

MOLTEN SPARTAN SOUTH MIDLANDS LEAGUE

NEWSLETTER No. 26

By Bill Scholes

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There were three hat trick heroes this week, with Premier Division Langford's Robert Groves leading the way with four goals. The other two hat tricks came from Division One and, spookily, both from Hammonds - Andy from Buckingham Athletic and Craig from Royston Town. This was the latter's fourth hat trick since joining Royston just over two months ago.

PREMIER DIVISION ROUND UP

Goals galore on Saturday with a total of 45 being scored in the 10 games played – in fact 30 of these came in just 4 games. Its still very tight at the top with three sides, Chalfont St. Peter, Brimsdown Rovers and Biggleswade Town all level on 55 points, although all three have played a different number of games. Just behind these come Beaconsfield SYCOB with 52 points, followed by Harefield United with 51, whilst five points back there are a cluster of 5 clubs separated by just two points. **Chalfont St. Peter** continues to head the table on goal difference, which may prove vital in the final reckoning but they were made to struggle for the points by a determined **London Colney** side. Two goals in the first four minutes from Terrell Lewis and Ryan Welsh seemed to herald a goal fest, but Colney hung on and pulled one back through Chris Wilkins after 38 minutes. Lewis got his second just before the Jaffa break to put the saints 3-1 up, but Colney bounced right back after the restart through Lee Rickard, and it was not until the 82nd minute that Chalfont's leading scorer Bradley Bubb made the game safe to make the final score 4-2. It was always going to be a close game at **Brimmsdown Rovers** where visitors **Leverstock Green** arrived on the back of an 11 league game unbeaten run. Incidentally that run started back in November with a 1-1 home draw againstBrimmsdown Rovers, and with Feb 2nd being Groundhog Day, another 1-1 draw was perhaps no real surprise! The home side took the lead on 35 minutes with a superb 30 yard shot from Ashley Taylor-Forbes, but Green's eschewed the chance to draw level two minutes later when James Armstrong missed a penalty. With time running out, Anthony Page salvaged a point for Leverstock with a shot from just outside the box, and in so doing extended the unbeaten run to 12 games. **Biggleswade Town** are also on 55 points as they kept up with front runners but they were made to work very hard to overcome visitors **Welwyn Garden City** 2-1. The Citizens have been boosted in recent weeks by on loan signings from last season's Premier Division winners Edgware Town, and it was one of these, Denis Maharjan, who gave them the lead in the 13th minute. The Waders were indebted to a brace from leading scorer Dan Heron, one just before half time and one just after, to make sure of all three points and keep them right in the promotion race. Having lost their last three league games, and not having scored on their travels since early December, **Hertford Town** approached their away game at 6th placed **Aylesbury Vale** on a bitterly cold afternoon with some trepidation. Although Kevin Cooper gave them the lead after 16 minutes with his 200th goal for the club following excellent work from Brother Ian, the Vale probably shaded the first half. However, once Kevin Kilroy's magnificent header from a Phil Goss corner went in immediately after the break, there was only going to be one winner and shortly after Cooper was again on hand to turn in another assist from Brother Ian. Before the game could be restarted there was a bit of a dust up in the centre circle, and Vale's Sam Cooley was dismissed for violent conduct. Ian Cooper scored his first goal for the club on 62 minutes with an excellent solo effort, and Ryan Wade then produced a vicious dipping shot from 25 yards out which left the Vale keeper literally rooted to the spot. Lee Roberts was coolness personified when he dummied the keeper to chip into an empty net with just 5 minutes remaining, to make the final score 6-0 to the Blues. This win moves Hertford back up to 6th place, replacing their hosts who slip back to 8th. There was a 10-goal fest at **Cockfosters** where visitors **Langford** eventually ran out 7-3 winners, but with the score only standing at 1-0 to

