

MOLTEN SPARTAN SOUTH MIDLANDS LEAGUE

NEWSLETTER No.23

By Bill Scholes

SATURDAY 12th JANUARY 2008

The Saturday fixture list was decimated by the weather, with over one half (27 out of 48) of the scheduled fixtures being postponed. Fixture secretary for the lower Divisions Eric Harrison would have been tearing his hair out, but for the fact that a recent visit to his favourite Luton hair stylist had left him little to play with.

Unusually no hat tricks this Saturday – the first time this season.

PREMIER DIVISION ROUND UP

Chalfont St. Peter only managed a week at the top as the torrential rain in the run up to the weekend put paid to their away game at Ruislip Manor and allowed **Biggleswade Town** to return to top spot with their 3-1 home win over **St. Margaretsbury**. Although the Waders now have a three point lead over Chalfont, they have played two games more. With over three quarters of the game played, neither side had made a breakthrough, but Biggleswade suddenly hit their straps and rushed into a three goal lead, thanks to two penalties from Scott Field and a single from Stefan Dancy. Matt Maskell scored the visitors consolation goal right on the stroke of full time. Match of the day, on paper at least, was at **Beaconsfield SYCOB** where the home side, in third place, entertained sixth place **Hertford Town**. An entertaining first half saw the visitors look the more accomplished of the two teams, with the lively Blues forwards at times overrunning the slightly leaden footed Rams defence. However the chances came and went and Beaconsfield hung on and, as is often the case, went into the half time break with a 1-0 lead – Stuart Swift scoring from the penalty spot on 39 minutes after Aaron Lennon had been brought down by a clumsy challenge from Matt Watts. For some reason, the Beaconsfield player manager Jamie Jarvis decided to run from his vantage point inside his own penalty area to the other end of the pitch to explain to the referee why the perpetrator should be red carded! Shortly afterwards Jarvis was himself yellow carded for a high challenge into the back of Ryan Redford. At the start of the second half there was still all to play for and Redford should have levelled the scores when he broke clear of Jarvis but lifted his shot just over the bar. Shortly afterwards, the game changed totally when Hertford's Matt Watts was dismissed for a second yellow card offence, - all the belief seemed to drain from the visitors, and it came as no surprise when Beaconsfield scored two further goals in the 68th and 75th minute, both from Oliver Godwin. The second of these was a cracker, as new signing Mick Swaysland, making good progress down the right, produced the perfect defence splitting pass for Godwin to drive home. This result keeps Beaconsfield in third place, hot on the heels of the leaders, and just a point ahead of Brimsdown Rovers and Harefield United, both of whom won. On the face of it, **Brimdown Rovers** had the more difficult task, at home to in form **Langford** but they ran out comfortable 4-0 winners. Scott Atkinson gave the home side the best possible start, scoring after 5 minutes, and Reece Prestedge doubled the lead in the 35th minute. Two goals from leading scorer Ashley Forbes-Taylor in the second half completed a good day for the home side. **Harefield United** made slightly heavy work of their 4-2 home win over struggling **Welwyn Garden City**, and were reliant on two goals each from Michael Livesey and Sean Sonner. The Citizens have been boosted by recent signings from Edgware Town, and one of these, Stuart Blackburne, levelled the scores at one apiece just after half time. **Hanwell Town** lost ground on the leaders as they unexpectedly went down 3-1 at home to **Broxbourne Borough**. Town could easily gone into a two goal lead and were made to pay for their profligacy as two defensive errors enabled Anthony Burke and Lee Teagle to give the visitors a two nil lead at half time. A Jason Tucker penalty on the hour mark got the home side back in the game, but with 8 minutes left, Bradley Drysdale made the game safe for the Boro. In the days only other game to be played in the Division, **Leverstock Green** came away from **Biggleswade United** with a 3-1 victory under their belt. Steve Flain opened the scoring in the 13th minute with an in-swinging corner kick that eluded all and sundry, and four minutes later new signing Matt Wardle produced a powerful header to make it 2-0. Just after the break, Biggleswade got back in the game when Simon Catmur shot home from a Craig Rydeheard free kick, but Wardle

popped up with his second shortly afterwards – this time a penalty after James Armstrong had been fouled in the box.

