Evo Stik Southern League South & West

Monday 2 January 2017

Shortwood United 4-4 Slimbridge

After a difficult week for the Swans that saw the departure of Manager Leon Sterling, the reaction of the side to the week's events was always going to be a massive factor in this encounter, and, with Assistant Manager Freddy Ward stepping up to the plate, Slimbridge and local rivals Shortwood played out an absolute cracker of a game to share the points in a game that ebbed and flowed between the two sides.

The Swans took an early lead through Marley Thomas, and doubled their advantage just before the half hour through Adam Mace. But Shortwood fought back before the break, and goals from Jake Lee and Ross Langworthy saw the sides go in level. Will Morford's penalty early in the second half saw the hosts in front for the first time in the game, before Brad Martin and then Joe Stokes put the Swans back in front. Lee's second, with just ten minutes remaining rescued a point for Shortwood, and a draw was certainly a fair result at the final whistle.

Slimbridge made the perfect start - with three minutes on the clock, Jack Twyman played in Marley Thomas with a superb diagonal ball, and he dinked the ball past Shortwood Keeper Rhys Lovett to put the visitors ahead. Momentum was certainly with the Swans early on, and Brad Martin's header and Johnny Cant's shot saw the visitors pressing hard.

Eventually, Sortwood settled into the game, and started to create their own chances - Matt Bennett and Adam Price both having good efforts saved by Swans' Keeper Adam Thomas, as the game became a lot more even.

Slimbridge had a great chance to notch a second on 24 minutes, when Thomas was played in again by another great Twyman pass, but was foiled by Lovett when one on one with the Shortwood Keeper.

But a minute later, it was two - Cant's powerful run down the left flank saw him play Mace into space, and he drilled the ball across Lovett into the far corner of the net to double the visitors' advantage.

But Shortwood came back, and two goals in the next ten minutes saw them draw level - Lee converted after a header from Bennett following a Shortwood corner on the half hour mark, and then Langworthy and Lee played a neat one-two four minutes later that saw Langworthy slam the ball past Thomas to level things up.

Shortwood could have actually gone into the break ahead had Andy Lewis' effort not come back into play off the Slimbridge crossbar with three minutes of the half remaining.

The second period continued with as much incident as the first - Brad Martin saw his effort blocked from point blank range after good work by Mace, and Dean Turner's effort was saved after John Cant's neat play to set him up, before, on 54 minutes, the hosts took the lead for the first time - Turner was penalised for a foul on Price by Referee Andy Sheppard, and Will Morford stepped up to convert the spot kick.

But, seven minutes later, the sides were level again, when Martin converted a sweeping move down the right involving Twyman and Smith to put the Swans back on terms.

With thirteen minutes left, Slimbridge were back in front - Joe Stokes' strike from the edge of the Shortwood box giving Lovett no chance.

Again, Shortwood came back, and three minutes later it was all square again, when Lee scored his second after a free kick from Price.

The final word looked to be going to the visitors, but Thomas' effort was cleared off the line, and Stokes' effort with two minutes left was agonisingly just too high, and the sides had to settle for a point apiece.

The Swans entertain David Mehew's Mangotsfield United on Saturday at Thornhill Park (3.00pm), before travelling to Swindon Supermarine next Tuesday (10th, 7,45pm) for another League encounter.

Team: Thomas, Turl, Mace, Ry Thwaite, Rich Thwaite, Turner, Smith, Twyman (Stokes 72), Brad Martin, Thomas (Jamie Martin 87), Cant (Grimes 84)

Supporters Man of the Match: Marley Thomas