

MOLTEN SPORTS
SPARTAN SOUTH MIDLANDS FOOTBALL LEAGUE

NEWSLETTERS No. 22 & 23

By Bill Scholes

NEWSLETTER No 22

Saturday 16th January 2010

It was yet another white out / wash out / frost out (depending on what part of the region you live in), with no play possible in any of the scheduled games. In the last three weeks, 118 League fixtures have been lost to the weather (with just 3 games completed) and this of course is going to cause a few problems for our indefatigable Fixture Secretaries. The above number of postponed games does not include any of the various Cup games, of which there were numerous, which also fell foul of the weather, and these pose additional problems of their own as they will all have to be fitted in. Do the math, as our American colleagues are fond of saying, and you will realise that almost clubs will be playing at least twice a week, with quite a few probably having to play Thursdays as well. And it's not just the successful clubs that face a crowded fixture list- some times sides who have not had a particularly good season could still end up playing 3 games a week, as they have to wait for the successful ones to play catch up. Some clubs will undoubtedly feel they have been hard done by, but don't lay all the blame on Phil Rolt and Eric Harrison!

NEWSLETTER No 23

Saturday 23rd to Tuesday 26th January 2010

It's back – finally, the great game that we all love and worship at the feet of, the game that has the power to lift you up to joyous heights of happiness, or alternatively bring you to the depths of despair. The weather abated and there was almost a full programme of games over the week end – just 5 being postponed. Pride of place must go to Royston Town who progressed into the last 16 of the FA Vase with a hard fought 2-1 win over Tipton Town. They have been rewarded with another home tie, against either Armthorpe Welfare from the Northern Counties East League, or Wroxham from the Eastern Counties League. These two drew 1-1 on Saturday and must replay at Wroxham this weekend. Commiserations go to Brimsdown Rovers who found Daventry Town, top of the UCL, just too strong for them on the day.

Although there were a total of 101 goals scored in all League and Cup games over the weekend, surprisingly there was just the one hat trick....and that was by Blaise O'Brien who notched all three of Hanwell Town's goals in their 3-1 win over Langford. A further 59 goals hit the back of the onion bag on Tuesday night, but again there was just the one hat trick...but probably one of the fastest of the season- Paul Danslow's three for London Colney coming in just four minutes.

FA Carlsberg VASE – FOURTH ROUND

Royston Town had a hard earned win over Midland Alliance side, **Tipton Town**, eventually running out 2-1 winners in extra time. A big, burly side from the West Midlands didn't allow Royston to play their renowned free flowing football, with the home side guilty of many misplaced passes in the first half. A first half pretty much devoid of chances, changed significantly in the first ten minutes of the second period. Royston

took the lead in the 48th minute when a cracking drive from Ryan Lockett screamed into the top corner of the net after being set up by Luke Robins. The visitors equalised some six minutes later when Tipton's Ross Brown headed home a corner. A tough battle then ensued, with both sides missing chances and Tipton's Brown missed an open goal with just seconds remaining of normal time. Into extra time and Tipton had a player sent off for illegal use of the elbow before the home side won the match with just three minutes remaining. A cross from Carl Edwards saw substitute Will Turl fire a bullet like header past the flailing visiting keeper. In truth Royston just shaded an intriguing game, which saw two substitutes, one from either side, cautioned, whilst not involved in the game, a send off and the visiting manager removed from the dug out.

On Sunday **Brimsdown Rovers** entertained a **Daventry Town** side, flying high in the UCL, having only dropped 5 points all season. A hat trick by the visiting centre forward Tommy Berwick put paid to Brimsdown making further progress and they were well beaten 4-1, in front of 150 spectators. Brimsdown took the lead after 11 minutes with their first attack, winning a penalty after a visiting defender committed a blatant push on a Rovers forward. Jermain Hughes fired the resultant spot kick into the far corner of the net. The lead only lasted 7 minutes before the visitors equalised when Josh Blake tapped home after the Brimsdown keeper dropped the ball at his feet. Daventry were on top for the rest of a feisty first half which saw six cautions, Brimsdown leading on that score, 4-2, before it became the Berwick show in the second half. First he put the visitors ahead in the 48th minute before adding to his tally with a penalty in the 78th minute and a further goal six minutes later. By this time Brimsdown had been reduced to 10 men, but in all fairness, Daventry looked by far and away the better side. Making its debut in this game was the 'phantom' substitute board purchased by the league some eight months ago! Kindly lent to the appointed fourth official, it was good to see its bright red and green lights light up the grey Enfield sky.

