

MOLTEN SPORTS SPARTAN SOUTH MIDLANDS FOOTBALL LEAGUE

CHRISTMAS NEWSLETTER No. 18

By Bill Scholes

“It must have snowed most wonderfully to have made that depth of covering in about eight hours. And here it was, blocking up the doors, stopping the ways, and the water courses, and making it very much worse to walk than in a saw-pit newly used. For all this time it was snowing harder than it ever had snowed before, so far as a man might guess at it; and the leaden depth of the sky came down, like a mine turned upside down on us. Not that the flakes were so very large; but that there was no room between them, neither any relaxing, nor any change of direction.”

Somehow the above extract from Chapter 52 – The Great Winter- of the novel Lorna Doone by R.D. Blackmore seems to have epitomised the last few days, certainly in my neck of the woods.

Saturday 19th December 2009

Well, my wish for a Saturday free of Red and Yellow cards certainly came true last week, but not exactly in the way I had anticipated, as not a single game in our league survived the combination of snow and frost. Still, it did allow a bit of extra time for all that exciting Christmas shopping! Fingers crossed for a full programme on Mon 28th Dec, but the way the weather is shaping up I'm not totally convinced that will happen.

DECEMBER TEAM OF THE MONTH - AN APOLOGY

Apologies and congratulations to Leverstock Green, who did win the December Team of the Month (Premier Division), and to Hanwell Town who I wrongly credited with the award last week. I knew it was Leverstock Green – I was at the meeting, I read the minutes and I was going to their game, but for some strange reason I typed Hanwell Town. Not even close on a keypad!

SSMFL CUPS – Progress to date

Three of the four SSMFL Cup competitions have reached the Quarter final stage. **The Challenge Trophy** looks to be wide open this year – last season's winners Tring Athletic having departed in the 1st Round – with just 3 Premier Division teams left in the last 8. Two are at home -Brimsdown Rovers hosting high flying Div One side Bedford Town Reserves, whilst Div Two table toppers Aston

Clinton will visit Dunstable Town. The third Premier side, Broxbourne Boro have to travel to Kings Langley. The other all Div One tie pits third and fourth together – Hadley at home to in form London Colney. The last 8 has also been reached in **The Dudley Latham Memorial Cup (Premier Division Cup)** – holders Tring again going out in the 1st Round - where the tie of the round looks to be Aylesbury v Dunstable Town. The battle of the Towns sees Hertford at home to Hanwell, Kingsbury London Tigers visit Colney Heath whilst Broxbourne Boro host near neighbours St. Margaretsbury. The holders of the **Division One Cup**, Royston Town, are of course unable to defend their trophy, and with both of the top two teams already out, the competition at Quarter Final stage, looks wide open, although if results go to league form, Hadley and London Colney could well meet in the Final. However, before that, Hadley have first to overcome visitors Hoddesdon Town, and then the winners of Crawley Green v Brache Sparta CFC. London Colney has a home draw against Kings Langley, with a possible semi Final against either Ampthill town or AFC Dunstable. **The Division Two Cup** is already at the Semi final stage, and the top two sides in the League have been kept apart. Leaders Aston Clinton will visit MK Wanderers whilst Berkhamsted will host Mursley Utd. There's many a slip twixt cup and lip, but if I were a betting man.....**The Reserve Challenge Trophy** has only just reached the Third Round (last 16) – keep up, Eric.....although holders Royston Town and Oxhey Jets have made it through to the Quarter finals.

I was sent the following article by Roger Reed of the F.A, and as he points out, although not a Christmas greeting, it does seem so apposite to all of us who enjoy our very glorious obsession.

