SPORT ITALIA HELLENIC LEAGUE –PREMIER DIVISION

(Played on Saturday 4th November 2006)

FRETFUL SWANS EDGE HOME

SLIMBRIDGE 2, ARDLEY UNITED 1

Slimbridge dominated a goalless first half, hitting the woodwork twice, and had to studiously apply themselves in the second to secure the points against a rejuvenated Ardley United who fell to their first defeat under new manager Dan Still, appointed earlier in the week after the departure of former Didcot Town manager, Peter Foley. Matt Green and Robbie Colwell were on target for the home side, with substitute Joel Petsi replying, to set up a tense finish.

Colwell made an early run at the visitors defence but shot just wide as did Tim Haddock shortly after. Will Morford looked eager with several darting runs and on 22 minutes was unlucky to see his hooked shot past goalkeeper Steve Edwards cleared off the line by a covering defender.

A minute later Matt Green fed a corner to John Cant who flicked on to Ashley Thomas who spun and volleyed against the Ardley bar. As the half hour came, skipper Leon Sterling put over a cross from the right that dropped against the visitors far upright, but was scrambled away.

It took 31 minutes for Ardley's first serious attack to materialise, and ended with Chris Hill firing straight at Ryan Chandler in the home goal.

At the other end Edwards parried from Matt Green and Steve Badham went on an overlap from Cant, but the cross in saw Colwell put the wrong side of the post. The half closed with another couple of near misses, but one had to give credit to the Ardley defence for weathering such an onslaught with commendable composure, with defender Massimo Lagioia and skipper Steve Garbutt involved a great deal in stemming the tide.

The half-time message from the Slimbridge dressing room seemed to be more haste less speed, as the home team recommenced by passing the ball around more, but content to wait for an opening to develop. On 51 minutes the tactic worked and finally breached the Ardley defence, Colwell spinning away from his marker up the left and his cross into the box turned into the net at the far post by Matt Green from close range.

A more intense mid-field battle then ensued with Johnny Meadows and Haddock getting through a lot of work for Slimbridge, as did Tom Green and Liam Malone for the visitors. With 69 minutes gone Ashley Thomas got forward, but under pressure put a far post header wide from a delightful right wing cross from Cant. Colwell put a daring low drive narrowly wide from a shot on the run from fully thirty yards, which seemed a tester for his next effort on 84 minutes that doubled the home side's lead. From twenty yards out in front of goal a terrific side-foot rising shot round defender Danny Mason and over the stretching Edwards that whistled in under the bar looked to have sealed the match.

Ardley had other ideas though, and pulled a goal back two minutes later, when a mix-up in the home box saw Petsi get the final touch before the ball rolled into the net and set up a tense last four minutes. No clear sight of goal emerged in that period at either end although Ardley did force a couple of corners, and afterwards magnanimously conceded that the better team on the day had won. Slimbridge Manager Doug Foxwell felt that his side were not at their best, but gave credit to a hard-working Ardley side, who although living dangerously at times made his side have to pull out all the stops to win the match.

Slimbridge; R.Chandler, L.Sterling, S.Badham, T.Haddock, Ashley Thomas, A.Axton, Matt Green, J.Meadows (Mike Green 79), W.Morford, R.Colwell, J.Cant (C.Cole 82)

Ardley United; S.Edwards, M.Lagioia, A.Richmond, D.Mason, J.Allen, S.Garbutt, L.Brandon (P.Martin 70), L.Malone, C.Hill, R.Wiffen (J.Petsi 59), T.Green

Referee; Mr. M.Niemirski (Swindon)