

WEDNESDAY, 28 NOVEMBER 2007

TIVERTON TOWN 0-2 TEAM BATH

BGB Southern League Premier Division

When Team Bath visited Ladysmead last April they cruised to a 3-0 victory without too much fuss and looked every part a team that would soon be playing at a higher level. Tivvy were weary at the time having just recently completed a double-header at Stamford and King's Lynn but there was little disguising the fact that they were very much second best on the day. Ten days ago the Students were back in town and had moved forward while Tiverton had taken a regressive step, and although the final 0-2 scoreline suggested a closer affair that was in fact anything but the case. Team Bath dominated the match, lead from the fourth minute and swept the Yellows aside as they maintained their strong challenge at the top end of the league table.

Darren Chitty in the Bath goal was alert enough to race out of his penalty area to beat Radley Veale to a long ball early in the game, and this was one of few moments when Town looked like they may be able to penetrate the Bath backline; and just sixty seconds later the visitors were ahead in bizarre fashion. Dean Smith picked up the ball wide on the right and with nowhere particularly to go. But cutting inside he swung the ball in with his left foot and the bounce deceived both the defence and Ray Johnston between the sticks to squirm inside the near post. Team Bath might have considered themselves fortuitous to lead but they didn't rest on their laurels and continued to pressurise the Tiverton backline. After a period of possession football they upped the tempo and could have gone into the interval with a four or five goal cushion had it not been for some last gasp defending by the yellow clad players.

Matt Villis was the first saviour, hacking away a dangerous low cross from former Ton target Matthew Hale, and the same pair were in the thick of the action again, with Villis clearing from underneath his own crossbar after an equally teasing centre from wide on the left. Nathan Rudge was then forced into defensive duties after his own sloppy was had gifted Mike Perrott a golden chance to increase the visitor's lead. Perrott seized upon a loose cross-field pass and made a beeline for goal, but as he struck towards goal Rudge recovered to deflect the ball behind for a corner and keep Tivvy in the match.

Johnston made up for his earlier error by saving sharply from prolific striker Sean Canham, who had ripped in a shot after latching on to a long cross field pass by fellow ex-Tiverton player Matt Lock, and Hale's corner that followed was nodded over the top by centre half Mark Warren. Bath were rampant and it was only a matter of time before they would move further ahead, but a combination of Rudge and Lee Groves denied Smith before Marc Canham fired wide of the mark from distance. The only glimmer of hope for Town was a break from deep by Paul Wyatt, but when he was brought down on the edge of the area the referee overruled his assistant and waved the game on. Tiverton could feel aggrieved at not being given a free kick in a dangerous position but there was no disguising the fact that Team Bath were the only team really in the game in the first half.

The second period offered up more of the same, and despite Darren Mullings having two efforts blocked at point-blank range short after the resumption it was Bath who were soon back in the driving seat. The University side camped out in the Tivvy half of the pitch, dominating both possession and territory as they sought the goal that would wrap things up. That goal finally arrived just after the hour mark when Lock curled in an exquisite far post cross from deep and Canham stole in behind Villis to neatly volley the ball back across goal and beyond Johnston. Canham then had an identical chance but struck too high and then stabbed the ball just the wrong side of the post after Johnston had done superbly well to save from Josh Llewellyn.

Besides a hopeful yet futile overhead kick from Ton Knighton on seventy minutes which was fielded easily by Chitty Tiverton couldn't muster any meaningful attempt on goal until just three minutes from time. Wyatt, though, could only volley straight at the goalkeeper when he, and Tivvy, finally managed their first shot on target of the evening, and Team Bath were comfortable and worthy winners. Like the Romans they came, saw and conquered. This was the clearest example so far this season as to how far we need to go to be able to mount a challenge even for a mid-table place. Had it not been for Johnston the score could have been much more - the defence looked tired, the midfield lacked creativity and the front line barely saw the ball. On one hand it was a pleasure to watch a great team at work; on the other it was a shame that it wasn't our team.

Tiverton Town: Ray Johnston; Paul Hinshelwood, Chris Vinnicombe, Matt Villis, Nathan Rudge, Tom Gardner, Radley Veale (James Turner 84), Lee Groves (Danny O'Brien 64), Tom Knighton, Darren Mullings, Paul Wyatt

Booked: None

Sent Off: None

Team Bath: Darren Chitty, Matt Lock, Shaun Lamb, Dean Smith, Gary Warren, Sami El-Abd, Mike Perrott (Matt Townley), Marc Canham (Steve Abbot 84), Josh Llewellyn, Sean Canham, Matthew Hale

Goals: Smith 5, Sean Canham 61

Booked: None

Sent Off: None

Attendance: 204