

Hellenic League Premier Division

Wednesday 11 August 2010

Slimbridge 2-1 Highworth Town

New Swans Boss Leon Sterling began his competitive managerial career with a 2-1 victory over Highworth Town at Wisloe Road last night, in Slimbridge's first game back in the UHlsport Hellenic Premier League.

First half goals from Micky Bryant, who joined the club in the Summer from Berkeley Town, and Joe Tustain put the Swans in the driving seat, but a determined second half comeback from Highworth could only produce a single goal response, from Ritchie Saunders, as Slimbridge held on to nick the points.

Bryant was the only new face in the Swans line up, with Sterling retaining the majority of the players who secured promotion last term, and he would have been delighted with his sides opening to the game.

Highworth were immediately under pressure as a the Swans came out of the blocks looking very lively, and it only took four minutes to the home side to take the lead Bryant controlled the ball neatly in the Highworth box, and lobbed Keeper Kurtis Sharkey for a sweet finish.

The tempo from the home side was maintained as both Lewis Wilton and Joe Tustain had chances early on to increase the lead, but Highworth held on and began to get themselves back in the game.

Slimbridge were still playing some very attractive football and a neat move involving Paul Carter, Fred Ward and Tustain saw some good Highworth defending block Tustain's effort on 22 minutes.

The visitors spurned a gilt-edged chance to pull level in the 26th minute, when a Tony Joyce free kick into the Slimbridge box was headed wide by Ritchie Saunders, who had been left in acres of space by the Swans

defence. Four minutes later, Danny Hilder's cross found Highworth Captain Tom Cole in a similar position, and again, his header flashed wide of Dave Evans post for a goal kick with the goal at his mercy.

The misses were to prove costly for Highworth - After Adam Philp and Wilton had both had close range efforts blocked in the box, the Swans doubled their advantage on 32 minutes. Philp made room for a probing cross from the left, and Tustain reached the ball ahead of Keeper Sharkey, taking it past him and blasting into the empty net.

Slimbridge continued to press, and Wilton should have got his name on the scoresheet when he blasted the ball over the bar 2 minutes before the interval with only the Keeper to beat. Just before Half Time Bryant also came close, shooting wide after a good break from Tustain.

As the second half progressed, the visitors came more into the game as Slimbridge sat back on their lead, and Highworth began to look the more dangerous side. The impressive Saunders was causing problems for the Swans' back line, and missed another good chance to pull a goal back on 61 minutes, when another headed drifted just wide of the post. However, in the 64th minute, he finally got the reward his performance deserved, slotting home from close range following the ball running free after a good save from Dave Evans.

Highworth continued to press, but couldn't make the breakthrough, as Slimbridge failed repeatedly to get back on the front foot clearing from defence.

The home side should have wrapped the game up with ten minutes when a through ball from Tustain found Roberts in on goal, and he appeared to be pulled down by Sharkey as he went to shoot. Referee Roskelly, however, felt there was no foul and gave a goal kick to the visitors. At the other end, Steve Robertson had a great chance to equalise in the last minute, but was thwarted by a stunning tackle from Rob Hine, who took the ball off Robertson's feet without fouling him 12 yards out.

On Saturday, Slimbridge travel to Wokingham and Emmbrook (3pm) before returning to Wisloe Road on Wednesday August 18th when they host Shrivenham in another League fixture (7.45pm)

Team: Evans, Cornwall, Cole, Inch, Wellon, Ward, Carter (Hine 73), Bryant (Roberts 67), Philp (Wood 67), Tustain, Wilton

Goals: Bryant (4), Tustain (32)