

**MOLTEN SPORTS**  
**SPARTAN SOUTH MIDLANDS FOOTBALL LEAGUE**

**NEWSLETTER No. 19**  
*By Bill Scholes*

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Well, the jolly fat man in the red coat has been and gone, but I hope he made it down your chimney, wolfed the mince pies and sherry that you left, and brought you everything that you wished for. Luckily, the predicted inclement weather wasn't quite as bad as expected, with 17 games out of a possible 29 taking place, with the worst of the snow and frost affecting the clubs around the South Bucks and West Herts area. In an interesting statistic for all you anoraks out there, all three divisional league leaders – Tring Athletic, Holmer Green and Aston Clinton - retained their top spot without kicking a ball!

*There were just 2 hat tricks, but both excellent performances, and both in the Premier Division. Luke Beardsworth scored all four of Oxhey Jets goals in their 4-4 draw at Langford, whilst Blaise O'Brien netted three times in 16 minutes to help Hanwell Town to a 5-0 win at home to Colney Heath.*

**PREMIER DIVISION**

With both Aylesbury and Tring Athletic out of action, **Colney Heath** travelled to **Hanwell Town** knowing that a win would enable them to start the New Year, and indeed the new decade, as league leaders, but they remain in third place after being humbled by the home side 5-0. However, for the first 69 minutes, the crowd were treated to an excellent game of end-to-end football, and credit must go to the groundstaff for preparing an excellent pitch, considering the conditions over the previous week or so. There was little indication in the early stages of the way the game would pan out in the way that it did, indeed Colney Heath came closest to opening the scoring, winning a succession of early corners. However, Hanwell began to gain the upper hand as the half progressed with Chris Mills and Aaron Wise beginning to dominate midfield. The first goal came in the 36<sup>th</sup> minute when good work by Charlie Baverstock set up a chance for Blaise O'Brien, and although Heath keeper Tom Blackman made a fine save, he could only turn the ball against the post, leaving Tashan Bradshaw with a simple tap in. O'Brien then squandered a simple chance to double the lead just before half time. With Cooper and Jackman always threatening up front for Colney, the early stages of the second half were evenly fought but once O'Brien netted Town's second from the penalty spot in the 70<sup>th</sup> minute after Baverstock had been tripped in the area, the

floodgates opened as Colney's heads visibly dropped. Possibly weighed down by a surfeit of Christmas puddings and mince pies, the visiting defenders suddenly appeared to be running in treacle and Hanwell's wide men were able to create havoc down the flanks and it was no surprise as Town netted three further goals in the last nine minutes of the game. O'Brien scored twice to complete his hat trick in 16 minutes and to continue his recent remarkable goalscoring run -12 goals in his last 9 games - whilst Town's fifth, two minutes into injury time was deservedly scored by the hard working Baverstock. A run of four consecutive victories has propelled **Harefield United** up the table to 6<sup>th</sup> place, and their latest victory was a 4-1 win at home to **Hillingdon Borough**. Boro actually took the lead after just 9 minutes through Rhys Rake, but the Hares fought back with a brace from Denver Morris and one each from Alex Brown and Kemo Melphela. The mid table clash between **Langford** and **Oxhey Jets** kept the Bank Holiday crowd warm as the two clubs shared 8 goals. The Jets flew into a two goal lead at the break, both scored by Luke Beardsworth but within ten minutes of the restart Langford were level through Lee Harman and Mark Wright. Beardsworth completed his hat trick 10 minutes later to restore Jets lead, but back came Wright with his second to make it all square again. Beardsworth then went on to notch his, and the Jets, fourth goal, but Ben L'Honre's goal, 4 minutes from time, ensured the 4-4 draw. **Hatfield Town** and their **Welwyn Garden City** landlords played out an exciting 3-3 draw in front of a bumper crowd of 223. With six minutes to play, the Citizens led 3-1, but a dramatic late fight back saw Hatfield net twice in the dying stages to rescue a point. Hatfield struck first after 16 minutes through Richard Cooke, but Dominic Hines brought Welwyn level just before half time. Twelve minutes into the second period Darren Wells put City ahead for the first time in the match and soon after they extended their advantage when Wells scored his second from the penalty spot after Lewis Field was red carded for his foul in the area. With just 6 minutes left, it seemed Welwyn would hold on for only their 4<sup>th</sup> league win of the season, but late goals from Rhys Lawrence and Matt Standen rescued a point for Hatfield. **St. Margaretsbury** won their local derby with **Broxbourne Borough** 1-0 thanks to a Chris Bell goal four minutes before half time. Two first half goals from Edson Cata and Terence Cariba ensured all three points for **Kingsbury London Tigers** in their home game against **Kentish Town**. **Chalfont St. Peter** were back in action for the first time since November 28<sup>th</sup>, and they moved up into fourth place with their 2-0 win away at **Hertford Town**. Ben Stack scored the first after 31 minutes and Joe Brittain doubled their money on the hour mark. Three second half goals from Gary Connolly, Simon Conway and Ryan Fahy were enough to secure **Leverstock Green's** 3-0 win away at **Brimdown Rovers**. Although two games were postponed due to the weather, the third, at **Biggleswade United**, was the result of mindless vandalism at the ground – the goalposts being wrecked following a break-in. I particularly liked the comment on the Biggleswade Utd web site "To the parents of these idiots, we thank you for raising such morons! "