PREMIER DIVISION

With Aylesbury cut off by the incoming tide, **Tring Athletic** took the opportunity to go back to the top of the table as they overcame **Hillingdon Borough** 4-0 at the Middlesex Stadium. Mark Burfoot opened the scoring in the 14th minute, but that's the way it stayed until a late three goal spurt in the last 10 minutes sealed the emphatic victory. Simon Ellis, Ashley Addison and Darren Franklin all got their names on the score sheet. **Chalfont St. Peter** also moved above Aylesbury, and up into second place, following their hard earned 1-0 win at home to **Hatfield Town**. The Saints carved out the better openings in the first half, but were guilty of missing a couple of gilt edge chances whilst a youthful Hatfield side, depleted by suspensions, always looked dangerous at set pieces. As often happens, the vital goal, when it came in the 69th minute was a simple one – it started from a throw in deep in the Chalfont half, and a through ball right down the middle from Ben Stack put Charlie Strutton clean through and he made no mistake. Sub Lucas Williams came on for the Saints down the right to torment the visitor's tired legs, but with the ever eager and willing Matt Standen up front, Hatfield continued to battle away right to the end, leaving Chalfont glad to hear the final whistle. **Colney Heath** slipped back to fourth spot as they could only manage a point in their 1-1 draw away at **Kingsbury London Tigers**, who managed to score both goals. Artiomas Barimobas gave Tigers the lead in the 39th minute, but Abdullah Hassan put through his own net five minutes after the break to level the scores.. Although perhaps it was too early for a six pointer, but with both **Biggleswade United** and **Hertford Town** just outside the relegation spots, this game had that feel about

it as Hertford just held on for an important 1 – 0 win. Biggleswade had the balance of play in the first half but it was Hertford who had the best chances and they scored on 29 minutes when Owen Beale shot through a crowd of players to beat Adam Lawrence in the home goal. Indeed, Hertford could have gone further ahead but a great save from Lawrence kept them out. The only real chance for the home team came on 34 minutes when a forward put the ball over the bar when it looked easier to score. The second half was mostly Biggleswade as Hertford went into defensive mode to protect their slender lead. Indeed, on occasions it seemed that the Hertford keeper Lee Robinson was playing Biggleswade all on his own as he made save after save to keep them out. Hertford did not muster a serious goal threat throughout the half and for the final few minutes they desperately defended their goal. They just about held on for the win through a combination of some inspired goal keeping and some woeful finishing by the home forwards. **Hanwell Town** maintained their recent good progress as they moved into the top half of the table with a 3-1 win at home to **Langford**. Blaise O'Brien was Hanwell's hero as he got the ball rolling with two early goals before completing his hat trick right at the end, whilst Adam Wombwell raised Langford's hopes with his goal after 32 minutes. There were bags of goals at **Oxhey Jets**, where the hosts just edged a 4-3 nail biter against **Dunstable Town**. Goals from Russell Preston and Luke Flood twice gave the visitors the lead, but strikes from Tim O'Mara and a quick fire brace from Luke Beardsworth put the Jets back in the driving seat, before a Neal Perrin penalty in the 65th minute made for an interesting last 25 minutes. **Leverstock Green** recorded their ninth unbeaten game on the trot as they came away from struggling **Welwyn Garden City** with a 2-0 win, which takes them up to 6th place in the table. A header from Andrew Cracknell gave Green the lead in the 33rd minute and Simon Conway doubled the score just before the hour mark.

