

# **Hellenic League Premier Division**

**Saturday 13 August 2011**

## **Ardley United 2 - 2 Slimbridge**

After an 18 minute spell at the start of the new season which produced four goals, and entertained the fans far more than it must have pleased the respective Managers, Slimbridge and Ardley ended up sharing the spoils after a great afternoon of football at Ardley Playing Fields.

Leon Sterling had the majority of last season's players available to him, and the consistency this offered the Manager was reflected in his team selection, which only included one newcomer, Brad Martin, who made such an impact in pre-season and was selected on the left side of midfield.

Dave Evans took his customary position in goal, and with Tom Speers sidelined through injury, Jamie Inch and Will Wellon were centre backs in a four that also included Shane Anson and Leon Cornwall. In Midfield, Paul Carter, Micky Bryant, and Fred Ward made up the midfield with Martin. Karl Nash partnered Marvin Roberts up front.

The game started very openly, with both sides looking as if they would score each time they attacked, but it was the visitors who created the first decent chance of the game after 5 minutes. Paul Carter's cross back hooked back into the box by Roberts, but Micky Bryant fired his shot wide of the Ardley goal.

Slimbridge continued to press, and a minute later, got their campaign off to a flying start. Carter was again involved, putting in a dangerous cross that was cleared just before Micky Bryant could collect the ball. The ball fell to Brad Martin on the edge of the Ardley box, and his delicate lob cleared Keeper Joe White to notch the Swans first goal of the season in some style.

Ardley responded superbly with two goals in the next four minutes. First, Ben Thomas powered home a header from a corner and then, in the tenth minute, a through ball found Lewis Cordice through on goal, and he easily beat Dave Evans to put the home side ahead.

Play continued to go from end to end, and after Nash made White work hard to keep out his shot on 14 minutes as The Swans pressed for an equaliser, Ryan Brooks nearly extended the home side's lead with a shot deflected for a corner on 16 minutes.

With just 18 minutes on the clock, the scores were level again – Martin, who had made a very accomplished start to his Slimbridge career, put in a delicate cross from the left flank, which saw Nash's header restore parity.

Cordice was causing all sort of problems for the Slimbridge back four, and Will Wellon particularly was at the sharp end of many of his best moves. Two minutes after the equaliser, Cordice again broke through the Slimbridge defence, this time dragging his shot wide of the post after beating Evans, and he must have been disappointed not to have done better.

Still the play continued to go from end to end. On 23 minutes, Carter's free kick was played neatly back across the box by Jamie Inch, but Nash's shot sneaked just over the Ardley bar.

As Slimbridge continued to press, Roberts volley three minutes later from Carter's cross brought a great save from White, but Ardley fought back, and series of dangerous corners saw them pile pressure on the visitors.

The home side created probably the best chance before the interval, when Stuart Brooks played in Ryan Brooks, and his shot brought a great save from Dave Evans, with the subsequent corner landing on the roof of the Slimbridge net, bringing a very entertaining first half to a close.

After what we can safely assume to be some harsh words from the management teams of both sides during the interval the second half was, unsurprisingly, a tighter affair, but chances continued to fall to both sides.

Cordice was still proving a major threat to The Swans' defence, and after he won a free kick after being fouled by Leon Cornwall on 49 minutes, Stuart Bridges' free kick set up an opportunity for Scott Bridges, but his shot ballooned over the bar and out of the ground into nearby gardens.

Ardley continued to press as the second period went on but, despite a series of dangerous corners, were unable to make their increased possession count. At the other end, Nash was creating problems for the home defence his superb solo run after 66 minutes saw a dangerous cross evade the incoming Roberts to be cleared.

From the subsequent throw-in, a magnificent header from Marvin Roberts brought an equally impressive save from Ardley Keeper Joe White, who pushed the ball past the post. Inexplicably, Referee Maynard then awarded a goal kick to the home side.

Chances continued at both ends. On 69 minutes, Ryan Brooks beat Evans, but his effort resulted in a corner for the home side. As Ardley pressed, Cordice nearly notched his second, heading just wide on 76 minutes, before being replaced straight afterwards by Alex Fraser.

The best chance of the final minutes went to the home side - Ryan Brooks' run was cleared for a corner, with Jamie Inch just beating Troy Bryan to the resulting cross to clear the danger with eight minutes remaining. It was the last serious action of a game that included six additional minutes of stoppage time, before an honourable draw was declared.

Team: Evans, Anson, Cornwall, Wellon, Inch, Ward, Carter, Bryant, Roberts (Hine 75), Nash (J.Martin 69), B. Martin (Wilton 78)

Goals: Martin 6, Nash 18