DIVISION ONE ROUND UP

Only four games played in this Division and no change in the top four placings. Leaders **Hoddesdon Town** edged slightly further away from their challengers with a point gained in their 2-2 draw at home to **Brache Sparta**. A 20th minute goal from Peter Ulatowski gave the Lilywhites a first half lead, but the visitors regained the initiative in the second half with a brace from Lee Hayward in the space of three minutes. It took an 81st minute penalty from Ulatowski to secure the draw for Hoddesdon, and of course the valuable point. The Leagues biggest gate of the day (125) saw **Royston Town's** march up the table continue and they now move dangerously into 5th place, just 7 points behind the leaders and with a game in hand, following their comprehensive 6-0 win at home to **Bedford FC**. Will Turl opened the scoring in the 13th minute, and further goals from Peter Chappell and a brace from Craig Hammond ensured the game was over as a contest by half time. Bedford produced a much better showing in the second half, but two late goals from Graham Tibballs completed the scoring, and in so doing put the Crows level with Haringey Boro as the division's highest scorers. Youthful **Bedford Town Reserves** made the short trip to **Amphill Town** in a match that beat the weather on an excellent Amphill Park pitch, where a match is almost always guaranteed. In a game where it was men against boys, the boys won! An even first half saw plenty of good passing moves and approach play from both sides but the finishing failed to match this good work. Half time came with no goals, although it could have been 2 - 2. Bedford scored the first goal of the second half following a corner. A clearance off the Amphill goal line fell straight to Adam Boughton who smashed the ball past the defender to score on 58minutes. Amphill stormed back and equalised on 63 minutes when a great curling shot from Christian Lester beat the keeper from 25 yards. To his credit, the Amphill manager put on an extra forward and went three at the back in an effort to win the game. Despite dominating play, the home side failed to break through and Bedford looked dangerous on the break. From such a breakaway Bedford scored the winning goal as Stacey Field converted a left wing cross to sweep the ball past the stranded home keeper on 75 minutes. For the second week running, **Amersham Town** were involved in a game which finished with the visiting side left with just 8 men on the park. However, whereas last week it was Amersham who were the culprits, this week it was the turn of visiting **Arlesey Athletic**. This was Amersham's second win on the bounce and has moved them swiftly away from the relegation area. Amersham took the lead through Jude Eboji in the 30th minute, which they held until Andy Brosnan's equaliser ten minutes after the break. Eboji then scored his second to restore Amersham's advantage, but that didn't last long before Adam Furness brought Athletic back on level terms. With 15 minutes left, Lee Gritt edged the home side back in front, only for Mark Phillips to once again restore parity. A minute later Reon Thomas scored Amersham's fourth goal to make the final score 4-3.

DIVISION TWO ROUND UP

Just two games played, and one was a cracker that saw **AFC Dunstable** keep in contention for a promotion place as they came from behind to defeat **Kent Athletic** 4-3 away. Watched by a crowd of 85, which was larger than any recorded in the Premier Division, the home side went two up in the first 25 minutes up through Danny Sunderland and Nathan Miller, but Dunstable fought back to draw level at half time, thanks to goals from Richard Harker and Lee Loasby. Miller's second goal, twenty minutes into the second half, put Kent back in front and so it remained until the last 10 minutes when a brace from James McCarthy turned the game on its head and ensured all three points for the visitors. In the other game played, **Caddington** ran out 3-0 winners away at **Old Bradwell United**, all the goals coming in the first half courtesy of Gary Catlin and a Courtney Massey double.

