

MOLTEN SPARTAN SOUTH MIDLANDS FOOTBALL LEAGUE

NEWSLETTER No. 16

By Bill Scholes

SATURDAY 24TH NOVEMBER

Just two hat tricks in the league this Saturday, both against teams with an Athletic suffix. Kevin Cooper was again on the money for Hertford Town in their 6-2 win against Tring Athletic and Darren Dykes went one better for Stony Stratford with four goals against Kent Athletic. There were also two hat tricks by players from a club with an Athletic suffix – Adam Furness scored four and Dave Kiddie three in Arlesley Athletic's 9-3 demolition of Risley Sports in a Beds Senior Trophy game. Spooky!

PREMIER DIVISION ROUND UP

With 6 out of the top 7 seven clubs winning, there was no change at the top of the leader board. The only club in the top 7 who didn't win were **Chalfont St. Peter**, who were rather surprisingly held to a 1-1 draw away at **Colney Heath**. In fact there were only 6 minutes left when Bradley Bubb's goal saved the Saints blushes, Phil Jackman having given Colney Heath the lead on 67 minutes. **Biggleswade Town** remain on top following their 2-1 win away at **Welwyn Garden City**. Jamie Steele and Peter Gatti had given the Waders a two goal cushion, but the Citizens pulled one back through Vince Rispoli with 10 minutes left. A Charley Baverstock 27th minute goal was enough to see second placed **Hanwell Town** come away from **Broxbourne Borough** with all 3 points, whilst third placed **Brimmsdown Rovers** were also on the road and were victorious by 3-1 at **Kingsbury London Tigers**. Aaron Churchouse gave Rovers an early lead, but Edson Cata brought Kingsbury level on 34 minutes – however Rovers proved to be the stronger side in the second half, and goals from Mervyn Abraham and Scott Atkinson secured all three points. In fourth place, and with two games in hand on the leaders, **Hertford Town** are purring along nicely and enjoyed a fairly comfortable 6-2 win away at **Tring Athletic**. Statto Ralph Griffiths from Tring was quick to point out that Tring actually enjoyed more possession and territory than Hertford, but acknowledged that the clinical finishing of the Blues' dangerous forwards in punishing the homes side's numerous errors was a major factor in the scoreline. Kevin Cooper opened the scoring for Hertford after just 6 minutes, despite strong Tring protests for offside (the ex-referee munchkin behind the goal, however, stoutly defended the official's decision) but Darren Caseman pulled Tring back into the game just 10 minutes later. Two quick goals from Ryan Redford and Cooper again, in the space of two minutes, changed the game and when Dave Hunt made it 4-1 just before half time, it was virtually game over. Eight minutes into the restart, Ryan Wade floated a free kick into the top corner to make it 5-1 and shortly after, Cooper completed his hat trick with a simple tap-in before retiring early to the bar. Tring never gave up and were rewarded with a second goal when Vinnie Iannone headed home a corner in the 74th minute. It was a comprehensive victory for Hertford, who looked strong at the back, busy and mobile in midfield, and probably the most dangerous strike partnership in the league up front. **Harefield United** kept up the pressure on the leading four with a 3-0 home win over a very hastily assembled **Ruislip Manor** side, who were hit badly in midweek by the defection of their managers and many of their players. In the circumstances the makeshift side did well to keep the score goalless at half time, but after the break the Hares ran in three through Sean Sonner, Danny Buckle and Danny Gallen. Another side that cannot be ruled out of the promotion chase are **Beaconsfield SYCOB** and they relied on a Sunny Seaton 69th minute goal to run out 1-0 winners at home to **Cockfosters**. The second highest goalscorers in the Premier Division were **Langford**, who defeated struggling **London Colney** 4-0. Although only one goal in front at half time, a Gary Walker 8th minute effort, Langford upped the ante in the second half with three more from Dave Brown, Robert Groves and Wes Byrne. **Holmer Green** dropped into the bottom three as their poor run of form continued with a 3-1 home defeat by **Oxhey Jets**. The visitors took the lead with a Marc Ayres penalty after 25 minutes, but Simon Williams gave the Old Bankers some hope with an equaliser just before the break. However, the Jets took off in the second half, and goals from Luke Lloyd and Wayne Gladly secured the victory. **Leverstock Green's** up and down season continued with an up as they had a home 3-1 victory over **St. Margaretsbury** to celebrate. 'Bury's Kane Lovett put through his own net to give the home side an early lead, which Mickey Swaysland doubled after 24 minutes. Steve Boad added to the lead in the second half, but Ricky Light did pull one back in a much better second half for the visitors.

