

## MOLTEN SPARTAN SOUTH MIDLANDS FOOTBALL LEAGUE NEWSLETTER No. 21 – THE FIRST OF 2008

By *Bill Scholes*

I hope that you all had an excellent Christmas and New Year and that Santa brought you everything you wished for. For those suffering withdrawal symptoms there were of course some games over the Christmas period, as well as a Christmas Special of Strictly Come Dancing!

### BOXING DAY – DIVISION TWO ROUND UP

5 games on Boxing Day, and 10 sets of Christmas puddings running around with a 12noon kick off. Division leaders **Kings Langley** extended their lead at the top to 11 points, but were very lucky to come away from **Tring Corinthians** with a 2-1 victory. Corinthians were on top for long periods, particularly in the second half and were by far the better footballing side, but just lacked that final cutting edge. Langley took the lead in the 16<sup>th</sup> minute when a fortuitous long shot from Anthony Cooper squirmed out of the Corries keepers hands, but due to some excellent defending and the odd bit of luck, they were unable to increase their lead and Corries drew level in the 36<sup>th</sup> minute when Darren O'Callaghan fiercely hooked a home a corner from the right. Although Corries dominated the second half kicking up the slope, they just could not find that final killer touch and, typically, Langley's winner when it came with just 5 minutes left, was a scrappy affair, as a high ball was hoisted into the 6 yard box, bounced around and was finally stabbed home by Jack Johnson. An excellent game to blow away the Christmas cobwebs but I'm not sure what happened to goodwill towards all men, as the entertainment was slightly spoilt by the persistent comments aimed at the referee by the Langley coach, who cleverly disguised himself as a tree in the first half, standing on the opposite side to the dugouts. However in the second half, he returned to the dug out side, continued his comments and, without his disguise, was swiftly spotted by the vigilant referee and quickly despatched from the bench area. Mention must be made of the referee Carl Henry and his two Assistants Nerino Vianello and Lewis Fowler, who all had excellent games. **Totternhoe** travelled up to the Milton Keynes area and returned from **Old Bradwell United** with a 4-2 victory. An amazing game in which all 6 goals were scored in the first half, did the Xmas puds take their toll, did anyone come out for the second half, or was it a well rehearsed plan to get home early for Boxing Day lunch? Totternhoe took a very Xmas present of an OG in the third minute and Joe Willmott doubled the score in the 17<sup>th</sup> minute. Old Bradwell then hit back with two goals from Danny Broad, so by 24 minutes it was 2-2. A couple of minutes later Andrew Wilson added a third for the visitors and Gary Simpson completed the scoring before 40 minutes had elapsed. With second place Crawley Green not playing, **AFC Dunstable** moved up to the same number of points, although they have played two games more, with their 3-1 home win over **Pitstone & Ivinghoe**. John Cooper gave Dunstable the lead just before half time, but Lawrence Bunker swiftly equalised for Pitstone just after the break. James McCarthy then scored a brace to seize all three points. **The 61 FC** moved ever closer to the leaders with their 2-0 home win against **Aston Clinton**, thanks to a goal in each half from Alan Lewis and Oliver Goundry. The local derby between **Caddington** and **Kent Athletic** ended in a 2-2 draw – another game where all 4 goals were scored in the first half. There was an early rush as Adrian Fontenelle gave Caddington a 4<sup>th</sup> minute lead, but Mishak Cole cancelled this out 4 minutes later. There was then a quiet period for 20 minutes or so before Ray Massey put Caddington back in front, only to see the lead wiped out a few minutes later by Danny Sunderland.

