

MOLTEN SPARTAN SOUTH MIDLANDS LEAGUE

NEWSLETTER No.29

By Bill Scholes

SATURDAY 23rd FEBRUARY 2008

There were two hat tricks this week, both in Division Two and both scored in the second half. Lawrence Bunker got three for Pitstone & Ivinghoe – his second hat trick on the trot, and Hayden Wills scored three for The 61 FC.

PREMIER DIVISION ROUND UP

Its taken time, but the top three are just beginning to create a little daylight between themselves and the chasing pack. Chalfont St. Peter remain in pole position, a point ahead of Biggleswade Town, but with two games in hand over their rivals, and three points ahead of Beaconsfield SYCOB. However all the leading clubs still have to play each other, so it's certainly not all over yet. **Chalfont St. Peter** had to work hard for their three points as they eventually overcame **Welwyn Garden City** 3-1. David Hughes gave the Saints an early lead which was pegged back by Alex Kinsey before half time, but two second half goals, one from Charlie Strutton and Hughes again gave them the vital three points. **Beaconsfield SYCOB** also avoided the potential banana skin to defeat in-form **Langford** 2-0 at Forde Park, in what one observer described as a dour struggle. The Rams did not have everything their own way, and Langford could have scored after 12 minutes but for a good save from keeper Nick Hart. Almost against the run of play, Beaconsfield took the lead when Mickey Swaysland got the benefit of an offside decision to cross for Stuart Swift to score at the far post on 37 minutes. Langford could count themselves unlucky to end the half one goal down. The second half was dominated by the Rams with the only threat from Langford coming from Mark Barnes. After missing a host of chances, Beaconsfield made the game secure on 85 minutes when Oliver Godwin stabbed home from close range as the ball rebounded to him from the keepers save. **Leverstock Green** managed their first point in four games as they held **Biggleswade Town** to a 0-0 draw at windswept McMullen Park, and the Waders must consider this as two points dropped in their battle for promotion. A five point gap has now opened up to fourth placed **Brimsdown Rovers** who were surprisingly beaten 2-1 at home to **Broxbourne Borough**. Ashley Taylor-Forbes gave Rovers the lead after 25 minutes, only for Anthony Burke to equalise 3 minutes later, but the game was settled by an unfortunate own goal from Alan Buck just after the hour mark. Normal service was resumed at **Hertford Town** who came away from Oxhey Jets with a 2-0 victory thanks to goals from Kevin Cooper, from the penalty spot, and Ryan Redford. **Tring Athletic** moved up a place to eighth following their 1-0 win away at **St. Margaretsbury**, but they had to wait until the 87th minute before Dave Whicker's shot was diverted into the Bury net. An eighth minute goal from Kye Davies gave **Kingsbury London Tigers** a 1-0 win over **Hanwell Town**, who have fallen off the pace in recent weeks. **Cockfosters** maintained their improved form with an emphatic 4-0 win at **Biggleswade United**, who drop into the bottom four for the first time. Jon Moniatis headed Cockfosters into the lead with Nicky Page doubling the advantage before half-time. Ben Andreos came off the bench mid-way through the second half and hit two more as the Reds eased to a comfortable three points. **Colney Heath** moved out of the bottom four with a 2-1 home win over **Aylesbury Vale**. The home side went into a two goal at half time with goals from Ashley Amaikhu and Greg Deacon, before Luke Melisi reduced the deficit for the Vale in the second half. As well as the race at the top, there is a battle at the bottom to avoid the drop into Division One, and **Ruislip Manor** made a big step forward as they scored a vital 1-0 away win at fellow strugglers **London Colney** with a goal from Anthony MacDonald. In so doing they opened up a six point gap over second from bottom **Holmer Green** who lost 4-0 at home to **Harefield United** who went into a two goal lead at half time through Danny Buckle and Craig Totton, and then doubled their money with goals from Adam Willis and a second from Totton. On Tuesday night, **Holmer** reduced the gap with Ruislip Manor to three points as they beat **Cockfosters** 2-1 at home, with a goal in each half from Tom Alabaster and Luke Byrne. Kevin Reade reduced the arrears for the visitors with 15 minutes

left, but it was then all hands to the pump as Cockfosters strove for the equaliser, but just lacked that final cutting edge. This was Holmer's first League win since 29th September.

