

**MOLTEN SPARTAN SOUTH MIDLANDS FOOTBALL LEAGUE
NEWSLETTER No. 18**

By Bill Scholes

SATURDAY 8th DECEMBER 2007

To say that last Saturday was a bit of a wash out would be an understatement, as just 4 league games, one in the Premier and three in Division One, and two of the three Vase games survived the rather atrocious weather. There was just the one hat trick on Saturday, from Matt Turl of Royston Town, but last Wednesday Dan Heron netted three for Biggleswade Town, whilst last night saw a hat trick of penalties from James Armstrong of Leverstock Green as well as a normal one from Allan Arthur in the same game.

FA VASE – THIRD ROUND PROPER

Of the three matches involving SSMFL sides, play was possible in two of these, with **Brimdsdown Rovers'** game at **Crowborough Athletic** being postponed. I know I was miffed, having spent around four and a half hours in my car driving to and from Crowborough, but I felt particularly sorry for the Crowborough officials who had spent from 8.00am in the morning till around 2.00ish working on the pitch. A local referee had given his OK during the morning, and thus Brimdsdown, their supporters and Mick Ewen had all travelled to the game. The match referee, however, who came from Chelmsford, opened his car door on arrival, and muttered the fatal words "its not very nice is it", and disappointed both teams and the assembled spectators by calling the game off. I subsequently discovered that he is friends with Mick Ewen, which says a lot!

Amphill Town entertained Kent League Premier side **VCD Athletic**, and put up a plucky show before going down 3-0 to the side that had already put out last season's beaten finalists AFC Totton. The visitors brought many supporters with them, which helped to swell the crowd to 160 - pity that could not be replicated every week. VCD dominated the opening 15 minutes and only a goal line clearance kept them out. However, as the half went on Amphill began to test the VCD defence and should have gone ahead but the ball was miskicked when in front of the VCD goal. The attractive approach play from the visitors was going nowhere but Amphill fell to the route one tactic on 35 minutes when they failed to deal with the bounce of the ball and Leroy Huggins lobbed the ball over the advancing Andy Gibb to score. A similar goal eight minutes later saw a cross from the left tucked away by Richard Sinden. For the first ten minutes of the second half Amphill stormed forward and could count themselves unlucky not to score. But pushing up, they were constantly caught on the break by VCD who really should have sealed the match. With time ticking away, Huggins finally made a breakthrough count and he scored from an acute angle on 85 minutes. There was just time for Amphill to score a well-deserved goal when sub Michael Owens rifled a shot into the VCD net on 89 minutes. All in all, a very entertaining match, well controlled by Referee Brian O'Sullivan and his two assistants.

In the other game played, **Harefield United** travelled to **Ipswich Wanderers**, who are bottom of the Eastern Counties Premier Division, and came away with a 3-0 victory. Danny Buckle's goal in the 22nd minute gave the Hares a first half lead, and goals from Ben Hammond and Adam Willis in the second half ensured Harefield's place in the Fourth Round. There was still time at the end of the game for a mass brawl, in which 3 players were dismissed – two from Harefield and one from Ipswich.

FA VASE -FOURTH ROUND DRAW

In the 4th Round Draw yesterday, **Harefield United** have been drawn away to Greenwich Borough, who are currently sitting around half way in the Kent Senior league. **Brimdsdown Rovers**, should they beat Crowborough in their postponed game being played this coming Saturday, will face another trip, to either Sherborne Town from Division One of the Western League, or Lymington Town from the Wessex League.

PREMIER DIVISION ROUND UP

The two mid week games played last Wednesday both involved the top two in the division, and both teams took the opportunity to extend their lead over the chasing pack. Dan Heron grabbed his second hat trick in a row to give **Biggleswade Town** an emphatic victory in the local derby against **Biggleswade United**. Two up at the break, the Waders strike-force fired on all cylinders after the break to secure a comfortable 6-0 win and maintain a four point lead at the top of the SSMFL Premier Division. Town led after 26 minutes, Heron converting at the far post and netted a killer second two minutes before half time and it came via a brilliant move involving Heron, Jamie Steele and Chris Hewitt, Steele finishing off from inside the box. The third duly arrived on 54 minutes, Heron turning and scoring from a long throw and within two minutes they were 4-0 up, Steele bagging his second of the evening. Heron wrapped up his hat trick, and his 23rd goal of the season, when he pulled away from the defender to after excellent work from Jack Weeden. Keith Thomas completed the scoring with a late header. Second placed **Brimdsdown Rovers** kept the gap to four points with a 2-0 home win over **Cockfosters**, thanks to goals just before the end of each half. Scott Atkinson got the first after 43 minutes, and Eric Manangu wrapped up the points in the 88th minute.