Cockfosters after the first 45 minutes, it would have been a brave man who would have bet on 9 goals being scored in the next 45! Dan O'Connor gave Cockfosters the lead in the 7th minute, which they held until Langford popped up with four goals in a 12 minute spell early in the second half – a hat trick from Robert Groves and one from Wes Byrne. Sandwiched in between this goal rush was O'Connor's second for Cockfosters. Apart from the dismissal of Dan O'Connor after 70 minutes, there was no more action until a last frantic 7 minutes when Langford scored three more, including Groves' fourth from the penalty spot, Byrnes second, and a single from Marc Barnes, whilst Dave Pigden notched Cockfosters third. This win propelled Langford up from 10th to 7th spot – just on the fringes of the promotion battle, although they have played a couple of games more than their nearest rivals. **Harefield United** kept their promotion hopes alive with a 3-0 win at home to **Colney Heath** – a brace from Sean Sonner and one from Ben Buckle sealing the points, but **Hanwell Town** slipped slightly further off the pace as they could only draw 1-1 at home to **Biggleswade United**. Both goals came in the first half – Adam Turner giving the visitors the lead after 40 minutes, only to see Dean Scarlett even it up right on the stroke of half time. **Oxhey Jets** flew back home from **Kingsbury London Tigers** with a 2-1 win under their belt, thanks to two first half goals from Paul Danslow and Tim O'Mara. Danilson Vicente scored Tigers goal 10 minutes into the second half. **Holmer Green** gained their first league point since November in their 1-1 draw away at **St. Margaretsbury** - Jay Gould giving them the perfect start when he curled in a 30-yard free-kick in the third minute. The next 67 minutes were uncharted territory for the Greens as they battled to hold on to a lead, but as the game wore on, Bury looked the more threatening, and in the 70th minute, Mitchell Linger latched on to a long ball over the top and rounded the advancing Holmer keeper to slot home the equalizer. Last week, **Broxbourne Borough** were involved in a 7 goal thriller, which they won 4-3 – this week it was an 8 goal thriller against **Tring Athletic** but this one they lost 5-3. Traditionally this fixture produces high scores, now 40 in 9 encounters, and this game lived up to expectations as fortunes changed frequently. Tring twice took the lead in the first half, goals from Danny Gray and Andy Humphreys and on both occasions Broxbourne pegged them back, courtesy of Paul Dodd and Bradley Drisdale, and then Tony Burke had the temerity to give the visitors the lead early in the second half! Tring battled back aided by a couple of sensible substitutions grabbed 3 goals, from Mark Burfoot, Paul Aldridge and that man Humphries again, in a 6 minute spell to run out comfortable winners in the end.

DIVISION ONE ROUND UP

No change in the top three positions, although **Kentish Town** took the opportunity to gain a three point lead over Stony Stratford Town and Hoddesdon Town with a 3-2 home win over **Bedford Town Reserves**. In boggy conditions, Bedford were unlucky to leave this game with nothing. John Guiney neatly finished after just five minutes for the visitors to open the scoring before the hosts struck back to level up through Paul Butler and it stayed that way until the break. The away side started the second period brightly and Stacey Field netted on 57 minutes following a good through-ball from Guiney to put Town ahead. However, they could not quite hold on and in the space of four minutes, Kentish Town grabbed all three points with two goals from David Dawson and a second from Butler. **Hoddesdon Town**- failed to capitalise on Stony Stratford's absence through Cup duty as they went down 3-1 at home to **Amphill Town**. Seven minutes into the game, Martin Wells lobbed the ball over the keeper to take the lead for Amphill and they continued to push forward for the remainder of the first half. After the break Hoddesdon equalised from a free kick by Aaron Tourlamain but substitute Michael Owens put Amphill back in front on 79 minutes. Michael Munday then secured the win when he rounded the keeper and fired the ball into the empty net a minute later. The biggest change occurs in just below the top three, where **Royston Town** continued their amazing renaissance over the last couple of months, have moved up into fourth place following their 5-0 demolition of **Sporting London e Benfica** at Garden Walk, and for the second week running, in front of the biggest crowd of the day in all Divisions (109). Are the Sexy Santas still there? A brace from Will Turl, in his last game for the Crows before embarking on a round-the-world tour with the Army, put them two up at half time and Craig Hammond took over in the second half with all three further goals. Hammond rammed home a loose ball in the box for his first before

volleying home his second from a Tom Malins cross. The powerful striker then grabbed his third goal to complete another comfortable rout, rounding the Sport London e Benfica keeper after a brilliant through ball from David Cain. Recent table toppers **Haringey Borough** suffered another reverse slipping back to fifth place as they went down 1-0 at home to in-form **Amersham Town**, who recorded their fourth win on the trot with a late Adamson Ajayi goal. **Buckingham Athletic** moved into the top half of the table with a 5-2 home win over **Bedford**. An entertaining game saw the visitors leave with nothing after the home side killed off the game shortly after half-time. Andy Hammond scored the first two goals of his hat trick in two minutes half way through the first half, before Callum Lewis struck back for Bedford only for Mark O'Dell put Athletic 3-1 up at the break. Andy Hammond wrapped up the points with his third goal immediately after the break and although Darek Jozwiak quickly hit back with a header to give Bedford hope, Jamie O'Callaghan put the result beyond all doubt in the last few minutes. **Cheshunt Reserves** and **Cranfield United** shared four goals, all coming in the first half – Ryan Dear and Arthur Williams scoring for Cheshunt and Tom Barnet and Tony Hill for Cranfield. At the bottom of the table, **Sun Postal Sports** closed the gap on Winslow to just two points following their 3-1 win at home to **Brache Sparta**. Two goals from Ben Poulton in the first 10 minutes gave them a dream start and Darren Locke added a third three minutes later. No further goals until James Dickson scored Brache's solitary reply in the 68th minute. A late goal from Craig Hayward salvaged a point for **Winslow United** in their away match at **Arlesey Athletic**, who had led for most of the game with an 11th minute goal from Danny Lane.

