Evo Stik Southern League South & West

Saturday 6 August 2016

Slimbridge 5-3 Winchester City

The Swans and Winchester served up an entertaining goal fest at Thorhill Park, with the home side recording their highest ever single game goal total in the Southern League.

The game looked dead and buried at the break, with 2 Sean Lawson goals, and a pearl from Archie Haskayne putting the home side in control of the game, but Winchester rallied - second half goals from Joseph Briggs, Robert Flooks and Craig Feeney were countered by two further strikes for the home side, with Nathan Payne and Jamie Martin netting, for a result that sees the Swans sitting proudly in fifth place, ahead of both Hereford and Salisbury.

Considering their very recent change of Manager, Winchester made the better start to the game, although their clever football didn't really create that many scoring opportunities early on. The best of the chances in the first twenty minutes went to the home side, with Sean Lawson looking dangerous. Winchester's best early effort was a shot from Adam Tomasso which Swans Keeper Luke Merchant gathered easily.

Slimbridge took the lead on 20 minutes, when Lawson's effort took a slight deflection to leave Winchester Keeper Lewis Noice no chance.

The visitors continued to look dangerous though, and the battle down the left flank between Lerone Plummer and Sam Turl was particularly impressive. Plummer looked as if he was going to have a major influence on the match, firstly playing in Briggs, and then forcing a save himself after a tricky run, but Merchant in the Swans' goal looked composed and confident.

Merchant made a super stop, tipping Michael Hubbard's effort over on 26 minutes, before the Swans doubled their lead just after the half hour mark - Archie Haskayne made space for himself after great work from Jack Twyman, who was proving very influential in midfield, outside the Winchester box, and drilled a peach of a shot past Noice to record the Swans' second.

A minute before the break, it was three - Lawson again was left free in the Winchester box, and netted his second of the afternoon.

Winchester's frustration boiled over, and, after a late tackle on Dean Turner, a melee ensued, resulting in Turner and Winchester Skipper Jamie Barron both seeing red before the half time whistle.

There was still time for Briggs to hit the Slimbridge crossbar before the break, bringing to a close a breathless first half.

Slimbridge made a far better start to the second half, and Haskayne was unlucky with a header after great work from Lawson, before a lovely passing move between Adam Mace, Haskayne and Lawson saw Ryan Thwaite miscue his cross.

Merchant was again called into action ten minutes into the second period, making a great save from a dangerous free kick, and then seeing Briggs' effort come back into play off the post. A minute later though, Briggs made no mistake to record the visitor's first of the afternoon.

The Swans reacted superbly to conceding, going straight up the other end from the kick off, with Nathan Payne's neat finish restoring their three goal advantage.

On 72 minutes, Winchester got their second of the afternoon, Robert Flooks' header beating Merchant to make the score 4-2.

With eight minutes remaining, Winchester felt they had pulled another goal back, but Feeney's effort was ruled out for offside, much to the frustration of the visitors.

On 87 minutes, the Swans recorded their fifth goal of the afternoon - Ed Major's powerful run down the right flank saw Jamie Martin rise and nod home his cross.

In the fourth minute of stoppage time, Winchester grabbed their third of the game, when Feeney converted after a goalmouth scramble, but the final whistle saw celebrations from the home side and supporters, as they picked up the three opening day points.

Team: Merchant, Turl, Ryan Thwaite, Hoyle, Rich Thwaite, Turner, Haskayne, Twyman (Oldham 62), Lawson, Mace (Martin 76), Payne (Major 72)

Goals: Lawson (20,44), Haskayne (32), Payne (61), Martin (87)

Supporters Man of the Match: Sean Lawson