The only game to take place on Saturday was at **Langford** where the home side ran out very comfortable 6-0 winners over **Tring Athletic**. Tring are obviously the side to watch if goals are your bag – their last three games have resulted in a 6-2 defeat, a 7-0 win and now a 6-0 loss! Langford dominated this game from start to finish and two penalties guided them to an easy victory. The hosts went ahead in the first two minutes after Rob Groves ran down the left hand side and passed the ball through the middle, penetrating Athletic's defence to see striker Dave Brown hit the back of the net. Tring were then caught playing about at the back when Groves snatched the ball up to slide it past the keeper on a simple one-on-one attack. From the kick off it then went from bad to worse for Tring, as they were caught straight away by a Mark Wright superb run around the Athletic team, only to be fouled by the last defender. The defender saw red and Mark Wright was more than pleased when converting the penalty to make it 3-0 at the break. The visitors improved slightly, but after constant pressure Lee Pateman received the ball in the box to hit past the goalkeeper to make it 4-0. Greg Skelton then made it into the box, only to be fouled once again by the last defender, who saw red, leaving an already weak Athletic side with only nine men. Skelton then hit it into the bottom corner to improve the lead. Late in the game Ryan O'Neill's corner managed to lob Tring's unfortunate goalkeeper to finish off the game.

There was a real topsy-turvy game at **Ruislip Manor** last night, where **Leverstock Green** eventually ran out 6-3 winners. In a game of four penalties, Leverstock led 2-0 within 10 minutes, thanks to goals from Allan Arthur and a James Armstrong penalty. Manor then hit back with two goals from George Mapes, one a penalty, and one from Michael Walker, to lead 3-2 at half time Green then recovered their composure to produce a sparkling second half display and an impressive come-back with two more goals from Arthur and two more penalties from Armstrong.

DIVISION ONE ROUND UP

There were just three games in this division on Saturday. The arrival of new manager Craig Connell at **Cranfield United** has seen a big turn-round in the Club's fortunes. Already there is a buzz around the place that has been missing for many years. In the space of weeks with a few astute signings he has transformed a young and talented but fragile side into a force to be reckoned with and they are likely to be the team in that division to watch out for in the future. On Saturday they continued their good run with an excellent 3-2 win over second placed **Kentish Town**, who thereby missed out on the chance to go top. Alistair Shearer gave Cranfield the lead from the penalty spot after 36 minutes, and that remained the score until the last 15 minutes when the game burst into life. Adam Wooding put Cranfield two up in the 76th minute, but four minutes later it was all-square as Lee Scott and Bradley Newell scored twice in two minutes for Kentish Town. Just two minutes later, Shearer got his second, and the all-important winning goal for Cranfield. **Hoddesdon Town** remain in fourth place, but dropped two valuable points by only drawing 1-1 at home to second from bottom **Winslow United**. The visitors took the lead in the first half through Ryan Wiffin, but Nick Newbury replied for the Lilywhites immediately after the break. In the day's other game, **Royston Town** ran riot at home to **Amersham Town**, scoring 7 goals without reply. The Crows were only two up at half time, but went on a scoring spree after the break. Will Turl scored a hat trick, and there were goals for Matt Turl, Luke Robins, Graham Tibballs and Mark Babbage.

MANAGERIAL CHANGE

Its all change down at Grosvenor Vale. The new man in charge of **Ruislip Manor** is Mickey Johnson, who has stepped up from running Manor's Reserve team, which has unfortunately been disbanded. The previous manager, Francis Joseph, has left the club.

MOLTEN FOOTBALLS SPECIAL XMAS OFFER

Balls, Balls, and even more Balls. Those lovely people at Molten Sports have a special Xmas Offer on Match Balls running throughout December. Buy 3 FVA 5000A Vantaggio Match Balls, and get a fourth absolutely FREE. To take advantage of this excellent money saving offer, get in touch with Andy Passman at Molten Sports – 01525 404274 - NOW

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

Bill Scholes