford Fields on Saturday, but had to settle for just one point. The game started at a fast and furious pace by both teams but it was Buckingham that posed the most threat. The dominance of the home team counted on just 12 minutes when David O'Dell crashed home a great 25-yard drive past Woodcraft in the Amphill goal and into the top corner of the net. It was all Buckingham, and another chance from a free kick hit a post and bounced clear. Nothing was seen of the Amphill attack and Dean O'Dell in the home goal did not have a single shot to save. However in the proverbial game of two halves, Amphill were a different proposition in the second half and they took the game to Buckingham from the outset. The home keeper O'Dell tipped over an early shot but Amphill scored on 19 minutes. A right wing cross was missed by keeper O'Dell and Anthony Wright had the simple task of slotting the ball into an empty net to level the scores. Amphill continued to press but the home defence somehow held out. The only threat from Buckingham in the whole of the second half came from Andy Hammond who shot high and wide of the goal when it looked easier to score. In the end it was a fair result in an entertaining game well controlled by the three match officials and without a single card being shown all afternoon.

DIVISION TWO

It's getting pretty tense at the top of Division Two, as the top four have been narrowed down to the top three. Realistically the battle for the League title is between current leaders **Hadley** and third placed **The 61 FC**, although **AFC Dunstable**, at present in second, could come into the reckoning should both of the other two slip up. Hadley have the points, but The 61 FC have three games in hand, but will need to improve on their form over Easter if they are to be in with a shout for the ribbons. On Saturday, The 61 FC were away to fourth placed **Tring Corinthians**, themselves making a late burst for a promotion slot, and this was a game of two halves.....but not in the classic sense. The first half was goalless, and fairly attritional, and the general view was that one goal could decide the outcome. The second half, however, saw not one but six goals, leaving both managers reaching the heights of ecstasy and then plumbng the depths of despair with frequent regularity. Ryan Smith put the Luton side in front 5 minutes after the break, only for Ian Adele to

equalise two minutes later. The level-pegging only lasted three minutes before Smith again put 61FC back in front – the lead was however short-lived - four minutes this time - as Darren O’Callaghan replied for Tring. There was then a period of calm for 18 minutes, although you wouldn’t have thought so listening to Mr Everett, before Denis Angel put Tring in front for the first time.

Undaunted, 61 FC fought back and Jamie Irons got the vital equaliser with 11 minutes left. There was still time for both sides to have won the game, but both keepers pulled off tremendous saves to make sure it ended all square. We are regularly told by managers that football is an emotional game, and this is generally their excuse for totally unacceptable behaviour, but this oft-held notion was totally dispelled by Mr Everett, who, although loud, and clearly heavily involved, addressed all his comments to his team, and his team alone. Never once were the officials criticised, and the worst language I heard was “For goodness sake!” If only another point was collected on Monday in the 1-1 draw with **Padbury United** and Saturday’s upcoming game between The 61 FC and Hadley could well be the title decider. Hadley won 2-0 on Saturday against **Old Bradwell United**, but could only manage a point on Monday in a 1-1 draw against **Tring Corinthians**. AFC Dunstable won both their games, 2-1 against **Wodson Park** and 2-0 against Old Bradwell, but only have a two point lead over 61FC having played four more games. At the other end of the table, **Totternhoe** had an excellent 5-1 win over **Bletchley Town** and followed that up with a 1-1 draw at home to **Markyate** – these four points enabling them to move out of the bottom three, leap-frogging **Aston Clinton**. The clubs filling the two re-election spots are now confirmed as Bletchley Town and Old Bradwell United.

BEDS SENIOR TROPHY FINAL

Congratulations to **The 61 FC** who lifted the Beds Senior Trophy last Wednesday with an emphatic 3-1 victory over UCL side **AFC Kempston Rovers**. In front of a goodly crowd of 265 at Biggleswade Town’s new ground, Dick Everett’s side were always in control of the game, and goals from Alex Bennett, Ryan Smith, and Hayden Wills sealed the win.

HERTS SENIOR CENTENARY TROPHY FINAL

Congratulations are also in order for **Hoddesdon Town** who won the above Final, played at Herts HQ Letchworth, in front of 360 spectators, for the second successive year. Their opponents on this occasion were **Hatfield Town**. It was all square at 1-1 after 90 minutes and after a further 30 minutes extra time, but on a bitterly cold evening, Hoddesdon finally triumphed 5-3 on penalties.

A HEARTWARMING LETTER FROM HANWELL TOWN

I was very pleased to receive the following Bob Fisher (Chairman, HonSec and ProgEd) of Hanwell Town – reproduced below with great pleasure.

“Back in February, at the last minute on a Tuesday evening, we were able to switch our intended away fixture against Haringey Borough to our home ground. Due to this late switch with no publicity, the game was played before a crowd of just 17, so little income for the club. After the game, John Bacon (the Haringey secretary) advised us that when the return fixture was played, they would give us 50% of the attendance money as compensation, but then laughingly said that ‘50% of nothing would not amount to very much’. After our game at Haringey yesterday (Saturday 11th April) when we were very well looked after by John and his chairman Aki Achillea, John handed me an envelope which I did not open at the time but, stuck on the North Circular Road going home, I opened the envelope to find a nice note from John plus £58, which I suspect, judging by their crowd (38), probably represented not 50% but 100% of their gate money. The warm feeling that this gesture gave me enabled me to forget our rather dismal second half display on the field and to reflect on the warm friendship that exists between not just our two clubs, but with other clubs in the league also and I thank John and Aki for this.”

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

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