LEAGUE CHALLENGE TROPHY – QUARTER FINALS

Holmer Green made hard work of progressing through to the semi-final stage of the Challenge Trophy, and only after the Division Two side **The 61FC** had taken their Premier Division opponents to extra time. The Greens took the lead 10 minutes before half-time when Steve Groves converted a pass from Andy Wheeler-King, but the lead was short-lived as a swift break from the Luton side saw

them draw level through Hayden Wills. An even second half saw no further goals and so the tie went to extra time. Holmer received an early fillip when Wheeler-King was brought down in the Luton penalty area and Lee Putnam coolly scored from the spot. The home defender who had been penalised with a caution before the spot-kick continued his protest at the restart and was sent off. This was the signal for Holmer to take control, at last, against their lower-division opponents and further goals from MacDonald and Putnam made an eventual 4-1 scoreline slightly unfair on the home side. Two other Quarter Finals were played midweek, and these saw Chalfont St. Peter and Kingsbury London Tigers make it through to the Semi Finals. **Chalfont** had by far the toughest ride as they were they were taken to extra time and penalties by their visitors from Division One **Stony Stratford Town**. No dissing the Cup here from Chalfont as they turned out the same team that had defeated Biggleswade Town just three days earlier, but they were taken right to the wire by a very impressive display from Stony Stratford. To be fair, the visitors rode their luck as Chalfont were quickly out of their blocks, and could (should) have gone three or four up early on, but only had a Charlie Strutton strike after 25 minutes to show for all their early superiority. With the experienced Darren Dykes always looking dangerous, Stony hung in and fully deserved their stroke of luck when a Marc Redsull shot took a wicked deflection to loop over keeper Power-Simpson's head just before half time. The second half was goalless, as indeed was the whole of extra time, and so to penalties, which Chalfont just edged 7-6. With both sides having their noses in front at one stage or another during the shoot out, the drama continued until the last kick for Stony, which was saved by Power-Simpson. Cue celebrations, which were suddenly curtailed as the Assistant Referee had spotted an infringement, and the kick had to be retaken. The kicker placed his shot in exactly the same spot as his previous effort, and Power-Simpson made an identical save! Cue final celebrations. On a cold and windy night, **Kingsbury London Tigers** overcame **Leverstock Green**, and the shock of going behind to a 13-second goal, to run out 3-1 winners. Allan Arthur's goal after just 13 seconds for Leverstock gave them the ideal start, but with the wind in their favour Tigers were quickly back in the game and Danilson Vicente drove in a rebound to level the scores after 8 minutes. Leverstock had the chance to retake the lead on 14 minutes when they were awarded a penalty but James Armstrong's weak shot was easily saved by the Tigers keeper. A close range header from Vicente in the 24th minute put the Tigers back in front, and Vicente completed his hat trick in the 56th minute when he lobbed keeper Milner to make it 3-1. Tigers' Edson Cata was sent off near the end as tempers rose, but in spite of over 10 minutes of added on time, Leverstock were unable to salvage the tie. The remaining Quarter Final will be between **Beaconsfield SYCOB** and **Brimsdown Rovers**, who completed an unhappy week for **Welwyn Garden City** by defeating them 4-2 in the delayed 3rd Round tie. In the Semi-Finals, Kingsbury London Tigers will host Chalfont St. Peter, whilst Holmer Green will visit the winners of the Beaconsfield v Brimsdown tie.

THE ART OF HOSPITALITY

Bill Hamilton meets some interesting hosts

The art of hospitality, so we are told, seeks to rekindle the timeless tradition, common to all cultures, of offering the best to your guest. From what I have observed, it is a tradition that most clubs in the Spartan South Midlands League take a pride in upholding. Many backroom staff – often the wives of club officials – spend hours at a time lovingly creating the sandwiches or warming the sausages and sausage rolls – for the guests to enjoy. Some clubs, including a number in the Second Division, even go the lengths of preparing a hot meal for their visitors and match officials. In the Boardroom, whatever the result, the emphasis should surely be on relaxing and enjoying your time together. These days people often seem so wrapped up in their own lives, they don't think to touch the lives of others. So it was an enormous pleasure to find myself in the company of some very interesting and welcoming hosts at Hanwell Town last Saturday. The home defeat against Broxbourne was quickly forgotten as the conversation got round to a thousand other aspects of sporting life. The club's patron, Stephen Pound, was none other than the MP for Ealing North. He describes himself as a lifelong Fulham fan but whenever they're playing away, you'll find him in the Hanwell Boardroom, resplendent in club tie and holding a bottle of champagne which he brings along to present to the man of the match. Our Mr Pound is a most interesting character with a wide variety of interests. He's had a varied career including working as a seaman, bus conductor and hospital porter

