

Hellenic League Premier Division

Wednesday 23 March 2011

Slimbridge 1-0 Old Woodstock Town

A 57th minute strike from Paul Carter saw Slimbridge nick the points in a largely forgettable evening's entertainment at Wisloe Road. After an explosive opening, during which Old Woodstock saw their Captain Ben Thomas red carded after just seven minutes, the game settled down to a game of attrition between the sides, with Carter's strike being the sole difference at full time. The Swans had a chance to seal the game with 18 minutes remaining, but Tom Cole's penalty was well saved by Woodstock Keeper Rich Barrett.

Leon Sterling made four changes to the side who had triumphed over Berkeley Town last time out, with Will Wellon returning to back four in place of Andy Shepherd. Ben Wood and Craig Cole returned to the side at the expense of Rob Hine and Leon Cornwall, with Paul Carter back in his left sided slot, meaning Ross Langworthy dropped to the bench.

Slimbridge made a promising start, and with only 3 minutes on the clock, a superb Craig Cole header from Carter's corner brought an equally good stop from Barrett in the Woodstock goal. The home side continued to press, and with 7 minutes gone, Jamie Martin's break from midfield saw him through on goal, in a move which saw the visitors reduced to ten men. The chasing Ben Thomas clipped Martin's heels outside the box as he tried to make up ground on the striker, and, once Referee Dave Sallis had deemed the challenge a foul and awarded the free kick, Thomas' fate as the last defender was sadly inevitable.

Woodstock quite understandably reacted to the loss of their skipper by withdrawing one of their front men, and crowding the midfield. Although this proved very effective in dampening down the Slimbridge attacking momentum, it did nothing for the game as a spectacle. No chances of note from either side were forthcoming in the remainder of the first half, which limped towards the interval in a very disappointing manner.

As the second half started, it was obvious that Slimbridge were upping the tempo of the game in an effort to make a breakthrough, and Tom Cole's pass which saw Tom Speers shot rasp into the side netting nearly saw an early reward for this approach. With 57 minutes gone, the home side finally got the opening they had been looking for - a scramble in the Woodstock box saw the ball cleared to Carter on the edge of the penalty area, and his drilled shot from 18 yards gave Barrett no chance and put the Swans into the lead.

A double Slimbridge substitution followed the goal - with Micky Bryant replacing Ben Wood, and Lewis Wilton on for Carter, who's goal was his last involvement in the action. It was 61 minute before Woodstock had what could be classed as their first real effort on goal, when a shot from outside the box by Nick Thorne was easily saved by Dave Evans.

A neat move on 62 minutes saw Speers and Marvin Roberts combine to set up Martin, but a good tackle robbed the Slimbridge man the chance to extend the lead. Thorne crafted a second opportunity for the visitors on 69 minutes, with another shot on target - this one bringing a far more challenging save from Evans to keep the ball out. At the other end, Slimbridge should have extended their lead when Wilton forced a good save from Barrett, and the ball was scrambled away by the Woodstock defence before Roberts could pounce on the loose ball.

It seemed as if the chance to nail the game down had arrived for the home side on 72 minutes, when Green's trip after being wrongfooted by Roberts in the box saw a penalty awarded. Tom Cole stepped and struck the ball confidently to Barrett's left, but the Woodstock keeper guessed the right way, and parried the shot out where it cleared by a grateful defence. The Woodstock stopper was in a action again just five minutes later, making another impressive save, this time from a Roberts header from a Freddy Ward free kick. As the move developed further a Bryant header was cleared off the line as the home side pressed forward again.

The final decent chance of the match fell to Ross Langworthy, brought on to replace Jamie Martin. A cross from Wood saw the youngster well placed, but his effort was scrambled over the bar.

With a minute remaining, Woodstock Manager Paul Lenegan saw red as he was dismissed from the dugout after exchanging words with the match officials. It summed up Woodstock' afternoon, as the Swans held on to record another valuable victory.

Slimbridge have three away ties on the bounce in the League this week, all in the space of seven days. On Tuesday 29th March, they travel to Flackwell Heath (7.45pm), on Thursday 31st, they are way at Wantage Town (7.45pm, before making the trip to our old compadres at Wootton Bassett next Saturday (3.00pm).

Team: Evans, Wellon, T. Cole, Inch, Speers, Wood (Bryant 57), C. Cole, Ward, Roberts, Martin (Langworthy 72), Carter (Wilton 57)

Goal: Carter 57