

WEDNESDAY, 14 NOVEMBER 2007

TIVERTON TOWN 0-1 SWINDON SUPERMARINE

BGB Southern League Premier Division

Swindon Supermarine travelled to Ladysmead with a score to settle. Just two months earlier in the reverse fixture at Hunts Copse Tiverton has performed the ultimate smash-and-grab and taken the spoils with two late goals. That evening in Wiltshire it was the team in blue that raced out of the starting blocks the fastest, and the situation was no different second time around as Supermarine started at a frantic but controlled pace, passing crisply, moving intelligently and making all of the early running. But for all their effort and desire they went nowhere, not a shot at goal, not a penetrative pass, just neat little triangles in front of the Tiverton defensive four.

And it wasn't long before the Yellows forced their way into proceedings, and as early as the second minute carved out the first meaningful opportunity. Chris Young, making his first start for eight weeks was bundled over twenty-five yards from goal, Chris Vinnicombe curled a testing free kick to the far post and Tom Gardner nodded the ball wide of the target. With Paul Wyatt causing havoc down the left flank, it seemed as if Swindon's right back Stuart Pearson would be in for a hard day, as time and time again the dynamic Tivvy man outpaced and outsmarted his marker. But there was seldom any end product, as Wyatt cut inside each time and inevitably ran into a stoic blue wall. The one occasion he did manage to get a shot away it sailed harmlessly over the top of Tom King's crossbar.

Young was again at the centre of things after twenty minutes when he latched onto a through ball by Glen Gould, but the striker chose to shoot early when he spotted King well off his line, and a weak chipped effort ran effortlessly through to the goalkeeper. And Young then saw a shot blocked at point blank range just moments later as Tiverton dominated the first half. Wyatt again shot high while Gould saw his low shot deflected behind by a defender, leading to a brace of corners from which Town were denied by some desperate defending and a bucket of misfortune. Gardner once again met a Vinnicombe set piece but his headed effort was bundled behind, and the Nathan Rudge was millimetres away from connecting with the ball.

Supermarine was somehow holding on to parity as the game headed towards the interval. Tiverton continued to rally, continued to press and continued to be denied at the last moment. The pick of the action came just five minutes before the break when a cross from the right by Tom Knighton was only half cleared, allowing Vinnicombe to race inside and launch a mesmerising shot from thirty yards or more towards the top corner. The shot had 'goal!' written all over it, but King was on his toes and pulled off the most spectacular of saves to keep the team locked in a stalemate at the change of ends.

It was one of those shots that, had it gone in would have deserved to win any game; as it turned out it was the save from King, every bit as impressive as the initial strike that effectively won the game for the visitors, for Tivvy were forced to reshuffle the team at the top of the second half and failed to find the fluency they had enjoyed hitherto. Supermarine gradually eased their way into contention and just before the hour they sneaked into the lead. Marine had won a corner on the right which was floated to the far post by David Stroud, nodded back into the goalmouth by Jason Welsh, and tapped home from two yards by Nathan Lightbody.

By this time Tiverton had already lost the services of Will Gardner and Radley Veale through hamstring injuries, and chasing the game were forced to send Rudge into the attack. It was a tactic that worked against Halesowen, but seldom proves effective and the law of averages had no intention of balancing things out - Rudge barely saw the ball and Tiverton were a shadow of their first half showing, while Swindon began to get the upper hand in the midfield. Richard Kear blazed over when it would have been easier to score, but on the whole Supermarine was happy to keep hold of the ball rather than throw caution to the wind.

Rudge did have one chance but his shot was deflected wide, and once again Tom Gardner headed wide from the resultant corner kick. And with the game deep into added time Knighton saw his shot crash off the woodwork and away from danger. It just wasn't Tiverton's day, and they were made to pay for not taking the chances when they presented themselves.

Tiverton Town: Ray Johnston; Will Gardner (Lee Groves 46), Chris Vinnicombe, Matt Willis, Nathan Rudge, Tom Gardner, Radley Veale (Luke Clarke 48), Chris Young (Sean Szabo 81), Tom Knighton, Glenn Gould, Paul Wyatt
Booked: Vinnicombe 57, Rudge 64, Johnston 90, Szabo 90
Sent Off: None

Swindon Supermarine: Tom King, Stuart Pearson, David Stroud, JP Mills, Leigh Henry, Cedric Abraham, Chris Thompson, Richard Kear, Nathan Lightbody (Danny Allen 85), Jason Welsh (Adam Mayo 90), Chris Taylor
Goals: Lightbody 55
Booked: Taylor 72, Abraham 77
Sent Off: None

Attendance: 238