

TUESDAY, 18 MARCH 2008

TIVERTON TOWN 0-1 DAWLISH TOWN

Westinsure Devon St. Luke's Bowl semi-final

The visit of Dawlish Town to Ladysmead was an intriguing prospect, not least because the visitors boasted a few former Tiverton players in their ranks. Jamie Mudge and Antony Lynch lead their line, and young Shaun Bowden, a right sided midfielder was on trial here at the start of last season. With the Sandy Lane outfit flying in the Western League Tivvy would have their work cut out to progress to their second Devon Bowl final in three years, and ultimately it was the away side that advanced thanks to a goal from Derek Fields fifteen minutes from time.

In a remarkable feat of groundsmanship the Ladysmead pitch was mopped up after Saturday's wash-out, and stood up admirably throughout the match, although it was clearly heavy going. Dawlish midfielder Adam Shearer attested to this after the game by saying that he was dreading the prospect of extra time as he was starting to feel his calves tighten up towards the end. Shearer needn't have worried though, as Dawlish soaked up everything that Tiverton could throw at them (which wasn't much) and fully deserved the victory.

The Yellows started the game well and Paul Wyatt, returning to the starting line-up for the first time since Boxing Day forced a corner less than two minutes after the start. The pacey forward raced onto a long ball from Chris Vinnicombe, Dawlish goalkeeper Ryan Draper rushed out, beat Wyatt to the ball but sliced his clearance behind. Vinnicombe's flag kick was comfortably dealt with by the lanky Aaran Pugh, and five minutes later the same player was involved at the other end of the pitch, heading Craig Fenner's free kick straight at Martin Horsell in the Tivvy goal.

Dawlish settled into the game and for most of the match looked the more assured side. Lynch swivelled to volley goalwards but again Horsell was positioned well and after twenty minutes Mudge's cross from the right flank was a matter of inches too far ahead of his strike partner and Tiverton were let off the hook as Matt Villis cleared the danger. Former Elmore midfielder Gary Head played a superb ball to release Mudge a minute later but the former Tivvy player couldn't shake off the attentions of Adam Faux and saw his shot blocked at point-blank range, and as Dawlish continues to press Mudge once again got a sight of goal but could only shoot weakly straight at the 'keeper.

Tiverton had little response and twice James Fraser received the ball on the edge of the area after corner kicks were half cleared. The first time he saw his shot strike a defender and the second time he blazed well over the top. Glenn Gould had a bit of shooting practice from distance and forced Draper into a smart save on the half-hour mark as Tiverton tried to force their way into the game, but on the whole they were reduced to shooting from distance with the Dawlish defence standing firm.

The game petered out leading up to the interval and Lynch earned the only caution of the match while James Fraser came within fractions of getting on the end of Danny O'Brien's cross from the right after a neat passing move involving Simon Bochenski and Gould had released the flying winger. But a goalless first half was brought to an end and the visitors from South Devon must have already been fancying their chances of causing an minor upset against an off-colour opposition.

Fraser started the second period by shooting straight at Draper, and it was the only half-chance the Yellows were able to rummage up for more than half an hour. Dawlish took control again and Mudge had an effort deflected wide of the post while Lynch could only fire straight at Villis having wriggled into a good position and beat Horsell and the near post. Midway through the second half a flurry of substitutions disrupted the game with Tom Knighton replacing Wyatt and Matt Bye returning to Ladysmead to take over from Gould. Bobby Hopkinson, on a trial loan from Plymouth Argyle made his first appearance for Town as a replacement for Radley Veale and hustled his way through the game with little end product, but the Tiverton performance dropped rather than improved with the addition of fresh legs.

With 77 minutes on the clock the away side finally grabbed the lead thanks to former Taunton Town player Derek Fields' volley from close range. Tiverton initially failed to clear from the edge of their area and Shearer chipped the ball back in to the danger zone where Fields was waiting in space to ram the ball past the advancing Horsell and into the net. It was a goal deserved on the balance of play, and Fields came close to doubling his tally just sixty seconds later but shot over from a tight angle after being released by a stunning cross-field pass from Mudge.

Hopkinson rocketed a thirty-yarder a foot or two over Draper's crossbar after Vinnicombe and Knighton had combined down the left, but that was a close of Tiverton came to taking the game into extra-time. The Yellows went out with little more than a whimper, and Dawlish will now be looking forward to the final to cap off what has been a fine season for them.

Tiverton Town: Martin Horsell; Danny O'Brien, Chris Vinnicombe, Matt Villis, Adam Faux, Will Gardner, Glenn Gould (Matt Bye 58), Paul Wyatt (Tom Knighton 68), Simon Bochenski, James Fraser, Radley Veale (Bobby Hopkinson 65)
Booked: None
Sent Off: None

Dawlish Town: Ryan Draper; David Worthington (Dean Stevens 65), Darren Vickery (Shaun Bowden 72), Simon Laughton, Aaran Pugh, Craig Fenner, Gary Head, Adam Shearer, Jamie Mudge, Antony Lynch, Derek Fields
Goals: Fields 77
Booked: Lynch 37
Sent Off: None

Attendance: 256