

SAUTRDAY, 26 JANUARY 2008

TIVERTON TOWN 1-3 CHESHUNT

BGB Southern League Premier Division

It is a mark of how far Tiverton Town FC have progressed over the past three months that, to a man, everyone expected the Yellows to comfortably brush aside the Ambers of Cheshunt at Ladysmead last weekend, but as things turned out it was also a mark of the magnitude of impact that a new manager can have on his struggling team that the Hertfordshire team left town with all three points and an improved goal difference. On balance Cheshunt weren't particularly the better team, but what they managed to do which Tiverton didn't was to play out the ninety minutes without any crucial mistakes, and that was ultimately the deciding factor in a match where Tivvy dominated both possession and territory but never really looked like a team in form.

When Darren Williams could only half clear Danny O'Brien's right wing cross the pattern of the game was set, and Glen Gould smashed in a shot from the edge of the area which went a yard wide of Bobby Smith's left upright as the home side hit the floor running and pinned their visitors back straight from the first kick. However, mistake number one came less than three minutes into the game as Danny Green found space on the left and jinked past O'Brien on the edge of the Tivvy penalty area. A somewhat lazy and half-hearted toe-poke had Town goalkeeper Ray Johnston at ease with the ball surely about to trickle well wide of the target. Not so, the ball did indeed trickle, but inside the post leaving Johnston perplexed and O'Brien rueing his poor attempt at a tackle.

Smith kept the score unchanged as the Yellows tried to force the issue, blocking well from James Fraser, but again the Ambers struck on the break just a minute later, and with only ten minutes on the clock they were already, remarkably, two goals ahead. The benefactor of loose defensive play this time was Dave Hicks who capitalised on a tardy attempt by Matt Bye at clearing the lines to somehow loop the ball high over Johnston and into an empty net. I tore up my betting slip and settled down to what was now sure to be one of the most surprising results at Ladysmead this season, but Gould was determined to make a fight of things and saw another twenty yard drive bobble just the wrong side of the post.

Bobby Smith, undoubtedly the player of the afternoon acrobatically denied James Fraser when the on-loan midfielder powerfully headed Chris Vinnicombe's cross goalwards, and later in the first half did well to claw Chris Young's hanging cross over the bar. O'Brien was all the while trying his best to undo his earlier failings with some typically fleet footed runs down the wing, and was unceremoniously stopped in his tracks by Hicks just after the half-hour mark, to the chagrin of the Tiverton players, and to the disgust of the referee who showed the goalscorer a straight red card. There weren't too many arguments about the decision, but even with a man short the Ambers regained their discipline and defender their advantage with courage and dedication. Bye had an effort blocked at point blank range as Tivvy began to run out of idea, while Johnston saved comfortably at the other end from Darryl Cox as the opening period was brought to a close.

Town weren't firing at all in the first half but managed to up the tempo as the match resumed, and by the time Tom Gardner saw two quick efforts hacked away and Young had volleyed straight at Smith Tivvy finally pulled a goal back. James Fraser crossed from deep and Tom Knighton, who had only been on the pitch for two minutes somehow managed to knock the high ball back to Simon Bochenski on the edge of the area. The striker struck a sweet first time volley that left the impressive Smith stranded and gave Tiverton a glimmer of hope.

The chances for an equalising strike were as frequent as they were wasteful - Matt Villis and Knighton both saw shots blocked, Fraser nodded onto the roof of the net, Paul Wyatt straight into Smith's arms, and Bye rattled the frame of the goal as Tivvy did everything with no reward and Cheshunt gallantly hung on to their slender advantage. And then the inevitable, a breakaway goal that sealed the game and guaranteed the points were heading East. Smith hoofed, Cox glanced a header forward from just inside the Tiverton half and Josh Cooper forced O'Brien into a hapless headed backpass with fell to the Cheshunt substitute and left him with an easy task of lifting the ball over the stranded Johnston. It was no more than the visitors deserved for a hearty defensive performance under great pressure, but it was a result that left the Tiverton team wondering what might have been had they been awake for the first thirty minutes.

Tiverton Town: Ray Johnston; Danny O'Brien, Chris Vinnicombe, Matt Villis, Nathan Rudge (Paul Wyatt 58), Tom Gardner, Matt Bye, Chris Young (Tom Knighton 58), Simon Bochenski, James Fraser, Glenn Gould (Radley Veale 73)

Goals: Bochenski 58

Booked: None

Sent Off: None

Cheshunt: Bobby Smith; Gary Schillachi, Michael Gliddon, Lloyd Boateng, Darren Williams, Dave Hicks, Solomon Henry (Ashley Hawkins 61), Jimmy Berry, Darryl Cox, Toby Oshitola (Glen Parry 46), Danny Green (Josh Cooper 73)

Goals: Green 3, Hicks 11, Cooper 85

Booked: Parry 66, Hawkins 90

Sent Off: Hicks 33

Attendance: 361