# Western League Premier Division

# Saturday 22 March 2014

# Hengrove Athletic 0-1 Slimbridge AFC

In the end, it took a disputed penalty to separate these two sides in a six pointer at the bottom of the table, but on the balance of play, Slimbridge left The Grove with the spoils that they deserved at the end of the day. Although they remain in 17th place in the Western Premier League, they have a six point cushion over the four clubs below them, and are now 11 points above the relegation zone.

Hengrove started the game sharply, but were handicapped by a lack of firepower up front which rendered many of their early forays ineffective, not helped by a strong wind and bumpy surface, which meant we were never likely to see a smooth flowing encounter. After 4 minutes, Steve Ratcliffe and James Dunn set up Lewis Scott for Hengrove, and it took a Freddy Ward defensive header to put the ball out for a corner, which was cleared.

A dangerous break after 8 minutes from Hengrove's Wayne Pearce saw Ben Tunnicliff make a superb saving tackle, before, at the other end, Alex Hoyle's header from Chandler's corner dropped just over the bar. Hengrove Keeper Mark Drinkwater required treatment after being clattered as he punched clear a Dave Evans Free Kick, but decent chances were in short supply for both sides.

As the game settled, the Swans began to gain the ascendancy - Chandler saw his long range effort drift too high, while his own cross a couple of minutes later was just too long for the incoming Jack Twyman, after good work from Liam Harding and Dean Turner had set the move up.

With 20 minutes gone, the best chances were now going to the visitors, and Harding was unlucky to see his effort blocked, after Twyman and Chandler had combined well to set the opportunity up.

Drinkwater was still having problems catching the ball in the swirling wind, and another Evans free kick saw a scramble in the Hengove box, with the ball eventually being cleared for a Slimbridge corner. As Chandlers dangerous cross came over, the ball was just nicked away from Tunnicliff's head, and Hengrove cleared.

This was a good period of pressure from the visitors, and Harding was next to be denied, as the ball was just taken off his toe as she shaped to strike Hoyle's cross.

With half an hour on the clock, all the action was now in the Hengrove box - Twyman's mazy run was stopped by a foul, and Harding's Free Kick was again punched clear by Drinkwater. Hoyle played the ball back into the box, but again, the wind caught the ball, and the cross was just too long for the incoming Chandler to reach.

With Paul Fahy and Dean Turner proving effective down the flanks, it seemed just a matter of time before the deadlock was broken, and Fahy created the last good chance of the half, when his cross managed to miss both Twyman and Hoyle as they converged on goal just before the break.

The game swung on an incident in the 58th minute, when a Swans attack was threatening the Hengrove goal, and a defensive clearance cannoned into Hengrove's Joe Brimble, who was only a yard or so away. Despite the fact that Brimble has no chance to get out of the way, Referee Brian Durie deemed him to have handled the ball, and Danny Chandler converted the penalty for the crucial Slimbridge strike.

The Swans nearly doubled their lead ten minutes later, when Alex Hoyle made a surging run through midfield, and it took a great save from Drinkwater to deny him - the ball fell free in the Hengrove box following the Keeper's save, and Harding was agonisingly close to getting to the rebound, but couldn't quite reach the ball before it was hacked away.

With Harry Fenner now on for Twyman, who came off after requiring treatment for a knock on his knee, Slimbridge continued to look good value for the lead - Harding and Hoyle again combined well only to see Drinkwater punch the ball clear, and Fenner should have produced a better cross after Fahy had set him up. There was even time for Callum

Brown to get in on the act, with an effort which went wide after good work by Turner.

In a nervy last ten minutes, Hengrove had a couple of opportunities, but Dunn's header which was well over, and a shot from Pearce, which bobbled as he struck the ball and ended up well wide, were the sum total of their efforts, and Slimbridge held on for a priceless three points.

The Swans travel to Meksham Town on Monday (7.30pm) before returning to Wisloe Road next Saturday, when Willand Rovers make the trip up the M5 from Devon.

Team: Evans, Ward, Brown, Tunnicliff, Thornton, Twyman (Fenner 75), Fahy, Harding, Chandler, Hoyle, Turner

Goals: Chandler (Pen) 58

Supporters Man of the Match: Paul Fahy