

SATURDAY, 26 APRIL 2008

HEMEL HEMPSTEAD TOWN 2-1 TIVERTON TOWN

British Gas Business Southern League Premier Division

Tiverton Town's season stumbled to a halt at Vauxhall Road with another defeat, their seventh in nine games, although the Yellows put up a good fight against Hemel Hempstead for much of the match, only to go down to a goal either side of half time, with Tom Knighton's late strike little more than a consolation in a wholly frustrating season. Paul Edgeworth headed the Tudors ahead on 33 minutes and Nathan Bowden-Haase powered Chris Herron's corner home with twenty minutes left to play to leave Hemel an agonising single point off a playoff position while Tivvy slipped two places further down the table to end up in a lowly seventeenth place.

Tiverton looked bright and sprightly in the early stages of the game and with a little more precision in front of goal they might have found themselves a couple ahead inside the first fifteen minutes. Bobby Hopkinson sent Paul Wyatt scampering down the right flank and the Town striker crossed deep to Matty Bye unmarked twelve yards from goal. However, Bye snapped at his first-time volley and Ian Brown in the Hemel goal was happy to watch the ball bobble harmlessly wide of the target. A few minutes later Brown was called into action when he beat Radley Veale's shot away at close range, with Hopkinson again carving out the opening with a smart through ball. At the other end Chris Dillon shot over after a neat one-two with his strike partner Harry Hunt, but Hemel Hempstead threatened seldom as they struggled to come to terms with the slight downward gradient and following wind.

Hopkinson blasted a shot wide after his initial free kick was only half cleared by Steve Jackman, and Veale launched an effort over the top as Tivvy held the upper hand, and on the half-hour mark came the first dubious decision by a referee that was seemingly oblivious to the laws of the game. Veale's long ball bounced through to Brown, but under pressure from Wyatt the 'keeper juggled the ball on the left side of his area, or more accurately two yards outside the left side of his area. Myopic Mr Kendall from Luton was clearly too busy pondering who he would show a ridiculous yellow card to and so waved the game on without Brown being punished, much to the chagrin of the Tiverton bench and the amusement of the vast majority of the 239 spectators in attendance.

Hemel broke away against the run of play and Dillon was in acres of space wide on the right wing with as much time as he cared for to pick out a fellow red shirt. His inch-perfect cross was too high for Martin Horsell to gather in, and too accurate for Matt Villis to nod clear, leaving an easy chance for Paul Edgeworth to head into the net from three yards at the far post. It was cruel luck for the Yellows, and a blow that they would never recover from as the hosts took hold of the game and forced their way on top. Ollie Burgess worked his way into the referee's notebook by impeding Horsell, and a moment later Dillon and Nathan Rudge joined him after stumbling over each other accidentally as Hemel carved out a counter attack.

Dillon and Hunt combined once again only for the former to shoot straight at Horsell, and on the stroke of half time Wyatt stumbled towards goal as Tiverton finally forced their way back into the opposition half of the pitch, but lost his balance and fell into Brown, and collision that triggered a small moment of push and shove between the pair that saw them both pick up yellow cards.

The second half was one way traffic with the home side dominating proceedings, and the result might have been put beyond doubt long before the second goal finally arrived. Burgess volleyed Mark Coulson's cross over the bar, and Dillon fluffed a shot when Rudge's headed clearance was snapped up sharply leaving Hemel with a five-against-two advantage and a perfect chance to increase their lead. With the ball drawn magnetically up the hill Adam Martin was the next to see a chance go begging, his shot being saved, fumbled and eventually recovered by Horsell with Hunt ready to pounce on the scraps if they had materialised, and Villis made two crucial tackles to bail out the rest of his defensive colleagues and keep the scores close.

Villis' second interception led to the corner from which Hemel gave themselves some breathing space. Chris Herron swung the ball towards the far post and the cross was met by Nathan Bowden-Haase, the tall defender's header going back from whence it came leaving Horsell wrong footed as the ball looped into the opposite top corner of the net. Five minutes later Bowden-Haase came close to netting a carbon copy, again losing the attentions of Simon Bochenski as Herron's corner came across, but this time his header was a foot or two too high. The Tudor's had a strong penalty appeal rejected after Hunt's driven shot struck Adam Faux on the arm, and although the home supporters were vociferous in their claims the ref clearly adjudged that it was ball-to-hand rather than the other way around, or perhaps he was just blind.

Burgess missed the target from the edge of the area after 78 minutes, but Tom Knighton's introduction helped Tiverton back onto the front foot, and with the excellent Villis having been pushed forward the Yellows finally regained some initiative and genuinely looked like they could get themselves back into touch. Villis glanced a header just wide of Brown's left post with a little under ten minutes remaining, and a further pair of substitutes gave Tivvy further impetus with Glenn Gould replacing the ineffective Bye and Ed Weeks taking Rudge's place in the centre of defence.

Weeks earned himself a stripe or two with an excellent challenge on Hemel substitute Graham Hall and Tiverton broke away sharply as the ball found its way to Bochenski on the half way line. Fresh legged and fresh faced, Gould sprinted through the inside right position and Bochenski threaded a 'five A Levels and no bookings' pass into the midfielder's path. Gould took one touch and drilled in a shot from eighteen yards which was too hot for Brown to handle. Off of the gloves, the ball fell perfectly for Knighton following up to poach himself a goal and give Tivvy a late lifeline. However, there was to be no great escape and the final minute or two was played out with Hemel holding on comfortably.

Hemel Hempstead Town: Ian Brown; Michael Cox, Mark Coulson, Adam Martin, Nathan Bowden-Haase, Steve Jackman, Chris Herron, Ollie Burgess (Aaran Cavill), Chris Dillon, Harry Hunt, Paul Edgeworth (Graham Hall 85)

Goals: Edgeworth 33, Bowden-Haase 69

Booked: Burgess 34, Dillon 35, Brown 45

Sent Off: None

Tiverton Town: Martin Horsell; Will Gardner, Chris Vinnicombe, Matt Villis, Nathan Rudge (Ed Weeks 83), Adam Faux, Matty Bye (Glenn Gould 83), Paul Wyatt (Tom Knighton 76), Simon Bochenski, Bobby Hopkinson, Radley Veale

Goals: Knighton 90

Booked: Veale 33, Rudge 35, Wyatt 45

Sent Off: None

Attendance: 239