“To say that these men paid their shillings to watch twenty-two hirelings kick a ball is merely to say that a violin is wood and cat-gut, that Hamlet is so much paper and ink. For a shilling the Bruddesford United A.F.C. offered you Conflict and Art.; it turned you into a critic, happy in your judgement of fine points, ready in a second to estimate the worth of a well-judged pass, a run down the touch line, a lightning shot, a clearance kick by back or goalkeeper; it turned you into a partisan, holding your breath when the ball came sailing into your goalmouth, ecstatic when your forwards raced away towards the opposite goal, elated, downcast, bitter, triumphant by turns at the fortunes of your side, watching a ball shape Iliads and Odysseys for you; and what is more, it turned you into a member of a new community, all brothers together for an hour and a half, for not only had you escaped from the clanking machinery of this lesser life, from work, wages, rent, doles, sick pay, insurance cards, nagging wives, ailing children, bad bosses, idle workmen, but you had escaped with most of your mates and your neighbours, with half the town, and there you were, cheering together, thumping one another on the shoulders, swopping judgements like lords of the earth, having pushed your way through a turnstile into another and altogether more splendid kind of life, hurtling with Conflict and yet passionate and beautiful in its Art.”

J B Priestley, *The Good Companions*, 1929.

A VERY MERRY XMAS AND A HAPPY NEW YEAR

TO ALL CLUBS AND PLAYING AND NON PLAYING MEMBERS OF THE SPARTAN SOUTH MIDLANDS LEAGUE , AND TO ALL OUR READERS, and especially all wives, girlfriends, husbands, boy friends, mistresses, in-betweens, SSMFL Committee members, club chairmen, club chairwomen, The Fabulous FleeRekkers, right backs, left backs, left footers, right footed left backs, left footed right backs, hat trick heroes, Zoot Money and The Big Roll Band, hat trick heroes, goal scoring centre forwards, goal scoring midfielders, chunky midfielders, hunky midfielders, the flat back four, the fat back four, sports editors, the sports media, Fats Domino, FA officials, County FA officials, league officials, Riders of the Purple Sage, general secretaries, The Eagles, match secretaries, fixture secretaries, registration secretaries, treasurers, Emmylou Harris, officials with email, officials without email (who won't read this), officials with blackberries, blueberries and strawberries, Geno Washington and the Ram Jam Band, referees secretaries, ex- referees secretaries, programme editors, Acker Bilk and The Paramount Jazz band, groundsman, happy groundsman (not many), miserable groundsman (lots), munchkins, Ola Jordan, Chuck Berry, train spotters, ground hoppers, space hoppers, Sounds Incorporated, midfield destroyers, destroyed midfielders, The Flying Burrito Brothers, all referees, referees who eat haggis, referees who work in advertising, young referees, lady referees, referees who have progressed to higher levels, ex referees, plump referees, even plumper lino's, who ate all the pies referees, Commander Cody and the Lost Planet Airmen, all Seagulls supporters, Kristina Rhianoff, Saucy Santas, Sexy Santas, tea makers, cake makers, hot pies and roast potato makers, The Searchers, midfielders with legs, midfielders with no legs, players with ear rings, players with nose rings, players with hair, players with no hair, Ola Jordan (again), The Clay Donner Combo, referees assessors, assessors with dogs, assessors with sticks (white), Alex Ferguson, lady physios, match sponsors, match ball sponsors, club sponsors, player sponsors, Jerry Lee Lewis, cool dudes, snappy dressers, all Sussex CCC supporters, Old Bankers, young bankers, Chuck Berry, Bar maids, friendly bar maids, lovely bar maids, Bucks County Cricket Club, Nero and the Gladiators, quiet managers, not so quiet managers, very noisy managers, jack- in- a box managers, should -be- in- a box managers, Tony Thompson, students, hairy students, Lilia Kopylova, coaches, coaches with badges, coaches with I Spy badges, coaches with Blue Peter badges, coach drivers, Creedence Clearwater Revival, all contributors to the newsletter, supportive supporters, supporters with attitude, Cliff Bennett and The Rebel Rousers,, all supporters of Non League Football..... Enjoy the festive season.

Bill Scholes- Editor