

SATURDAY, 1 SEPTEMBER 2007

TIVERTON TOWN 0-1 KING'S LYNN

BGB Southern League Premier Division

King's Lynn are the favourites to lift the Southern League title, and with good reason. Last year the Norfolk outfit missed out on promotion when they lost at home to a flying Maidenhead United in the end-of-season playoffs, but the vast majority of the squad has remained, and a few crucial additions have strengthened them. It was one of these newcomers, John Turner, who provided the only goal of what was an otherwise uninspiring game, and consigned Tivvy to their first home defeat of the season. With the mundane draw at Cossham Street still fresh in the memory there may not have been reasons to be cheerful, but there were certainly reasons to be optimistic even before the game kicked off. Paul Wyatt, so important a part of the jigsaw a week earlier against Bedford was rewarded with a starting berth, and against what was a relatively cumbersome Lynn defensive line surely the teenager would have a field day.

But it was from another area of the pitch where the early momentum was born; as Luke Clarke rampaged forward in the early exchanges, curling in a telling cross only to see Carl Cliff-Brown fail to add the finishing touch, and then combining neatly with Wyatt wide on the right, again Cliff-Brown was in the right place but with the wrong end product. The visitors might have been rocked from the early Yellow onslaught had they been lesser players, but they soaked up the pressure and were able to launch counter-assaults of their own, carving through the Tiverton midfield almost at will. Adam Smith fired wide of the mark, and Matt Nolan nearly capitalised on a poor headed clearance by Tom Gardner, only to see Tivvy custodian Ray Johnston race out of his area to clear the danger.

Turner and Nolan, along with support striker Michael Frew were teaming up well, and the latter tried an audacious effort from 35 yards which Johnston was able to hold comfortably. Linnets left back Greg Lake was the next in on the action as the early running made by the home side became a distant memory, His inswinging free kick landed on the head of Nolan, hit Johnston at point blank range was somehow diverted away from the danger area. But three minutes later the writing that had been on the wall for much of the first half finally began to morph into legible script. A hopeful through ball from the deep lying Steve Melton was seized upon by Turner, the hit man easily outpacing Gardner before calmly slotting the ball past Johnston and into the net. Cliff-Brown became the second player into the referee's notebook, following Turner, for a cynical foul on Lake and a first half dominated by the Norfolk side was brought to an end.

The second half followed much the same pattern, with the visitors technically far superior and making the majority of the running. Frew and Turner both shot wide right before the Yellows finally managed to pin King's Lynn back for the first sustained time in the match. Cliff-Brown, however, once again forgot his shooting boots, and when he wasn't aiming wide from open play he was aiming straight down Scott Howie's throat from well positioned free kicks. Midway through the second period came Town's most genuine chances, two of them in the space of three seconds, but unfortunately it was a case of 'right place, wrong personnel' for these chances fell to centre backs Nathan Rudge and Matt Villis respectively, and when Rudge scuffed his initial shot Villis could only reciprocate in sympathy.

Rudge then pushed into a far more advanced role as Tivvy sought an equaliser, and his header finally brought a meaningful save from Howie. That was with twenty minutes still remaining, but it was the last hoorah as far as the home side were concerned. Only a weak header from substitute Lewis Irish and a high, wide and not-very-handsome free kick from Cliff-Brown remained as Tiverton simply ran out of puff. King's Lynn for their part went about their work professionally, and it is a mark of their quality, even if they were far from flowing today, that after five matches they lie fourth in the table, having yet to play a home fixture.

Tiverton Town: Ray Johnston; Luke Clarke (Chris Young 73), Chris Vinnicombe, Matt Villis, Nathan Rudge, Tom Gardner, Jak Martin, James Palmer (Lewis Irish 73), Paul Wyatt, Carl Cliff-Brown, Will Gardner
Booked: Will Gardner 52, Rudge 87
Sent Off: None

King's Lynn: Scott Howie; Dean West, Greg Lake, Mark Warren, Charlie Defty, Mark Camm, Michael Frew, Steve Melton, John Turner (Danny Bloomfield 69), Matt Nolan (Jack Defty 63), Adam Smith
Goals: Turner 38
Booked: Nolan 32
Sent Off: None

Attendance: 373