Beaconsfield SYCOB's 3-0 win at home to **Colney Heath** on Monday night enabled them to move up a place to fourth, overtaking Harefield United in the process.

DIVISION ONE ROUND UP

Once again the lead has changed hands in Division One, and its **Haringey Borough's** turn to go top of the pile as they beat **Amersham Town** 3-1 away. Amersham led for most of the game, thanks to an early goal from Jude Eboji, but late goals, including a brace from Chimalu Obigi and a last minute effort from Karl Lewis secured all three points. Last week's leaders, **Kentish Town**, dropped back to second place as they lost 5-3 at home to **Stony Stratford Town**, another of the promotion hopefuls. Darren Dykes was Stony's hero, notching his sides first four goals. With the two sides above them involved in County Cup games, **Sport London e Benfica** took the opportunity to move up two places from fifth to third as they won 3-1 at home to **Buckingham Athletic**, thanks to second half goals from Edgar Sa Da Silva, Abdikharim Muse and Albert De Matos. Athletic's sole reply came from Jason Benjafield. **New Bradwell St. Peter** overcame **Cheshunt Reserves** with a solitary goal from Lee Coulter in the 32nd minute, whilst at the foot of the table, **Royston Town**, under new management, closed the gap on the clubs above them by beating **Sun Postal Sports** 2-1 at home. Both of the Crows goals came from George Garner, with ex Tring Athletic player Stuart Steadman replying for Sun Postal. In a hectic relegation battle at Elmfield Gate between **Winslow United** and **Bedford Town Reserves**, four players were sent off and as many cautioned as Bedford triumphed 2-0. None of the crowd foresaw this, as a testing first half saw Stacey Field for once beat the home offside trap to score on 9 minutes. Winslow missed a golden opportunity to draw level but Lawrence Wiffen's shot was well saved by the Bedford keeper. The game exploded in the second half as Winslow's Felice Iannone was sent off for violent conduct. Worse was to follow for the home team when they allowed Paul Draycott the time and space to curl his shot into the top corner of the net. The Winslow players seemed to lose their composure and an off the ball incident sparked a midfield melee of players. The officials struggled to restore order and when this was done, one Bedford player and two from Winslow were sent off. Thankfully, the remainder of the match was played out peacefully with Bedford running out worthy winners.

DIVISION TWO ROUND UP

With their three nearest rivals occupied in Cup games, **Kings Langley** took the opportunity to extend their lead at the top to 8 points as they enjoyed a 3-0 home win over **Old Bradwell United**. The home side went two up at half time thanks to Andrew Cracknell and Jack Johnson, and an own goal from Bradwell's Fraser Nichol completed the scoring. **Aston Clinton** kept in touch with the chasing pack by returning from bottom club **Markyate** with a 5-0 win, whilst, sadly, a serious injury caused the abandonment of the **Mursley United** and **Risborough Rangers** game. The first half of the **Pitstone & Ivinghoe** and **Tring Corinthians** local derby was fairly uninspiring, but the Juicy Jaffas obviously worked their magic as the game came to life immediately after the break with two quick goals, - Simon Jackson's opener for Pitstone being quickly cancelled out by Corries Charles Snoxhall. Ashley Higgins put the away side in front on the hour mark and Steve Lewis wrapped up all three points just before time. The mid table encounter between **The 61 FC** and **Caddington** looked like ending all square before Caddington's David Edwards popped up with the winner with 15 minutes left.

