Evo Stik Southern League South & West

Saturday 18 March 2017

Slimbridge 2-0 Paulton Rovers

The Swans recorded the double over Paulton Rovers with a dominant display this afternoon at Thornhill Park. Captain Lee Smith was ultimately the difference between the two sides, notching two goals to seal the victory which means that the Swans can start planning for another season in the Southern League next season.

Slimbridge move up a place to 19th as a result of the win, with a 14 point advantage over Wantage Town in the relegation spots. However, with Wantage still to travel to both Hereford and Salisbury in their last six games, their chances of survival are unlikely, to say the least, although they still currently have a mathematical chance of pulling off an huge upset.

Paulton had the first early opportunity when Adam Mace was penalised for a pull on Reeko Best, by far the visitors best player on the day, but Josh Ford's effort was weak and easily gather by Slimbridge Keeper Marcus Beauchamp.

The Swans had a glorious opportunity to take an early lead when Paulton Keeper, and ex-Swan, George Burton scuffed a clearance to Jamie Martin on three minutes, but, faced with virtually an open goal, Martin skewed his effort wide.

The chances continued to come for the home side, with Smith and Marley Thomas both going close, but the scores remained level.

The combination of an uneven pitch and high wind was creating some interesting opportunities, and Mace saw his 40 yard free kick end up with a good save from Burton as the wind caught it with 12 minutes gone.

Manager Freddy Ward was forced into an early change, bringing himself on after Mike Oakes got caught with a nasty looking tackle, and was unable to continue.

Mace and Thomas then combined well to set up Martin, whose header was well caught by Burton as Slimbridge pressed forward.

On 26 minutes the wind again nearly proved decisive, this time lifting Thomas's lob over the Paulton bar, before the deadlock was eventually broken on 32 minutes.

A lovely move saw Joe Stokes play in Ward on the Slimbridge right, and Smith stroked home Ward's cross to put the home side ahead.

Smith had two great chances in the next two minutes to increase the lead, but his efforts were just too high and then wide as Slimbridge pushed for a second.

Paulton attacks were rare at this point, but Ryan Thwaite made a good block from Best's effort on 35 minutes to maintain the lead.

Paulton's closest effort of the game came on 36 minutes, when Matthew Benham saw his header come back off the Swans' crossbar, but Referee John Roskelly had already penalised the striker for a push as he went up.

Reeko Best continued to look the most dangerous player for Paulton, and Man of the Match Nick Grimes made a great block just before the break from a goalbound effort, but the Swans went in ahead at the Half.

The second half continued in much the same vein as the first - Paulton had a flurry of chances in the first 15 minutes, but Elliott Keighley's effort was easily saved, Joe Chandler's effort was wide and Jordan Rickett's effort saw another comfortable Beauchamp save, before the Swans wrapped things up in the 76th minute.

Smith turned and made space for himself in the Paulton box, beat two men, and then slammed the ball homes despite the best efforts of Burton to double the home side's advantage.

Martin and Smith both had chances to increase the score with chances in the last ten minutes, but the Swans comfortably played out time to record an important victory.

Team: Beauchamp, Turl, Mace, Grimes, Ryan Thwaite, Twyman, Stokes, Oakes (Ward 12), Martin, Smith, Thomas

Supporters Man of the Match: Nick Grimes