FA Cup 2nd Qualifying Round

Saturday 17 September 2016

Taunton Town 2-0 Slimbridge

It says much for the progress that Slimbridge Football Club have made both on and off the pitch in the past ten years that there was a genuine sense of disappointment as the side bowed out of the FA Cup at The Viridor Stadium this afternoon to Taunton Town. From competing in the Northern Senior League in the 2007-8 season to competing with clubs like like Taunton Town, and in ten days time, Hereford, is a measure of how much has been achieved during the clubs' journey to Southern League football.

The hosts can rightly point to a game that they should have put to bed far earlier than the 80th minute second that clinched the tie for them, including hitting the woodwork on no less than three occasions, but the Swans never gave up, battled hard, and on another day, may have nicked a goal that would have potentially have changed the game. In the end though, Taunton deserved their victory, and booked their place in the Third Qualifying Round of the Emirate FA Cup with a goal in each half.

The game started at a pace despite the warm conditions, and it was the visitors who fashioned the first real opportunity, when no-one was in the Taunton box to meet a probing Marley Thomas cross in the fifth minute. Apart from a straightforward save for Luke Merchant from Jordan Rogers, the visitors were making the running early on. Archie Haskayne, and then Jack Twyman both went close, the latter bringing a great stop from Taunton Keeper Lloyd Irish as the Swans pressed in the first ten minutes.

Twyman was thwarted again by a superb tackle from Owen Irish, before the hosts found their feet and started to get into the game. Merchant made good stops from Jordan Rogers and then Matt Wright, before Taunton broke the deadlock on 19 minutes - Pierce Mitchell was allowed too much space on the Taunton right, and his pinnpoint cross was met by the head of Rogers, giving Merchant no chance.

The momentum of the game swung very much to Taunton at this point, and Adam Kelly saw his rocket shot come back into play off the Slimbridge bar just before the half hour, as the home side pressed. The last 15 minutes of the half was backs to the wall for the Swans, as Ed Palmer's Free Kick tested Merchant, Wright was off target when well placed, Jordan's neat turn and shot saw his effort come back off the post, and Wright again had a good opportunity which he placed too high as the game approached the break.

The Swans situation was summed up by Ed Major's air kick at a dangerous cross, but Taunton were again denied before the break when Owen Irish's header was cleared off the line by Dean Saunders, before Wright was again off target, leaving Slimbridge to regroup at the break.

The second half started in much the same vein as the first, with Callum Martindale's Free Kick a minute in hitting the woodwork again, but it was still a single goal dividing the sides.

Slimbridge began to create opportunities for themselves, with Archie Haskayne's free kick just wide, and a scramble in the Taunton box seeing Irish made another superb stop from Alex Hoyle, before the ball was cleared.

There were still chances being created at the other end though, and a 35 yard Free Kick from Ed Palmer was only just off target as Taunton pushed to kill the game off. At the other end, Ed Major was brought down on the edge of the box, resulting in a free kick which saw a Haskayne effort deflected for a corner, and then Johnny Cant was off target as Slimbridge still looked as if they may be able to force their way back into the game.

On 64 minutes, Matt Villis was off target for the hosts with a header, before Wright brought another good save from Merchant, who pushed his effort into the side netting.

Slimbridge had a glorious opportunity to level things up on 71 minutes, when Cant found himself through one on one with Irish, but his effort ended up in the side netting and the chance was lost.

Taunton finally broke the Swans' resistance for the second time ten minutes from time, when another long range Palmer Free Kick was spilled by Merchant. Ryan Batley was first to the loose ball and drilled it in to double the advantage.

Cant had another good effort which brought another classy stop from Irish, while Merchant made a good stop from Kelly in the second minute of stoppage time before Referee Lewis Sandoe drew events to a close.

The Swans are back to League action on Tuesday, when they make their third attempt to travle to Bridgwater Town (7.45pm), before hosting high flying North Leigh at Thornhill Park next Saturday (3.00pm). Slimbridge curently sit in 13th place in the Southern League South and West, albeit with either one or two games in hand on most of the clubs around them.

Team: Merchant, Turl, Ry Thwaite, Hoyle, Rich Thwaite, Turner, Haskayne (Ward 65), Twyman, Major (Orchard 70), Cant, Thomas (Mace 60)

Supporters Man of the Match: Jack Twyman