SPORT ITALIA HELLENIC LEAGUE – PREMIER DIVISION

(Played on Saturday 21st October 2006)

HAT-TRICK HERO ROBBIE TO HOT FOR FAIRFORD

SLIMBRIDGE 3, FAIRFORD TOWN 1

Robbie Colwell got the goals that underpinned a convincing Slimbridge performance that sent County neighbours Fairford Town crashing to their first Hellenic Premier defeat of the season. Darren Smart had earlier equalised for the visitors to keep them in the game for most of the first half, but the game ran away from his side after the interval.

The early action saw a chance at both ends, Will Morford putting a header from a Johnny Meadows cross past the post before Courtenay Chessell put a well-weighted ball through to Dave Slattery, who, clear on goal, failed to trouble home goalkeeper Ryan Chandler from 14 yards.

With both sides prepared to attack, the next opening saw Slimbridge take the lead on eleven minutes. Mid-fielder Tim Haddock who enjoyed a hard-working afternoon, got forward to bring a good diving parry from Ian Gill, but the ball ran loose and Colwell was on hand to net from an acute angle.

A delightful tee-up from Morford saw Colwell shave the post, but Fairford retaliated and were back on level terms with 18 minutes gone. The ball ran loose and Smart crashed it high into the net through a crowded area from 16 yards in front of goal, defenders standing off after a previously taken corner had broken down.

The goal naturally gave Fairford a boost and Chessell set up skipper Kevin Coles, who not only put his angled drive wide of the diving Chandler but also unfortunately for him, also wide of the post.

On the half hour, with the game delicately balanced, Slimbridge's Jon Embling had to retire with a recurrence of the groin strain injury sustained a week ago at Merthyr in the Cup and was replaced by the reliable Jamie Inch, but before he got into the game, Chandler bravely dived in to save on his own goal line from Phil Corcoran.

Slimbridge then visibly went up a gear and regained the lead on 39 minutes. Allton Axton's long clearance out of defence was chased down the left by Morford, and with a steadying touch, an accurate cross to the incoming Colwell at the back post was deftly turned in back across the exposed, onrushing Gill.

Fairford's influential mid-fielder, Dave Slattery took a knock in the closing stages of the first half, struggled in the early play after the break and quickly exited, which seemed a big blow to the balance of the Fairford side.

The second half opened with Haddock driving just past a post from fully twenty yards and Morford unlucky to flick a cross against the far post that ran along the line to the grateful arms of Gill. This, following a tremendous burst up the left from John Cant, who had an inspired second half that Fairford struggled to contain. It was Cant who sent a piledriver at Gill on 59 minutes that the goalkeeper couldn't hold and Colwell thumped the rebound gleefully into the back of the net, and left the fray to applause some twelve minutes later, to be replaced by Barrie Dibden.

By then Fairford's Lee Stoddart was on the pitch and certainly gave a bit of previously lacking bite to the Fairford attack, once drawing a good save from Chandler and going close on a couple of other occasions, before Cant and Haddock spurned a chance apiece at the other end.

Delighted with the result, Slimbridge manager Doug Foxwell felt that this was a very important win for his side. ' I asked the lads for a big performance against a form side that had only conceded three league goals in their nine league games this season. They did all that I asked and more. It was important to get our League campaign re-launched after the Cup run.'

Slimbridge; R.Chandler, L.Sterling, J.Embling (J.Inch 30), T.Haddock, Ashley Thomas, A.Axton, Matt Green, J.Meadows, W.Morford, R.Colwell (B.Dibden 71), J.Cant.

Fairford Town; I.Gill, A.Roper, J.Joyce, G.Hill, L.Spalding, D.Smart, T.Cole (R.Pratley 70), D.Slattery (B.Snook 56), P.Corcoran, K.Coles (L.Stoddart 70), C.Chessell.