

SATURDAY, 15 DECEMBER 2007

## **BANBURY UNITED 2-1 TIVERTON TOWN**

**BGB Southern League Premier Division**

Just five months ago Banbury was under water, so seeing Spencer Stadium in a good state was warming, and credit must go to the many people at the Club who worked tirelessly through the late summer to repair the damage and make sure that United were able to take their place in the league this season. There were no water lines in the clubhouse, no worms popping their heads through the turf, and not an inflatable dingy in site. There was also not much action at the end the home side were defending, particularly during the first half of a game which the Puritans dominated.

As early as the third minute Banbury had their first sight of goal but Nicky Gordon's shot was bravely blocked ten yards out, and the follow up from Lewis Travers was well saved by Ray Johnston. Action was confined for extended periods in the Tiverton half of the pitch, but the hosts lacked a cutting edge and were unable to penetrate the Yellow's defence, although their huge quantity of possession indicated that it would only be a matter of time until the Town goal was under threat.

To their credit Tivvy didn't panic, and midway through the first period were able to mount an attack that led to a series of four corners, each swing inwards from right and left alternatively, and the first three hacked behind again close to goal. Finally Banbury goalkeeper Andy Wheeler was able to get his hands on Vinnicombe's centre, and the threat was averted. And just a few minutes later Tiverton captain Nathan Rudge entered into the festive spirit by sending a gift to Gordon, allowing the in-form striker to open the scoring. A hopeful ball over the top looked comfortable for Rudge, but the defender, trying to help the ball back to Johnston hideously underweighted his backpass, leaving the 'keeper exposed as Gordon nipped in to slot the ball into the net.

It was a gaffe of mesmeric proportions, one of which Titus Bramble would be proud, and gave the Puritans a lead they heartily deserved on the balance of play to that point. The Tiverton cause was further hampered just after the half-hour mark when Radley Veale, having been upended by Travers took the law into his own hands, or rather feet, and kicked out as the pair tussled on the deck. The referee had no option but to give Veale his marching orders, while Travers was booked for his part in proceedings - whether the yellow was for the initial foul or the 'afters' is not clear and not really important.

Tiverton had to wait until stoppage time in the first half for their first effort on goal, but Wheeler fielded Tom Knighton's shot on the turn with ease, and a generally unenthralling forty-five minute was brought to a close.

The second half was better on the eye, and the visitors looked more determined as they sought an equaliser. Wheeler fumbled Paul Hinshelwood's free-kick but Tivvy debutant Simon Bochenski could only fire the rebound at the feet of a defender, and Vinnicombe struck a sweet volley a couple of feet over the crossbar from well outside the penalty area. Tiverton became even more lively when Paul Wyatt replaced the wholly ineffective Knighton, but Banbury were keeping Town at arms length and broke away with ten minutes remaining to put the game out of reach. Gordon escaped down the right flank, and with Vinnicombe caught out of position it was Hinshelwood that raced back to cover. But the Torquay loanee was turned inside-out and Gordon's cross was met at the near post by Scott Bridges, and he had no problems in finding the back of the net.

Tivvy hit back almost immediately with a somewhat fortuitous goal; Hinshelwood going some way to making up for his error by curling in a free kick which took a deflection off the defensive wall, wrong-footed Wheeler and bobbed into an unguarded goal. But that was all Tiverton could muster, and Banbury made good use of the extra man in the closing stages, and should have increased their lead still further as they dominated the final ten minutes of the game. Gordon had a shot saved by Johnston, Ollie Stanbridge suffered the same fate and then Stanbridge missed a sitter in added time after some excellent interplay involving Mike Feeley and the superb Gordon.

Banbury, a team in good form richly deserved the three points - it could and should have been more comfortable, while Tiverton were once again flat in midfield, and blunt and shot-shy in the final third.

**Banbury United:** Andy Wheeler; Lewis Travers, Tommy Kinch, Mark Essex, Wayne Blossom, Ady Fuller, Mike Feeley, Murray Nicholls, Scott Bridges, Nicky Gordon, Ollie Stanbridge

Goals: Gordon 28, Bridges 77

Booked: Travers 30, Gordon 45, Stanbridge 81

Sent Off: None

**Tiverton Town:** Ray Johnston; Danny O'Brien, Chris Vinnicombe, Matt Villis, Nathan Rudge, Tom Gardner, Radley Veale, Paul Hinshelwood, Simon Bochenski, Darren Mullings, Tom Knighton (Paul Wyatt 65)

Goals: Hinshelwood 79

Booked: Rudge 35, Villis 78

Sent Off: Veale 30

Attendance: 400