SPORT ITALIA HELLENIC LEAGUE –PREMIER DIVISION
(Played on Tuesday 26th December 2006)

HADDOCK SUPER-STRIKE SETS UP WIN

SLIMBRIDGE 2 , ALMONDSBURY TOWN 0

Tim Haddock's early wonder goal followed by a smart piece of Robbie Colwell finishing just before half-time was the difference between two hard-working teams. Third-placed Slimbridge closed the gap at the top to three points with games in hand on the top two, North Leigh and Ardley United respectively, as both dropped points in their Boxing Day matches.

The 'Almonds' were first on the attack, the home side being grateful for two outstanding, saving tackles from Allton Axton, before Kane Ingram made room for himself approaching the home area, but saw his shot go over Ryan Chandler's bar.

With Mike Green and Fred Ward looking particularly sharp, troubling the visitors right side of defence, it was perhaps a surprise that Slimbridge took a 17th minute lead emanating from the left when Haddock received the ball in plenty of space, ran on and cracked a dipping 35 yard drive that flew in off the underside of the bar, goalkeeper Andy King catching the ball on the way out of the net.

The goal lifted the Slimbridge momentum and when Town's Lee Gitson hauled down Kacey Johnstone on a forward run, the resulting free-kick from the edge of the area taken by Johnstone, brought a flying save from King, stretching to the top corner.

King was again in action smothering Haddock's shot when the mid-fielder was put in by a particularly buoyant looking Colwell.

Town then steadied, and were dismayed to have a goal ruled out on 24 minutes. A long diagonal free-kick from skipper Ben Pope found its way to Justin Bishop who headed against the post, but before Adam Cole netted the re-bound the Assistant Referee's flag was up, Cole being in an off-side position.

Action back at the other end saw Matt Green fire over when well-placed after good build-up play between Colwell and Johnstone.

Some niggling fouls then started to disrupt the play for a while but authoritative control by the men in black saw this phase pass by. Town went close when Neil Rosslee hit a rising shot from just outside the area that fizzed past Chandler and an unguarded post. The home side then retained some good possession and doubled their lead three minutes before the break. A deep Matt Green free-kick into the area was palmed away at the back post by King straight to Colwell, who quickly put his angled shot high into the net.

The hosts controlled the early play after the break, but some solid defending with Marcus Mapstone and Matt Emery to the fore for Town, limited clear opportunities until Johnstone put in John Cant who brought a tremendous save out of King.

Play then got a bit niggly again, (during which time, defender Jon Embling limped off to be replaced by Leon Sterling) as it had in the first half. Players from both sides received some stern lectures, which again did the trick, as Town had a ten minute period of domination without really creating a clear chance. Two half chances for Rosslee, heading onto the roof of the net from a back-flick and substitute Richard Kerr, off target at the back post, were the nearest the visitors came to a goal.

'A keenly-fought local derby' was how Swan's Manager Doug Foxwell put it after the match, and 'a good all-round team effort winning the day'.

Slimbridge; R.Chandler, Mike Green, J.Embling (L.Sterling 58), T. Haddock, Ashley Thomas, A.Axton, E.Ward, Matt Green, K. Johnstone, R.Colwell, J.Cant.

Almondsbury Town; A.King, L.Gitson (M.Shongreng 63), B.Pope, M.Emery, M.Mapstone, P.Fowler, N.Rosslee, K.Ingram, J.Bishop, A.Cole (R.Kerr 71), P.McKelvaney.

Referee; Mr. A. Davies (Gloucester)