

WEDNESDAY, 9 JANUARY 2008

## TIVERTON TOWN 5-1 HEMEL HEMPSTEAD TOWN

BGB Southern League Premier Division

The last time Hemel Hempstead Town visited Ladysmead it took a late, late strike from Kiwi-bound Chris Bale to help Tiverton take the spoils, and a first leg advantage in the Southern League Cup final; the time before the Yellows raced into a 3-0 lead just after half time only for Hemel to perform at a sublime standard for the last forty minutes and take away three points from a league encounter, so there was very little indication what this game would throw up. Tivvy were, of course, on an excellent run, and although the Tudors had picked up a fine victory at home to King's Lynn four days earlier they were proving to be a little hit-and-miss in recent times, and found themselves gradually dropping off the pace at the top of the league table.

At this point a confession; due to circumstance unforeseen I wasn't able to catch the first half, so in true match reporting style I will just make things up as I go. Ahem, much like the league game last season Tivvy were the first to blink, and were ahead inside three minutes after a fine passing move down the left flank ended with the ball at the feet of Simon Bochenski, and then behind Hemel goalkeeper Ian Brown and in the onion bag. Hemel may have been stunned by conceding early but their play didn't show it and with just ten minutes played they were back on level terms thanks to a superb strike from Adam Martin. Martin had opened his season's account in the recent victory over King's Lynn, that goal also to equalise the game at 1-1, so Hemel had every reason to be optimistic.

A frenetic end-to-end game saw chances come and chances go, and Tom Gardner curiously had a bundled goal ruled out by the offside flag, but Dan Bulley restored the Yellows' lead from the penalty spot on twenty-eight minutes, and although the game didn't die, the scoring in the opening period did.

Now I have reached Ladysmead, all the remainder is true!

Matt Villis had picked up a knock and was replaced by Nathan Rudge for the second half as Tiverton continued where they had left off and pushed forward seeking to extend their lead. Danny O'Brien was having the mother of all games down the right flank and beat his man time after time, only for the final ball to be lacking, but there was also good passing and movement through the centre of the field, particularly from the impressive Matty Bye. One fine pass from Bye on the hour mark finally allowed O'Brien to run more centrally and his shot from the corner of the penalty area took a wicked deflection off the covering defender, sent the ball left as Brown dived right, and in turn sent Tiverton into a two goal lead.

Not content with three goals the Yellows pressed forward, while to their eternal credit Hemel also continued the game with good intentions and good spirit. Chris Vinnicombe hacked a goalmouth scramble off the line and Ray Johnston continued his fine form with a sharp and brave stop from Harry Hunt as the visitors searched in vain for a route back into the game, but the result was put beyond any doubt on seventy-six minutes when Tom Knighton, on as a second half substitute put Tivvy 4-1 ahead with a low show from twelve yards.

Four might have been five, or even six had Town taken the chances that were so neatly carved out, but Glen Gould and Bochenski both missed the target, while Bye opted to tee up O'Brien when a strike on goal may have been the better option. However, the missed chances ultimately didn't matter, and Bochenski scored his second of the game as the match entered stoppage time, ramming the ball into the net after Knighton and Fraser had combined well. There was just enough time for Radley Veale to make his return to action after a three game suspension, replacing the ever improving Gould, and with Tivvy still moving forward the referee put Hemel out of their misery.

The final 5-1 scoreline was Tiverton's biggest league victory since Hitchin were beaten 6-2 in December 2005. In the ensuing two years only a single player remains at the club that featured (Tom Gardner; Nathan Rudge was injured all of that season) in the demolition of the Canaries, but there are certainly signs of progress in recent games, which will hopefully be continued today against Man United.

**Tiverton Town:** Ray Johnston; Danny O'Brien, Chris Vinnicombe, Matt Villis (Nathan Rudge 46), Daniel Bulley, Tom Gardner, Matt Bye, Chris Young (Tom Knighton 68), Simon Bochenski, James Fraser, Glenn Gould (Radley Veale 90)  
Goals: Bochenski 2, 90, Bulley 28, O'Brien 61, Knighton 76  
Booked: Young 49, Bye 74  
Sent Off: None

**Hemel Hempstead Town:** Ian Brown; Simon Sweeney, Mark Coulson, Aaran Cavill (Josh Sozzo 68), Nathan Bowden-Haase, Adam Martin, Matt Gearing, Dean Cracknell, Chris Herron (Yiadam Yeboah 66), Harry Hunt (Danny Nicholls 80), Paul Edgeworth  
Goals: Martin 10  
Booked: Sozzo 34, Bowden-Haase 47, Yeboah 87, Cracknell 89  
Sent Off: None

Attendance: 222