DIVISION ONE

The tide was also in at Watchet Lane where leaders Holmer Green's game against Cranfield Utd was postponed, and **Crawley Green** closed the gap at the top to two points as they enjoyed a good 3-1 win away at rivals **Bedford Town Reserves**. Ryan Macdonald and Ricky Clark put the visitors two up in the first twenty minutes but Tom Damon reduced the deficit for Town Reserves from the penalty spot just before the break. John Cooper put Crawley further ahead with ten minutes to go. **Hadley** had two goals from Bruce Hutchinson and Neil Richardson –one in each half - to thank for their 2-0 win at home to bottom club **Brache Sparta**, which enabled them to keep in close touch at the top, and **AFC Dunstable** moved up a place after their comprehensive 7-1 walloping of **Amersham Town**. There were doubles from Bernie Christie and Ryan Quinn, and singles from Richard Harker, Hayden Wills and James Baldry, whilst Andy Parry scored Amersham's sole reply. **Cockfosters** leapfrogged over their visitors **Amphill Town** with a fine 4-2 win after being reduced to 10 men as early as the fifteenth minute. Amphill came to Chalk Lane in fine form but were trailing after 5 minutes when Nick Nicou made the early breakthrough. Amphill quickly levelled through Gavin Hansell but after Andy Purcell "lost the plot" and was dismissed, the future did not seem too bright for the Reds.. However, two great strikes in quick succession from Joe Smith and Dean Barker put Cockfosters 3-1 up on the hour. The door opened slightly for Amphill when Paul Munday converted a penalty after 67 minutes. With fifteen minutes remaining, Jon Curtis set up the fourth for the home side with a great run that ended with Kyriacos Portou hitting the post and Billy Wingrove knocking in the rebound. Late in the game, Amphill lost their numerical advantage as they were also reduced to ten men. **Sun Postal Sports** also

leapfrogged their visitors **Tokington Manor** following a 3-2 victory. The game ebbed and flowed with Manor taking the lead in the 17th minute, only for Fabien Forde to bring the scores level from the 12 yard spot a minute later. Three minutes later, the Posties were in front through Ben Poulton but it only took Craig Cauldwell-Smith a further three minutes to bring the Manor back on level terms. The score stayed that way until 22 minutes from the end, when James Thompson scored the Posties winner.

DIVISION TWO

With leaders Aston Clinton involved in cup action, **Berkhamsted** moved back to the top, on goal difference, after their 1-1 draw away at **Totternhoe**. New signing Lawrence Bunker gave them an early lead, but Henry Mungwira salvaged a valuable point for the home side just before half time. **MK Wanderers** moved up into 6th place following their 3-1 win at home against **Bucks Student Union**. MK took an early lead through Adam Parish and a second half brace from Matt Old put them firmly in the driving seat. The returning Daddy Moses scored the Students consolation. **Bletchley Town** gained another useful point in their climb away from the relegation zone, in their 1-1 draw at home to **Kent Athletic**, who are putting up a brave fight to avoid the wooden spoon position. Danny Swan gave Kent a 9th minute lead, but Jermaine Cuffy secured the point for the home side with 13 minutes left. **The 61 FC** continued their recent renaissance with a 4-3 win at home to **Mursley United**, but they left it very, very late – the winner coming from Oliver Goundry in the 2nd minute of added on time. The Luton side recovered from Brian Nixon's early opener for Mursley to take a 3-1 lead at half time, thanks to a brace from Alex Bennett and one from Aaron Lewis, but two goals from Jakub Kasprzyk and Ed Mills pulled Mursley back on level terms after the break. It remained deadlocked until Goundry popped up with his winner. **Tring Corinthians** recovered from being two down away at **Caddington** to record an excellent 4-2 victory, with Karl Davidson and Neil Richardson both bagging a pair. Robbie Adams and Tony Scurry gave Caddington the early lead.

HERTS CENTENARY TROPHY – QUARTER FINALS

Hoddesdon Town relinquished their hold of the trophy as they went down 3-0 away to **London Colney**. All the goals came in the second half, Russell Gallagher opening the scoring before Gary Simmonds added the second from a highly disputed penalty. David Parkinson completed the Lilywhites woes a couple of minutes later with a fine individual goal. Div One side **Kings Langley** had a relatively passage into the Semi's as they beat Div Two side **Wodson Park** 4-1 at Ware. Langley's scorers were Joe Gallagher, with a pair, Dan Thompson and Jack Johnson whilst Tony Amstead got a late consolation for the home side.

BERKS & BUCKS INTERMEDIATE CUP –FOURTH ROUND

Mixed results from our four clubs remaining in the competition. **Aston Clinton** made the short trip down the road to play **Aylesbury Dynamos** and returned with a 4-0 win, whilst **New Bradwell St Peter** had an easy 5-0 win at home to **Aylesbury Reserves**. **Padbury United** went down 2-1 away at Hellenic Div One East table toppers **Wokingham & Emmbrook**, whilst previous winners **Pitstone & Ivinghoe** succumbed 4-2 at home to **Bucks C.C.** In the draw for the Quarter Finals, Aston Clinton will be at home to Windsor Great Park whilst New Bradwell has to travel to Newbury.

