

## **Hellenic League Premier Division**

**Monday 29 August 2011**

### **Slimbridge 2-1 Highworth Town**

Slimbridge bounced back from their Bank Holiday Saturday defeat with a 2-1 victory over Highworth Town at Wislow Road this afternoon. The Swans raced into a two goal lead through Lewis Wilton and Alex Higgs, before Tyler Sheppard reduced the arrears for the visitors. Despite Highworth pressure in the second period, spurred on by a very impressive performance from Mark Barnes, the home side hung on to record a valuable victory, ahead of their FA Cup clash with Cadbury Heath next weekend.

With Brad Martin moving into the back four from his midfield role two days earlier, consigning Rob Hine to the bench, Manager Leon Sterling started with a midfield four of Ben Wood, Freddy Ward, Micky Bryant and Lewis Wilton, with Alex Higgs partnering Marvin Roberts up front.

The home side started very promisingly, and nearly made a perfect start after just two minutes - Higgs played a neat 1-2 with Wilton, and after the ball was cleared during a goalmouth scramble, Wood's run and cross saw Micky Bryant drive his shot just wide.

Slimbridge continued to press home their advantage as Highworth struggled to match the pace of the game, and Roberts' header set up Ward nicely for a cross which was eventually cleared. However, the home side took the lead on 6 minutes, when another Ward corner fell to Shane Anson at the far post, and his cross back across goal was turned home by Lewis Wilton to put The Swans ahead.

Highworth responded well, and nearly snatched an equaliser on nine minutes, when Danny Hilder's header from a corner went over courtesy of the top of Dave Evans' crossbar, but with 18 minutes on the clock, Slimbridge were two goals to the good. Ward was playing some neat diagonal balls through the midfield area, and one of these passes played

in Alex Higgs, who neatly lobbed Highworth Keeper Charles Steward to double the home side's advantage.

Five minutes later, the same combination saw Higgs denied by a timely defensive tackle, as Highworth struggled to contain the Swans' Assistant Manager. As play continued, Ward sent in another pinpoint cross, but Higgs' header was just wide.

Still the home side dominated proceedings, and Higgs was again on the end of a good opportunity after 26 minutes, but this time his lob over Steward drifted wide of the Highworth post.

The visitors struggled to create many chances of their own during the first third of the game, but it took a good tackle on 29 minutes from Brad Martin to halt a good run by Ben Snook as he neared the edge of the Slimbridge box.

The Swans had a let off on the half hour, when an error by Dave Evans dribbling the ball out saw him haul back Tyler Sheppard who had dispossessed the Slimbridge stopper and was bearing down on an empty net. After Sheppard inexplicably managed to slip his shot wide of the goal, Referee Phil Staynings decided that Evans' card should be yellow, not red, having played advantage to the attacker.

The incident seemed to galvanise Highworth, and they finally began to work their way into the match, which finally turned into the more balanced encounter that many were expecting before Kick Off. However the visitors still struggled to create concrete chances, and the score line remained 2-0 to the home side at the interval.

In the same way that Slimbridge dominated the early exchanges of the first period, the early second half honours went to Highworth - With 51 minutes on the clock, a sweeping move involving Tony Joyce and Ritchie Saunders saw Joyce's shot well blocked by Will Wellon, although the visitors felt that there may have been a handball as Wellon threw himself at the ball. Referee Staynings awarded a corner to Highworth following the incident.

It didn't take too long for the Highworth pressure to tell though, and after 53 minutes, Tyler Sheppard was on the end of another neat passing move, and he easily beat Evans to halve the deficit, and bring Highworth back to within a goal of their hosts. Danny Hilder had a good opportunity to level the scores two minutes later, but blasted his shot high and wide after his first effort had been well blocked by Anson.

The momentum of the game had definitely swung in favour of the visitors, and Barnes was the next to try his luck on 61 minutes, but pulled his shot wide of both Evans and the Slimbridge post.

Leon Sterling made his first substitution of the day following this move, replacing Higgs with Ross Langworthy, and the youngster nearly made an immediate impact on the game. After Wood's through ball nearly played Langworthy in for his first touch of the ball, Ward's cross after a promising break down the right saw Langworthy's header rise over the Highworth bar.

Barnes continued to turn in a superb performance for the visitors, and his mazy run on 64 minutes saw him beat four Slimbridge players, before he was stopped by a superb Wellon tackle, which allowed Anson to clear the threat.

Slimbridge had a great chance to finally kill the game off with 20 minutes remaining, when Ward got on the end of an overhit Carter cross. Ward's cross from the right flank was turned past Steward by Langworthy, but the ball rebounded back off the Highworth post and rolled agonisingly along the goalline, before being cleared to safety.

Five minutes later, another good chance for the home side went begging-following Roberts' cross, Micky Bryant's shot was cleared off the line as Slimbridge yet again came close to a third goal.

With three minutes remaining, Highworth missed a final opportunity to gain a point, but Gary Hill's header from Ryan Thomas' cross fell wide of the Swan's post.

Slimbridge now turn their attention back to the FA Cup, and the visit of Cadbury Heath to Wisloe Road next Saturday (3.00pm).

Team: Evans, Anson, B. Martin (Hine 73), Cornwall, Wellon, Wood, Ward, Bryant, Roberts, Higgs (Langworthy 62), Wilton (Carter 67)

Goals: Wilton 6, Higgs 18