DIVISION TWO ROUND UP

Unusually not too many goals scored in this division this week, apart from the game in which **Caddington** produced a bit of a shock in defeating third placed **Crawley Green** 4-3 at home. Caddington raced into an early two goal lead through Grant Carney and Richard Walsh, before Danny Watson and Phil Cusack brought the visitors back level. Gary Catlin and Gary Duncan, from the penalty spot, increased the home side's lead before the break, but although Crawley Green reduced the deficit, they couldn't pull level. **AFC Dunstable** reduced the gap at the top to three points by dint of a hard fought 1-0 win over **Aston Clinton**, James McCarthy getting the vital goal, whilst the local Luton derby between **Kent Athletic** and **The 61 FC** went ahead after a hectic morning's activity, with The 61 FC emerging 2-1 winners. At the foot of the table, **Markyate**, having taken the lead through Russell Dodgson, gained their second point of the season with a 1-1 draw away at **Risborough Rangers**, whose equaliser came from Billy Sutherland. **Tring Corinthians**, with two goals from Steve Smith and Charlie Snoxall came away from **Mursley United** with a 2-1 win and **Pitstone & Ivinghoe** came back from their short trip to **Totternhoe** with a 2-0 win, goals coming from Mark Allen and a Nick Ryan penalty. Honours were even in the basement battle between **Old Bradwell United** and **Padbury United** – Nathan Townsend for Padbury and Anthony Perry for Old Bradwell being the scorers.

BERKS & BUCKS INTERMEDIATE CUP – QUARTER FINAL

Stony Stratford played host to Hellenic League Division One East **Binfield** in this quarter final County Cup game. In a sometimes niggly match, Stony eventually ran out worthy winners. In a strongly contested first half, Binfield adopted "they shall not pass" approach to defending and twice had to clear the ball off their own goal line. However the half ended goalless. Stony looked more the part in the second half and a great individual goal by Ben Hill opened the scoring on 56 minutes. The tie seemed almost over when Adam Castagnetti headed home a cross from Dave Holloway on 64 minutes. Stony centre forward Darren Dykes finally got his goal at the third attempt when he headed in a corner kick on 74 minutes. Binfield briefly rallied and scored when Tony Calvert turned and shot home on 87 minutes, but it was too little too late and Stony ran out comfortable winners. They will now meet local North Bucks League side PB (MK) in the semi final, to be played at Ostlers Lane on Sat 1 March. The other semi final will be between Penn & Tylers Green and

Chalfont Wasps – both Hellenic League Division One East teams. Chalfont Wasps are the holders, having won it for the last two years.

HERTS INTERMEDIATE CUP – QUARTER FINALS

The holders **Kings Langley 1st**'s are through to the Semi Finals, having beaten **North Mymms** 2-0 away. They left it late, Lewis Pritchard putting them ahead in the 75th minute, and Lee Burcham wrapping it up with an 89th minute penalty. They will be joined in the semi finals by **Broxbourne Boro Reserves**, who beat **Hertford Town Reserves** 1-0. **Colney Heath Reserves** unfortunately lost 2-1 away to **Bishop Stortford Swifts**. In the Semi Final draw, Kings Langley will host Broxbourne Boro, whilst Mill End will play Bishops Stortford Swifts.

BEDS INTERMEDIATE CUP –QUARTER FINALS

Definitely through to the Semi Finals are **Amptill Town Reserves**, who beat **Cranfield United Reserves** 2-1 away, and **Stotfold Reserves** who put out **The 61 FC Reserves** 3-0. The match between Crawley Green Reserves and AFC Dunstable Reserves was postponed, whilst Biggleswade United Reserves have yet to play Dunstable **United**.