BEDS SENIOR TROPHY SECOND ROUND

There were two all-SSMFL ties in this competition – **Kent Athletic** beating **Brache Sparta** 3-0 and **AFC Dunstable** winning 5-1 away at **Cranfield United**. There were goals galore at **Arlesley Athletic** as the home team ran riot against **Risley Sports**, winning 9-3 aet. Amazingly, the score at normal time was 2-2. **Crawley Green** also took their opponents, **Luton Borough**, to extra time, finally finishing 4-4. However they lost the penalty shoot out by 5-4. Elsewhere **Amphill Town** went down 2-1 at home to **AFC Kempston**, **Bedford** lost 3-1 away to **Meltis Corinthians**, and **Totternhoe** could not make home advantage pay as they went down 2-1 to **Sharnbrook**.

HERTS SENIOR CENTENARY TROPHY SECOND ROUND

Both **Harpenden Town** and **Hoddesdon Town** were in action at home against Herts County League sides, and both triumphed by a four-goal margin. Harpenden scored four without reply against a **Buntingford Town** who lost a number of players following their ex-manager to Royston Town, whilst Hoddesdon Town racked up a 5-1 win against **Bedmond Sports & Social**.

ANAGRAM RECORDS TROPHY THIRD ROUND

We have three sides through to the 3rd Round of the above Trophy, which started life in 1999 as a competition for clubs in the Home Counties who did not qualify for the FA Vase – basically because they didn't have floodlights. Tring Athletic won the Trophy, then known as the Cherry Red Books Trophy, in the first two years of its inception, and also finished runners up in its fourth year. The three sides, all with home advantage, hoping to follow in Tring's footsteps are **Pitstone & Ivinghoe** who play Buntingford Town, **Winslow United** who entertain Manford Way, and **Amersham Town** who will play Frenford Senior. We wish all three the best of luck.

WEALDSTONE AND RUISLIP MANOR MERGER DENIED

From the Harrow Observer – 22nd November

Wealdstone have denied rumours this week that they are to merge with struggling Spartan South Midlands League club Ruislip Manor. But Stones have confirmed an interest in the situation at their cash-strapped near neighbours, and the possibility of some form of alliance with the Grosvenor Vale club in the near future cannot yet, it would seem, be ruled out. Speculation has been rife over homeless Wealdstone's intentions following a posting on a website which claimed that a merger between the two clubs was 'a done deal.' However, Wealdstone chairman Howard Kraiss has refuted those claims. He said: "We are not going to merge with Ruislip Manor. We are aware of the problems at Ruislip and are trying to understand what is going on. At the moment I can't say any more than that. But suggestions of a possible takeover in the future were not so readily dismissed. Said Mr Kraiss: "We have made some enquiries and it's premature really to say publicly what may or may not happen." Wealdstone are on record as saying they would look at other possible avenues as a back up in the event that the Prince Edward Playing Fields site, which will include a new stadium for the club, fails to materialise. However, with Barnet FC having successfully concluded negotiations with Harrow Council to complete the project, builders are expected to begin work there in February, and Mr Kraiss says he believes Wealdstone could be in their new home for next season, or during next season. Their initial plan was for all the club's teams to be under one roof at Prince Edward but that has been hit by Environment Agency concerns over a flood plain on the site, which means the loss of a 'green' pitch on which the reserve and youth teams would have played. Those teams currently play their matches at Grosvenor Vale. Said Mr Kraiss: "We need to have backup and we are looking to consider other opportunities. Its not just about the first team."

MANAGERIAL CHANGES

As mentioned in last week's Newsletter, David Craig has stepped down as manager at **Cockfosters**, and the new man in the hot seat is his erstwhile assistant **Mark Standen**.

There is a new management team at **Arlesey Athletic**, where **Mark Phillips** and **Daniel Lane** have taken the reins. The duo has replaced Darren Staniforth, who has stood down to concentrate on the coaching side.

FA VASE THIRD ROUND

Correction to 3rd Round Draw published in last weeks Newsletter. **Ampthill Town** are at home to **VCD Athletic**, and not Concord Rangers

Many thanks to our contributors - please keep all news / views / items of interest coming to billscholes@hotmail.co.uk Bill Scholes