### SATURDAY 29<sup>th</sup> DECEMBER

*There were just the two Christmas hat tricks this week, both actually scoring four goals and both coming in Division Two. James McCarthy got 4 for AFC Dunstable and Steve Powell scored 4 for Aston Clinton.*

### PREMIER DIVISION ROUND UP

Leaders **Biggleswade Town** retain top spot in spite of failing to score for the first time this season and gaining their first draw, away at **Langford**. The best crowd of the day (147) saw a potentially exciting game rather spoilt by extremely cold and windy conditions, making good football virtually impossible. In truth it was rather boring, with little to warm the cockles of the frozen spectators hearts, with both keepers heavily under-utilized. Chances were few and far between, the Waders having a couple in the first half – an excellent free kick from Jack Weeden that hit the post did deserve more reward, and Langford could have won the game near the end if only their shooting had been a tad better. Sadly, Waders leading goalscorer, Dan Heron, pulled up lame with a hamstring injury in the second half, and will almost certainly miss the next few games. Second placed **Chalfont St. Peter** missed the chance to close the gap on Biggleswade, when they could only manage a 2-2 draw away to **Cockfosters**. After the home side had raced into a two-goal lead just after half time, even a point looked beyond them, but a Charlie Strutton double saved the day. The second highest attendance of the day (131) was at **Beaconsfield SYCOB**, where 3<sup>rd</sup> played 4<sup>th</sup> as **Harefield United** were the visitors. Another draw, but at least the spectators had a couple of goals to see – the first when the Hares went in front with a Ben Hammond goal just before half time, and the second from the Rams equaliser from Oliver Godwin with 13 minutes left. The three teams below the top 4 all won and kept up the pressure on the leaders. **Brimdown Rovers** beat **Welwyn Garden City** 3-1, with a brace from Ashley Taylor-Forbes, who rumour has it has been on trial at Gillingham, and **Hertford Town** needed a goal in the 8<sup>th</sup> minute of stoppage time to finally overcome **Kingsbury London Tigers** 2-1. Hertford took the lead after 35 minutes when Ryan Redford latched on to a long ball from defence and slotted past keeper Kambila for his 24<sup>th</sup> goal of the season, but Tigers only needed 7 minutes of the second half to draw level – Renars Zarchenko reacting swiftly after Blues keeper Lee Robinson parried a shot into his path. The game appeared to be heading for a draw, until Phil Goss knocked in a cross from the left in the 8<sup>th</sup> minute of stoppage time! The remaining top 7 contenders are **Hanwell Town** and they returned from a visit to second from bottom **Holmer Green** with a 3-1 victory. A Lee Putnam penalty after half an hour gave the home side a glimmer of hope, but Denis Involi brought Hanwell back level just before the break, and two goals from Victor Osobu in the second half sealed all three points. **London Colney** remain rooted to the foot of the table following their 4-0 loss away at **Biggleswade United**, who scored two in each half, and **Ruislip Manor** remain in the danger zone as they lost 2-1 at home to **Aylesbury Vale**. Vale took a first half lead through Stuart Corbould and Daniel Jones, with Anthony McDonald netting a late consolation for the Manor. **Leverstock Green** ended 2007 on a high note as they continued their good run of league form at home to **Tring Athletic** with their fifth win in an unbeaten run of eight games. Tring opened the scoring in the 14<sup>th</sup> minute with a looping header from Mark Burfoot but an excellent strike from Steve Hawes levelled the scores after 63 minutes. Three goals in the last ten minutes, one from Anthony Page and two from Steve Boad sealed an impressive 4-1 win for Leverstock. **Broxbourne Borough** entertained **Colney Heath** and emerged with a good 4-1 victory, courtesy of two goals from Paul Dodd and singles from Danny Ward and Anthony Burke – Neil Jordan getting a late consolation for the visitors. In the days other game, **St. Margaretsbury** ensured that **Oxhey Jets** remained grounded as they came away from their visit with a 2-0 win, goals coming from Matt Maskell and Ben Herod.