## DIVISION ONE

Five games postponed in this division, including games involving the top three clubs. **Crawley Green** took the opportunity to move up into third place by beating **Stony Stratford Town** 3-0, thanks to a brace from James Potter and one from Tom Freeman. Surprise results included **London Colney's** 1-0 defeat at **Bedford**, Ian Thorne scoring, and **New Bradwell St. Peter's** 4-1 thumping away at **Buckingham Athletic**. Jamie O'Callaghan and Scott Latham scored a brace apiece for the home side whilst Adam Castagnetti netted for Bradwell. **AFC Dunstable** moved up a couple of places with their 3-1 win at home against **Cockfosters**. All the goals came in the first half Bernie Christie and Hayden Wills (2) for Dunstable and Tom Boxer for Cockfosters. The biggest winners of the day were **Amptill Town** who travelled the short distance to **Cranfield United** and came back with a 5-0 victory. Christian Lester and Stuart Reynolds both scored twice for Amptill in the first half, and Gavin Hansell added the fifth late in the second half.

## DIVISION TWO

Just four games survived the weather, and **Kent Athletic** recorded only their second league win of the campaign as they beat high flying **Pitstone & Ivinghoe** 1-0, thanks to Lee Scott's goal in the 60<sup>th</sup> minute. **Wodson Park** moved up into third place after beating **Totternhoe** 2-0 at home – Tyler Hatherly and Steve Hawsey scoring the goals in the first 25 minutes. **The 61 FC** climbed out of the bottom three with a 3-2 victory at home against **Tring Corinthians**. Chris Mapp, twice, and Craig Nield were on target for the Luton based side. **Mk Wanderers** took an early two goal lead through Calvin Budd and Matt Old in their away game at **Mursley United**, lost it as Ed Mills and Jakub Kasprzyk pulled the hosts level before half time, but scored twice in the second half through Old again and Adam Parrish to finish the Old Year on a winning note with a 4-2 victory.

## THE NOUGHTIES (And I don't mean Eric and Terry!)

So we reach the end of another decade with our three divisions being headed by Tring Athletic, Holmer Green and Aston Clinton respectively. Will they still be there come the end of the season? Who will win the prestigious Premier Division title, and with it the right to proceed upwards to Step 4 football? A quick look at the top of the table shows that 5 out of the top 6 would probably have the facilities to make the upward step and join the list of their notable predecessors over the last 10 years. Out of the last 10 champions, only one - London Colney (come on Dave) in 2001/02 did not move up. Beaconsfield SYCOB were probably the most successful, winning the title 3 times, although they were denied promotion the first time, and have also been relegated back to us. They are not looking too safe at the moment, but have just changed managers! Also coming back to us was

Dunstable Town, who were promoted in 2002/03. Edgware Town, promoted in 2006/07 no longer exist, but their team lives on – currently playing in Enfield Town's colours. Success has come to Arlesey Town, Potters Bar Town, and Oxford City whilst last season's champions Biggleswade Town seem to be holding a comfortable mid table position. Brook House moved across to the Ryman League 3 in mid decade, were promoted to the Southern League, changed their name to AFC Hayes but have struggled to survive and currently sit in a relegation position. Waltham Abbey also left us, moving across to the Essex Senior league. Hanwell Town and Hillingdon Boro were both promoted as runners up- in the days when you could be – but whilst Hanwell came straight back down, once proud Boro hung on in both Ryman and Southern Leagues for a couple of years before coming back down to us this season.

In the Senior Division /Division One, 9 out of the 10 champions of the decade were promoted to the Premier Division, and 7 are still there. Two are no longer in business – Letchworth Garden City and Greenacres (Hemel), whilst Pitstone & Ivinghoe, winners in 2002/03 could not be promoted due to lack of floodlights, and now, for the same reason, sadly find themselves in Division Two. A number of Division Two sides have been promoted up to Division One, although the majority have utilised groundshare arrangements to do so, but Haywood United, promoted in 2001/02, have made it all the way to the top of the Premier Division, albeit with a couple of name changes along the way – now of course Aylesbury FC.

One very sad statistic is the number (24) of our clubs who have basically ceased to exist over the last 10 years. Four clubs from the Premier Division, - Letchworth Garden City, Milton Keynes City, Ruislip Manor and Berkhamsted Town are no more, whilst a further 20 have been lost to Divisions One and Two. How good is your memory – do you remember Milton Keynes Borough, Toddington Rovers, Islington St. Mary, Letchworth Bridger Packaging, Greenacres (Hemel), Dunstable 98, Houghton Town, de Havilland, Abbey National (MK), Walden Rangers, Luton Old Boys, Flamstead, Scot FC, Leighton Athletic, Milcutt Rovers, Shillington, North Crawley Athletic, Newport Athletic, Markyate and Winslow United.

**In theory, that is more than one whole division of clubs lost to us, but are we a division short – of course not, and I believe it is attributable to the high regard in which The Spartan South Midlands League is held that we continue to attract new clubs every year, and undoubtedly will continue to do so over the next decade.**

## A VERY HAPPY NEW YEAR TO YOU ALL

And let's hope for a full programme of games this coming Saturday

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