

SATURDAY, 29 DECEMBER 2007

TIVERTON TOWN 1-0 BASHLEY

BGB Southern League Premier Division

Tiverton Town might have entered the home game against Bashley struggling to field a team, as both Paul Hinshelwood and Darren Mullings had completed loans spells and returned to Torquay United, while the remainder of the squad was ravaged with suspensions. Matt Villis, Nathan Rudge and Radley Veale were all forced to sit out the game due to an accumulation of bookings, or in Veale's case a petulant dismissal at Banbury a fortnight earlier, but Martyn Rogers waved his managerial wand and scraped together a team that were determined to overcome the odds against the Dorset team. Matters were helped with the return of Tom Gardner, and Dan Bulley joined Ed Weeks in an unfamiliar but remarkably impressive defensive line while newly signed Matty Bye and James Fraser made up a youthful midfield with Glen Gould.

Town almost got their noses ahead with only 30 seconds on the clock when Danny O'Brien burned down the right flank, leaving Chris Ferret in his wake before pulling the ball back for Glen Gould to hammer a shot goalwards. Unfortunately for Tivvy David Elm in the Bashley goal was alert to the danger and fell to his left to field the bobbling effort, and the home side would need to wait a little longer before taking a lead that they would never lose.

It wasn't much of a wait, however, and within two further minutes Fraser opened his account. Bye found space in the middle of the field and swung a ball leftwards for Chris Vinnicombe to race onto. The evergreen wingback brought the ball under control with his first touch, delivered a low cross with his second, and Fraser was waiting ten yards from goal to stab the ball home, having seen the opening and burst through the hole. A dream start for Fraser, and for the Yellows who had taken maximum points just once from their previous six league outings.

The new look midfield appeared unperturbed by their lack of familiarity, and Bye released Simon Bochenski but the striker saw his shot easily saved before Bashley managed to find their feet and force their way into the match. The first sight of goal for the visitors came on ten minutes but Dave Wakefield curled his attempt high and wide, and Bash began to dominate possession without ever forcing beyond the Yellows back line, and Ray Johnston took on a role of spectator as his defence dealt with everything that came their way. Towards the end of the first half Johnston was beaten by Neil Marrant's shot but Weeks, making his first Tiverton start was in position to hack the ball off the line, and Town ventured into the opposite third on a couple of occasions, only see chances from Chris Young and Bochenski go begging.

Vinnicombe struck a rasping shot just over the top at the start of the second half before the general pattern of the game resumed. Bash were poking and prying but nothing they tried could break down the Tivvy defence, and they found Gardner in stunning form, the centre back refreshed after a three week break and sweeping up anything and everything that came even remotely near him. Pete Castle saw Johnston hold on to a close range header and the Tivvy shot-stopper then pulled off a marvellous save from Ryan Moss after Gardner had lost his footing on the awkward surface. If the defender had been bailed out by his 'keeper then the roles were reversed two minutes later as Jeremy Tarr's goalbound header was punted from underneath the crossbar by the retreating Gardner.

The final ten minutes saw Bashley commit men forward in search of a point, and this almost led to Town increasing their lead as they counter attacked. Twice Paul Wyatt, on as a replacement for Gould forced Elm into excellent saves, the first when set on his way by Tom Knighton, and then just sixty seconds later when the livewire forward raced half the length of the left flank before sending in a fizzing shot that Elm did well to parry over the bar. For Bashley the game was up, they had run out of ideas and with the immense Gardner and his defensive assistants in fine fettle Tivvy took a deserved maximum to gain some revenge for the 2-1 defeat at Bashley six weeks earlier.

Tiverton Town: Ray Johnston; Danny O'Brien, Chris Vinnicombe, Ed Weeks, Dan Bulley, Tom Gardner, Matt Bye, Chris Young (Tom Knighton 60), Simon Bochenski, James Fraser, Glenn Gould (Paul Wyatt 83)

Goals: Fraser 3

Booked: Knighton 90

Sent Off: None

Bashley: David Elm; Neil Morant (Gareth Keeping 85), Chris Ferrett, Pete Castle, Phil Archibold, Danny Smith, Dave Wakefield (Jeremy Tarr 64), Craig Davies, Ryan Moss, David Town, James Burden

Booked: Morant 63

Sent Off: None

Attendance: 300