### DIVISION ONE ROUND UP

The top 3 clubs were forced to sit this week out, as Friday night's rain took toll of the Haringey Borough v Sport London e Benfica and Kentish Town v Royston Town games. This allowed **Hoddesdon Town** to move up into third place following their 3-2 away win at **Bedford Town Reserves**. The Lilywhites mirrored the previous weeks' win against Sport London as they squandered an early lead to go 2-1 down early in the second half, but then rallied with two excellent goals to take all three points. Andy Martin headed Hoddesdon into an early lead, but Bedford hit

back with a swift couple of goals just after the restart through Mark Allen and Paul Drewe. Peter Ulatowski brought the scores level after 62 minutes, before Richie Howard bent a free kick around the wall for the winner. **Bedford FC** stole all three points against visitors **Amersham Town** with a late goal from Mark Reed as the wind proved difficult for both sides. FC played against the gale in the first half and Town took the lead early on with a long-range shot from Adamson Ajaji. Bedford responded well and Paul Lawrence slotted past the Amersham keeper to level the scores at the break. The weather worsened and the game was rather quiet until Reed converted a brilliantly executed corner to keep FC up amongst the front-runners. A late equaliser from **New Bradwell St. Peter** and a turned down penalty appeal prevented **Amphill Town** from taking all three points, as they had to settle for a 2-2 draw. Stuart Reynolds scored a marvellous free kick from 30 yards to Amphill ahead but Ed Wheatley hit the ball in off the post to equalise before half time. Reynolds again scored after a brilliant 40-yard run, squeezing the ball past the keeper to put Amphill in front with 15 minutes remaining but an 87th minute curling shot from Ricky Simpson levelled the scores. The local derby between **Stony Stratford Town** and **Buckingham Athletic** was a scrappy affair and aptly settled by a scrambled goal on 71 minutes. The first half saw Buckingham with a strong wind at their backs have the majority of play and they really should have scored at least two goals. Two of the misses were from the six-yard line! Stony did not have a shot on goal throughout the half. The second half was better and Stony now had the advantage of the strong wind and only a good save from the Buckingham keeper kept them out. The longer the game went on, the more likely it looked that Stony would score. This did eventually happen following a corner and the ball hitting the underside of the crossbar, before being forced over the goal line by Shaun Carr for the only goal of the game. Despite levelling late on, **Arlesey Athletic's** lack of concentration saw **Harpenden Town** take all the points with two goals in the last 5 minutes. A long range shot from Toshik Knock put Town ahead at the break and the game saw few chances until the last ten minutes when Arlesey equalised through Terry Lock. Athletic tried to defend the draw but Town counter-attacked and scored late two goals courtesy of Gerard Smith and Dan Jeffries. Too many mince pies and not enough training over the festive period left **Cranfield United** struggling to keep up with bottom of the table **Sun Postal Sports**. The home side went one up at the break through Darren Lancaster, but piled on the pressure after the resumption and made three more deliveries into the Cranfield net through Andrew Avis, Ben Poulton and Lancaster again. This win for Sun Postal moves them off the bottom, just, and relegates Amersham to the wooden spoon spot. **Winslow United** moved out of the bottom two with a 2-0 home win over **Brache Sparta**, who have now slipped into the bottom half of the table. Winslow's goal scorers were Alex Lawes and Craig Haywood.

#### DIVISION TWO ROUND UP

Leaders **Kings Langley** made it six points out of six over the festive period with their second successive away win by the odd goal when they returned from **Mursley United** with a 1-0 win thanks to a Lewis Pritchard goal in the 25<sup>th</sup> minute. The gap at the top is 11 points but **Crawley Green**, who beat **Old Bradwell United** 4-1 at home, could halve that if they win their two games in hand. Once again there were a couple of big scores in this division, with **AFC Dunstable** maintaining third place with a 9-0 walloping of sad **Markyate**. James McCarthy scored a first half hat trick and then added a fourth in the second half. Jay Hutchins scored a double and there were singles from Richard Harker, Kevin Taylor, and Chris Hemmings. There was another four goal performance, this time from Steve Powell as **Aston Clinton** beat **Padbury United** 6-2, whilst a brace from Lawrence Bunker saw **Pitstone & Ivinghoe** run out 2-1 winners at home to **Caddington**. **Totternhoe** beat **Risborough Rangers** 1-0 thanks to a 19<sup>th</sup> minute Joe Willmott goal, whilst neither **Kent Athletic** or **Tring Corinthians** could find the net in their 0-0 draw.