DIVISION ONE ROUND UP

The astonishing story of **Royston Town** continues as they moved from bottom of the table in mid November to second from top at the end of February with a vital 2-0 win over promotion rivals **Stony Stratford Town**. The crowd of 159 was the second largest of the season in all divisions – beaten only by the 223 at Tring Athletic on 16th February - see article below. The Crows were made to work hard for their win, with the visitors getting off to a bright start and, with a bit more discipline, could have taken something from this game. However Royston opened the scoring after 20 minutes with a Tom Malins free kick which deceived the Stony defence. In the second half the visitors again started brightly, but the Royston defence held firm with keeper Damian Williamson making one terrific, and vital, stop to deny a Sean Carr header from close range. The Crows doubled their lead after 65 minutes when top scorer Craig Hammond netted from the spot after being comprehensively held in a bear hug by the Stony centre half. As the half wore on, so Stony's fuse shortened and their woes increased when Ian Alderman received his second caution for dissent. With a minute left, a challenge from Royston's Allan Reid prompted an over the top reaction and a mass brawl involving virtually all 22 players. Reid, along with Stony's Marc Redsell, was sent off, but the drama continued as a Highway Cone was despatched from the dressing room area into the Crowing crowd as the players left the field. Referee Peter Saggars is to be congratulated for an excellent performance under difficult circumstances. **Kentish Town** remain in top spot, after beating **Winslow United** 2-0 with two second half goals from Lee Scott, and are four points clear of Royston, but have played two games more. Only three points cover the sides from second to sixth, with both Hoddesdon Town and New Bradwell St. Peter recording victories to strongly remain in contention. **Hoddesdon** had a comfortable 4-0 win at home to **Buckingham Athletic** – an early goal from Lee Tombs setting them on their way. A brace from Ritchie Howard and a penalty from Peter Ulatowski completed their scoring and **New Bradwell** beat **Cranfield United** 2-0 with two first half goals from Greg Tite and Brendan Quill. Spectators were treated to a six goal feast at **Sport London e Benfica**, where visitors **Bedford FC** triumphed 4-2. Derek Jozwiak slotted home after 26 minutes to give Bedford the lead, but SLB drew level just after the break through Dani Da Conceicao. Ashley Deverell restored the lead with an 18 yard screamer, and Robbie Goodman headed home the third on 70 minutes. There was late drama as Yahya Younes scored SLB's second on the stroke of time, but four minutes of added on time allowed Jozwiak to net his second of the game. **Cheshunt Reserves** beat **Sun Postal Sports** 4-0 with a brace from Liam Farrell and singles from Matt Cook and Scott Honeyball, whilst a goal from Christian Lester after 3 minutes was enough to see **Amptill Town** return from **Harpenden Town** with a 1-0 win. Amptill were reduced to 10 men after 20 minutes in a game that saw 8 bookings as well as the red card! Presumably, one of **Brache Sparta's** holidaying spectators has returned as the crowd of 5 saw the home side beat **Arlesey Athletic** 1-0, and again it was with a goal scored after just three minutes – this time from Keith Justin. The remaining game at **Bedford Town Reserves** saw **Amersham Town** come away with a 0-0 draw, thanks in part to some excellent saves from their keeper.

DIVISION TWO ROUND UP

Kings Langley continue to head the table, the 3-1 home win over **Tring Corinthians** putting them three points ahead of AFC Dunstable and with two games in hand. Langley were three goals up, through Richard Harvey, Simon Conway, and Chris Valentine before William Hatton hit a late consolation for Corrie. **AFC Dunstable** improved their goal difference with a 7-0 win over bottom club **Markyate**, helped to a brace each from James McCarthy and Felix Karami. Ross Morrissey, Craig Butler and Dan Aardi also contributed. **Crawley Green** remain in third place, but had to come from behind to beat **Mursley United** 2-1 with goals from James Potter and Phil Cusack, whilst fourth placed **The 61FC** also had a bit of a field day with a 7-1 win away at **Totternhoe**. Hayden Willis scored a second half hat trick and there were singles for James Dunnington (penalty), Oliver

Goundry, Jon Day and Iain Maskell. Another second half hero was Lawrence Bunker, who scored three for **Pitstone & Ivinghoe** in their 4-1 win away to **Padbury United**. The two other games also finished 4-1; **Aston Clinton** defeating **Old Bradwell United** helped by a brace from Aaron Usmani and singles from Neil Roberts and Mark Powell, and **Caddington** beating **Risborough Rangers** by the same score with two from Bernie Christie, and one from each from Adrian Fontenelle and David Edwards.

PREMIER DIVISION CUP

Congratulations to **Chalfont St. Peter**, who on Tuesday night reached their second final of the season with an extra-time win over **Biggleswade Town** in the Premier Division Cup. They had to do it the hard way as they were trailing for most of the game to a Dan Heron goal scored after 16 minutes. With just 7 minutes left, Lee Togwell popped up with the equaliser to take the game into extra time, and Charlie Strutton scored the winner with just 10 minutes left. Chalfont will now play Beaconsfield in the Final.