MIDWEEK -TUESDAY 26th JANUARY

Premier Division: Three of the top 6 clubs were in action on Tuesday night. The top game was at **Aylesbury** where leaders **Tring Athletic** were the visitors, and in front of a crowd of 128 it was the hosts who came out on top with two goals, from Ross Lafayette and Kieran Schmidt, in a five minute spell late in the first half. This win takes Aylesbury back to the top, a point clear of Tring and with a game in hand. Fourth place **Colney Heath** missed out on the opportunity to close the gap at the top when they went down 3-2 away at **Hertford Town**. Although the hosts took an early lead thanks to Rob Luya, two goals from Kevin Ashwood and Ian Cooper gave Heath a 2-1 lead at the break, but Hertford fought back in the second half and Dominic Musafiri and another from Luya secured the win for the Blues. **Leverstock Green**, with goals from Lewis Pritchard (2) and Gary Connolly, moved up a place to 5th after their 3-1 win away at **Biggleswade United**, for whom Sean Murray replied.

Division One: There were three big scores in the 6 games last night, although no result affected the top four placings. Top scorers were **London Colney** who scored nine without reply against **Cranfield United**, who clearly don't come out at night as they lost 10-0 against Biggleswade Town last Tuesday evening. Amongst the Blue Boys scorers was Paul Danslow who scored a second half hat trick in just 4 minutes! **Hoddesdon Town** put a dent in **AFC Dunstable's** promotion hopes (whilst at the same time doing their own prospects no harm) with a 6-2 win, which included doubles from Tom Neilson and Jason Sorial, whilst **Amphill Town's** up and down season continued with a 6-1 away win over **Stony Stratford Town**. **Crawley Green** let the chance to top the table slip away, as they lost 2-1 away at **Kings Langley**, and **New Bradwell St Peter** struggled to beat **Amersham Town** 1-0. The game between **Harpenden Town** and **Sun Postal Sports** finished 2-2.

Challenge Trophy –Fourth Round: Big upset here as Division Two front runners **Aston Clinton** defeated Premier Division promotion hopefuls **Dunstable Town** 3-2 on their own patch. The visitors were two up, through Ben Sullivan and Jeremy Robinson by the time the hour mark was reached, but two goals in fourteen minutes pulled the home side level. Relief was short lived, however, as Aaron Usmani popped up with the winner three minutes later to take Aston Clinton into the Semi Finals, where they will meet either Kings Langley or Broxbourne Boro.

The Dudley Latham Memorial (Premier Division) Cup: a 14th minute goal from Rob Tungatt was enough to seal **Broxbourne Boro's** win over local rivals **St. Margaretsbury** and take them into the Semi Finals where they will host **Hanwell Town** who beat **Hertford Town** 3-0 last Tuesday. The other two Quarter Final games were also played last Tuesday, and both went to extra time – I guess they were all so glad to be playing again that they quite welcomed the extra 30 minutes! **Aylesbury** just edged out **Dunstable Town** 1-0, the knock out blow (sorry, Ian) coming from Nathan Graham with just two minutes left, whilst the match between **Colney Heath** and **Kingsbury London Tigers** went to penalties, before the Tigers emerged victorious.

County Senior Cups: both weekends Vase contestants were in action. **Brimsdown Rovers** recovered from their disappointment to beat **Hanwell Town** 4-1 in the London Senior Cup, whilst **Royston Town**, probably still recovering from their win, went down 3-2 to **Cheshunt** in the Herts Senior Cup.

GARY (WILLOW) WILLIAMS TESTIMONIAL – SAT 8th MAY 2010

On Saturday 8th May at 3pm Harefield United will be holding a testimonial match for one of their best loved club captains –Gary Williams. The club has had the pleasure of having Willow lead the team for many seasons now since his move from neighbours Northwood. He will be much missed in the dressing room and it is hoped that this will not be goodbye but see you again soon. Surely he will be back in the game soon, can't see him going shopping and doing the DIY at the weekends for long. Anyone from "WILLOWS" past that wants to take part in the game or just to meet up again please contact Ray Green 07834 771212

Thanks to Mick Ewen and Bob Flight for their reports. I saw a slightly worrying weather forecast last night which sort of predicted the return of the cold weather, and possibly the white stuff, so fingers crossed that they've got it wrong again!

As always, please send in any news, views, items of interest etc - to

Bill Scholes

billscholes@hotmail.co.uk