#### NEW YEARS DAY ROUND UP

Just two games in Division Two and **Crawley Green** inflicted only the second league defeat of the campaign on **The 61 FC** with a 1-0 win. A crowd of 67, which was nearly as many as for The

61FC's previous seven league games in total, saw the all-important goal scored in the 65<sup>th</sup> minute by Daniel Watson. In the days other game, **Mursley United** were at home to near-neighbours **Padbury United** and emerged with a narrow 3-2 victory. The home side took the lead after only 7 minutes through Nigel Price, but Nathan Townsend levelled for the visitors some 10 minutes later. Martin Shaw put Mursley back in front on the hour mark, only for Padbury to draw level again through an Ian Fraser penalty, but 2 minutes into added on time, Brian Nixon scored the winner.

#### LEADING GOALSCORERS –ALL COMPETITIONS –UP TO 25 DEC

In the Premier Division, there are 5 players who have hit the back of the net over 20 times to date. Leading the way with 26 goals is **Kevin Cooper** of Hertford Town, but interestingly 14 of his goals have come in Cup competitions. Two goals adrift of Cooper are **Dan Heron** of Biggleswade Town and **Sean Sonner** of Harefield Utd, both on 24. Heron is by far the League's leading scorer with 23 – 7 ahead of **Ashley Taylor-Forbes** from Brimsdown Rovers who has 16. Hot on their heels and both on 23 goals are **Bradley Bubb** of Chalfont St. Peter and **Ryan Redford** of Hertford Town. The leading hotshots in Division One are **Adam Furness** of Arlesey Athletic with 19, **Stuart Reynolds** of Amphill Town with 18, and **Jonathan Donoghue** of Kentish Town with 17. All 17 of Donoghue's goals have come in the League, putting him at the top of this list, two in front of **Alistair Shearer** of Cranfield Utd. Keep an eye open, however, for **Craig Hammond** of Royston Town, who has 12, all in the League and in just 4 games – methinks he might just move up the table when he's played a few more games! In Division Two, **Neil Roberts** of Aston Clinton heads the list with 19, but only 10 of these were in the league, and four goals behind comes **James McCarthy** of AFC Dunstable on 15, and **Joynul Hoque** of Tring Corinthians and **Martyn Shaw** of Mursley Utd, both on 13. Joint top scorers in the League, both with 12, are McCarthy and **Gary Simpson** of Totternhoe.

#### TITLE-TATTLE

Never let it be said that watching football with Mystic Mick Ewen is boring. In freezing conditions on Saturday, he spent the whole of the first half running an (alleged) illegal betting ring, whilst during the second half he regaled all around him with Tommy Cooper jokes, at the same time keeping everyone upped with all the latest scores from his mobile. To cap off a fine day, he then won £15 in the raffle, which he says he put back into club funds!

Our now legendary Scottish referee Mr Bill Hamilton appeared on National TV on Saturday in Football Focus. The cameras had been at his game at Risboro Rangers a couple of weeks ago in order to honour his 50 years as a referee. Sadly, I missed it – on my way to a game - but if anyone has a copy, do let us know – we think it should be buried in a time capsule in some one's centre circle for future generations to marvel at!

**I WOULD LIKE TO TAKE THIS OPPORTUNITY TO WISH A VERY HAPPY NEW YEAR TO ALL PLAYING AND NON PLAYING MEMBERS OF THE SPARTAN SOUTH MIDLANDS LEAGUE, TO ALL CLUBS WITHIN THE SPARTAN SOUTH MIDLANDS LEAGUE AND TO ALL INVOLVED IN NON LEAGUE FOOTBALL, whether that be playing, officiating, watching, administrating, writing about it, or just purely supporting.**

Many thanks to our contributors - please keep all news /views / items of interest coming to [billscholes@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:billscholes@hotmail.co.uk)  
**Bill Scholes**