BERKS & BUCKS SENIOR TROPHY

Congratulations to **Beaconsfield SYCOB** who reached their second Final of the season by defeating Hellenic League side **Milton United** 1-0 on Monday night. It was a game played at a frantic pace, and one that cried out for some midfield creativity, but alas none was forthcoming. If balls could have headaches, these would have definitely had several. The solitary goal, when it came in the 77th minute, was relatively soft as Oliver Godwin was on hand for a simple tap-in at the far post, but there was still time for Beaconsfield to finish their second consecutive Semi Final with 10 men as Ian Duncan was shown red for Foul and Abusive language. Beaconsfield now await the winners of the other Semi Final between Chalfont St. Peter and Newport Pagnell Town.

BEDS SENIOR TROPHY

Kent Athletic suffered a heartbreak defeat in their Semi Final with Beds league side **Caldecote** as they lost 6-3 after extra time – two late OGs contributing to the defeat. However, there *will* be a SSMFL side represented in the Final as **AFC Dunstable** defeated **Arlesey Athletic** 2-1. Dunstable opened the scoring with a 17th minute goal by Hene Ojulah and doubled the lead 3 minutes before half time, courtesy of Gary Capehorn. Adam Furness scored a consolation goal for Arlesey in the 73rd minute.

UP FOR THE CUP(S)

As well as leading the race for the Premier Division title, **Chalfont St. Peter** still have an interest in FOUR Cup Competitions. They are already through to the Final of the League Challenge Trophy, and now the Final of the Premier Division Cup, having beaten Biggleswade Town in the Semi Final on Tuesday. As mentioned above they are in the Semi Final of the Berks & Bucks Senior Trophy, and also in the Quarter Finals of the Wycombe Senior Cup where they will play Burnham. Winning all four would mean a total of 68 games played in the season!

RESERVE DIVISION CHALLENGE TROPHY

This competition has now reached the Semi final stage. Of the four clubs left in, three are from Reserve Division One, and one from Reserve Division Two West. The three Division One clubs are **Hertford Town** who will play **Colney Heath**, and **Cockfosters**, who were re-instated following Crawley Green's removal from the competition. The remaining club is Stony Stratford Town who took advantage of the loose competition rules to win their Quarter Final.

HOW TO BOOST YOUR ATTENDANCES

Tring Tornandoes JFC boost Tring Athletic attendance

The potential of Tring Athletic as a club was shown by the League's highest attendance of the season (223) for all SSML clubs at The Grass Roots Stadium on Saturday 16 February. Tring

Athletic's match versus Colney Heath was sponsored by Tring Tornandoes JFC who boosted the crowd to an impressive 223. Tornandoes had two penalty shoot-out competitions for different age groups and, despite a lack of goals, an entertaining game was seen by hopefully a number of future Athletic players. Tornandoes provide netball and football for children in age groups from under 6 to under 16 and many of Athletic's players are former members of TTJFC.

SPOTTED ON THE BOX LAST WEEK

Richard Everitt, long standing Secretary and Manager of **The 61 FC (Luton)** was interviewed on Sky Sports TV last week re the FA's development and investment (or not) of grass roots football. Richard was critical of the FA and their lack of investment in grass root clubs, even going so far as to say that some of Fabio Capello's reported huge salary would be better off invested in clubs lower down the food chain. For full details click on the following link:
www.skysports.com/video/0.20285.1260_3176408.00.html

HAVE YOUR SAY.....TO THE HERTS F.A

The FA's National Game Strategy 2008-2012 will outline how we will work both nationally and locally to develop football to ensure you can all enjoy the game in a safe, positive environment.

Nearly 20,000 football participants and providers have already had their say in the most fundamental review to date of the state of grassroots football in England. Having your say is important because we want to ensure the Strategy delivers what you want for football over the next four years. Your feedback on how football can be improved on a local level will be integral to putting the strategy together. The Hertfordshire Football Association county plan has indicated the need to consult with as many stakeholders as possible to ensure that all views, opinions and observations are received and documented. Therefore we are setting up a series of events to give all our stakeholders an opportunity to shape the future of the football in the county, to feedback and challenge our thinking so far and to raise current issues and challenges.

The workshops will be based on the key goals and enablers for the strategy which are:

1. Growth and Retention - Increasing the number of players and addressing retention
2. Raising Standards and addressing abusive behaviour - Creating a safe and positive environment
3. Developing better players; focusing on improving the quality of the 5-11 year age group.
4. Running the game - Leading and governing the game.

In order to achieve these goals successfully the FA recognises the following three key enablers are key:

- Workforce - Recruiting and developing a highly skilled and diverse paid and volunteer workforce
- Facilities - Improving the quality and access of training and playing facilities
- Promotion - Effective marketing, PR and communications

The dates are now set for the following venues:

North - The County Ground, Letchworth: Wednesday 19th March

South - Sun Postal Sports, Watford: Tuesday 18th March

East - Wodson Park, Ware: Thursday 27th March

West - Harpenden Public Halls, Harpenden: Wednesday 26th March

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

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