before, as a mature student, gaining a degree at the London School of Economics. He's also a keen motorcyclist, serves on the Northern Ireland Affairs Committee, writes columns in two newspapers and makes numerous appearances on TV and radio.

But even he feels humbled in the company of the Hanwell Town chairman, Bob Fisher. His quiet but engaging manner belies a remarkable record of achievement, for Bob has been with Hanwell since he first donned the club shirt in October 1954. He played 750 games for them, first as a sprightly inside right and later as a rather slower centre-half. He then went on to manage the club and in 2004 received a 50 years service gold medal from the FA. But, wait for it, at 69 he's still playing cricket for Ealing! A noted wicketkeeper, he even led the club to the National Championship Final at Lords having destroyed Scarborough in the semi-final before 5,000 spectators at the summer festival on the Yorkshire coast.

Hey, if you get into conversation at Hanwell, don't expect to be leaving for home before 6.30 at the earliest! Now, that's what I really call the art of hospitality.

TITTLE TATTLE

Following last weeks news re Mickey Swaysland's move from Leverstock Green, it should be pointed out that Beaconsfield SYCOB followed the correct and proper 7-day approach procedure before obtaining the player's signature at the back end of the week. Apologies for any confusion.

WEALDSTONE FC and RUISLIP MANOR FC

The following announcement was posted on the Wealdstone website on Mon 14 January

Wealdstone FC announce that a consortium of senior members of the Club have acquired a majority shareholding in Ruislip Manor Sports and Social Club (RMSSC), the sports club that owns the lease to the football stadium and associated facilities across the 12 acre site. Shareholders, players and supporters were invited to a special meeting on Sunday 13 January at the Grosvenor Vale site when they heard about the development from Wealdstone FC Chairman, Howard Kraiss and Vice Chairman Peter Worby. With the ground-share agreement at Northwood coming to close and no finish date in site for the Club's long term Prince Edward Playing Field development, Wealdstone intend investing in the Grosvenor Vale stadium to upgrade the playing facilities as a priority in order to meet the necessary ground grading requirements to play Ryman Premier League football in the 2008/9 season. Looking further ahead, Wealdstone's vision is that Grosvenor Vale will provide an opportunity to successfully reach out to the wider community and embrace other local sports clubs and organisations to maximize the use and potential that exists at the site. It will also be an ideal permanent base for the club's highly successful youth and reserve teams. Both sides have previously used the facilities on a rental basis during recent seasons, with Wealdstone reserves playing there this current season.

Said Kraiss, "It is well known, and I have clearly stated several times in the past, that with the Club running out of funds and time, we had to find solutions that could help secure the future of the club.

Ruislip Manor Sports & Social Club have been in some difficulties for some time and on the verge of going out of business altogether. When we were invited to talk to the people at Ruislip we decided to act quickly to take this opportunity as we believe there is great potential in the site. Whilst negotiations continue with Football First over the Prince Edward Playing Field development we still have a responsibility to continue to look at all viable options and to build on the progress of all sections of Wealdstone FC to bring them under one roof" Howard Kraiss concluded, "This is the start of a new era for Wealdstone Football Club. After 17 years of ground-sharing we will finally have a home of our own. Whilst the hard work starts now we are very excited about the potential of building the club that we all want Wealdstone to be."

News from Ruislip Manor FC is that the Barrett family – Chairman Ken, Treasurer June, Match Secretary Daniel, and Programme Editor Michael, have all resigned from the club and as per Jim Bean's recent memo, all future contact with the club should be through the First Team Manager, Michael Johnson Tel (M) 07917 507660 or email brian.johnson@ttg-uk.com

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