200 UP

Hertford Town's first goal against Aylesbury Vale was **Kevin Cooper's** 200th goal for the club. "Coops" as he is known to team-mates and fans alike, returned to Hertingfordbury Park for a third spell at the start of last season. He first joined from Elliott Star at the end of the 2000-01 season and has also played for Ware, Enfield and St Margaretsbury. Renowned for his exceptional strike rate, Coops formed the "dream" striking partnership with Ryan Redford last season, notching 48 goals in their joint total of 103. He now has 201 goals in just 252 appearances for The Blues, and is determined to press on and beat Dave Whitehead's 1990s record of 216 goals for the Blues.

ROYSTON TOWN FC

Royston Town chairman **Rob Stewart** resigned this week after eight weeks at the helm - but has urged the club to continue to move forward. Mr Stewart, 42, joined the club at the beginning of December as interim chairman and immediately vowed to help take The Crows to new heights. Showing his intent, Mr Stewart targeted promotion back to the South Midland Premier Division, and immediately funded the club's first paid transfer, signing Craig Hammond from Mildenhall Town. He also financed the transfer of Arlesey striker Ashley Townsend and introduced performance coach Steve Linger, as well as introducing the popular Crow mascot and a variety of merchandise. However, because of unforeseen **work** commitments, Mr Stewart, who is a leading businessman in the property and packaging industry, has decided to step down. Mr Stewart said: "I came here with the aim of improving the club and in the short time I have been here I believe I have done that. Everyone knew that my role was a temporary one and I made it clear that I would be looking at my position on a month-to-month basis. Unfortunately, I just couldn't dedicate sufficient time to the role any more. I'm an extremely busy man, and I just felt that Royston was only getting a glimpse of my time. The little time that I had would have been ultimately affected, and that would not have been fair." Mr Stewart, a former Royston Colts manager, hopes that his departure will not affect the club and says he will remain passionate about its future. "I have a lot of passion and enthusiasm for Royston Town and that will not stop just because I have left. I wanted to bring about change and I think that I have done that - I just wish I had a bit more time. I've simply lit the fuse, and now it's a chance for others to take the club forward. On the pitch they are doing very well and Paul Attfield, Tony Galvin, and the players deserve a lot of credit. And off the pitch, the committee need to challenge themselves and I hope I have left them with the belief that they can move

forward.” Mr Stewart's tenure may have been short, but his time at the club has been vital. He came with much-needed drive and ambition, and has helped steer the club into a potentially bright future. In a statement Royston President Alan Barlow said: “In the short time Rob has been with us he has helped to give some extra momentum to the club's development plan, both on and off the pitch, and we all appreciate the time and commitment he has shown. Although it's disappointing not to have Rob on board for longer, our success on the pitch started before he arrived at the club and in no way will his stepping down detract from our commitment to succeed. We wish Rob and his family all the best for the future.” However, this may not be the last Royston will see of Mr Stewart. He said: “This is a great club with a lot of potential. At the moment I just have too much going on and I think that it's in everybody's interests that I step aside. But this is a club that I believe in, so you can never say never!”

SSMFL CHALLENGE CUPS

We are now approaching the Quarter Final and Semi Final stages of all various League Cups, so I thought I would give you the heads-up on the situation to date.

Challenge Trophy: Three Semi Finalists are known. Kingsbury London Tigers will host Chalfont St. Peter, whilst Holmer Green will visit the winners of the delayed Q/F between Beaconsfield SYCOB and Brimsdown Rovers.

Premier Division Cup: Both Leverstock Green and Beaconsfield SYCOB have reached the Semi Final stage, and will play each other at Pancake lane. The winners of the Hanwell Town / Chalfont St. Peter Q/F will be at home to either Ruislip Manor or Biggleswade Town.

Division One Cup: This has reached the Semi Final stage – Haringey Boro will host Harpenden Town, whilst Buckingham Athletic are at home to Ampthill Town.

Division Two Cup: Another competition at the Semi Final stage – Tring Corinthians will be at home to Mursley United, whilst Kent Athletic will play host to Kings Langley.

THE QUADRUPLE - IS IT POSSIBLE?

Two of our Premier Division clubs are hoping to be very busy in the next couple of months or so, as both still have a very healthy interest in four competitions. Beaconsfield SYCOB and Chalfont St. Peter are both flying high in the race for the Premier Division title, as well as reaching the latter stages of the Challenge Trophy and the Premier Division Cup. In addition, both clubs have reached the Semi Final stage of the Berks & Bucks Senior Trophy. Both have been drawn at home – Beaconsfield to Milton United of the Hellenic League and Chalfont to Newport Pagnell Town from the United Counties League – so an all SSMFL Final is still on the cards. This has only happened once before, back in 2000 when New Bradwell St. Peter beat Milton Keynes City after extra time and penalties.

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

Bill Scholes