

## **Hellenic League Premier Division**

**Saturday 8 January 2011**

### **Slimbridge 2-2 Ascot United**

Two goals down after a quarter of an hour, the Swans came back to snatch the points in a roller coaster game at Wisloe Road this afternoon. After a dreadful opening spell for the home side, Ascot deservedly led through goals by Sam McIntyre in the opening minute and Phil McGrotty's strike in the 14th, before a Tom Speers header right on halftime and an equaliser from Danny Chandler with 11 minutes remaining ensured the spoils were shared.

Following the capitulation to local rivals Shortwood the previous Monday, Manager Leon Sterling made two changes - Tom Speers replacing Rob Hine at the back, and Freddie Ward replacing Jamie Martin in midfield.

Ascot made a dream start, attacking down the left flank, and winning a corner following a Speers miskick. The corner was cleared out to Sam McIntyre, who blasted the ball past Dave Evans to give the visitors a very early advantage.

The Swans New Year hangover continued as Ascot continued to make all the running - In the fourth minute, good work between Jon Bennett and Rob Saunders saw the latter fouled on the edge of the box, and Evans had to make a smart save from Andy Lunn's free kick. In the eighth minute, the Ascot lead could have been doubled when a clearance fell to Steve Curtis, and his shot hit the Slimbridge post.

With Tom Cole's tenth minute free kick well saved by Ascot Keeper Jeff Lamb being the only sign of life from the home side, it was no surprise when Ascot got their second goal on 14 minutes. Dreadful Swans' defending from a corner left Phil McGrotty in acres of space, and he duly slid home the second goal for the visitors.

The second goal seemed to inject a little life into the home side, and they started to begin to create chances - Marvin Roberts headed over the bar in a goalmouth scramble, following a corner won by Micky Bryant, and then Paul Carter went close with a free kick following a foul on Roberts. As the game crept toward the half hour mark, Bryant headed wide after good work from Craig Cole, and the home side began to look a little more threatening.

The Swans best chance of the match so far came in the 32nd minute, when Bryant was played in by a nice pass from Ben Wood. A backtracking defender went to clear the ball, but sliced it onto the Ascot crossbar - the ball bounced down and was cleared. Four minutes later, another good chance came for the home wide, when Roberts' cross, played in Carter, whose shot was again well saved by Lamb.

With five minutes remaining in the half, Ascot missed a golden opportunity to kill the game off, when more slack Slimbridge defending from a corner left McGrotty with the goal at his mercy, but to the relief of the hosts, he contrived to head the ball wide. It was to prove a costly miss. With virtually the last kick of the first half, Slimbridge pulled a goal back - Carter's cross was converted by a stooping Tom Speers to give the home side some hope going into the second period.

With 4 minutes of the second half gone, Jamie Martin replaced the ailing Carter, and Martin's pace was to create the first real chance of the second period. he made space for himself and played in Micky Bryant, who was thwarted by a great saving tackle from Jon Steedman to prevent the equaliser. Sterling's second substitution, replacing Bryant with Chandler on 57 minutes was to prove to be the vital one in saving the game for the hosts.

Chandler immediately set about causing trouble for the Ascot defence, and should have levelled on 66 minutes, when he was played in by a good break from Martin. A minute later, Leone Cornwall went close with a rasping shot from the edge of the box, but it still seemed as if the away side were going to nick the points in a thoroughly entertaining encounter.

Chandler finally got the reward his play deserved on 79 minutes, when he made a surging run from midfield, and drilled the ball past Lamb to level

the scores. Ascot had one last chance to win the game with 4 minutes remaining, when Tom Cole was dispossessed by Ian Brooks after some sloppy play. Brooks played the ball to Lee Boon in acres of space, but he shot high and wide with the goal gaping in front of him.

In the final reckoning, a draw was probably a fair result on the balance of play, although Ascot could certainly feel that the game was theirs to win, and the Swans second half performance in particular entitled them to a share of the spoils.

Team: Evans, Cornwall, T. Cole, Wellon, Speers, Wood, Bryant (Chandler 57), Ward, Roberts (Hine 78), C. Cole, Carter (Martin 49)

Goals: Speers 49, Chandler 79