

SATURDAY, 29 MARCH 2008

YATE TOWN 1-0 TIVERTON TOWN

British Gas Business Southern League Premier Division

Games at Lodge Road, home of Yate Town are inevitably incident packed, and Tivvy's latest visit proved no different, although a relatively flat first half gave little indication of what was to follow after the half time oranges. Simon Bochenski's strike just before the interval had cancelled out Aaron Blakemore's tenth minute opener, and the hosts sealed the points when former Bath City winger Craig Davidge was afforded the freedom of Bristol to drill a low shot past Martin Horsell midway through the second period. Despite having Ashley Williams dismissed seven minutes from time the Bluebells held out to move above Tiverton and into the top ten in the Southern League Premier Division.

High winds and persistent rain meant that conditions were not conducive to free flowing attacking football, and neither side became fully accustomed to the elements in what was a scrappy opening to the match. As early as the third minute Tiverton had their first sight of goal, but the curse of five days earlier remained and Tom Knighton could only fire the ball into the side netting when well placed to work Tony Court in the Yate goal. The opening came, typically, from a long ball from deep via the right boot of Bobby Hopkinson, as there was little merit in trying to play through the midfield on the slickest of surfaces. Yate also found the going to treacherous in the middle of the park and opted for a more direct approach, and it was this method that led to the opening goal. A forty yard up-and-under should have been dealt with by debutant Jason Hughes, but the centre-back could only head the ball infield where Aaron Blakemore was waiting. A few strides forward, into the penalty area, Blakemore dropped his shoulder and easily rounded the advancing Martin Horsell allowing him to casually roll the ball into a net only half guarded by the retreating Matt Villis.

The Tiverton attacking threat was tamed by the lack of finishing prowess that was so evident against Hitchin Town on Easter Monday, and twice Knighton saw shots blocked at point blank range as the striker struggled to keep his footing on the tricky pitch, while Radley Veale blazed a shot well over the top from the edge of the Yate area. There were few further occasions that Tiverton managed to open up the home defence, and Hopkinson resorted to a more direct approach but lifted the ball a foot or two over the top from a free kick just before the half-hour mark. But with the interval nearing Simon Bochenski levelled in bizarre fashion; Knighton and Danny O'Brien combined to force the ball across the area towards the marine, and Bochenski swivelled and scuffed in a left footed shot that should have been fielded comfortably by Court. However, the ball somehow squirmed out of the 'keeper's grasp and bobbed sympathetically into the bottom corner of the goal.

The resumption of the match after the change of ends coincided with the wind dropping and the rain ceasing, and Yate were the quicker to adapt to the changing conditions. Almost directly from the kick-off Jake Reid escaped through the inside left channel only for Horsell to scamper sharply off his line to beat the ball away from danger. And a few minutes later Davidge played a sharp one-two with Blakemore only to drag his shot wide of the target from the edge of the Tivvy penalty area. The Yellows weren't at the races and deservedly fell behind on 66 minutes - the same combination of Blakemore and Davidge combined, the former spotting Davidge unmarked and an inch-perfect pass was met with a low drive that bobbed over Horsell.

Villis was replaced by Glenn Gould as Tivvy looked to get back on level terms, and with twenty minutes remaining had a penalty claim for hand ball waved away. Hopkinson, playing deep in midfield remained Tiverton's main threat and bustled his way half the length of the pitch five minutes later but ran out of steam and saw his effort deflected away for a corner kick. Bochenski saw Court push away a dipping shot from an acute angle, but seldom did Tiverton genuinely look like pulling level, and the points should have been sealed by the home side with ten minutes remaining but Darren Hawkins could only shave the outside of Horsell's left upright with a low shot that saw the Tivvy custodian beaten.

The game sparked to life on 83 minutes when first Chris Vinnicombe and second later Hopkinson both made rash challenges on Yate substitute Dean Griffiths. The second challenge, directly in front of the Yate Town dugout was met with anger and consternation by the home management team, and amid the uproar all twenty outfield players ridiculously decided to get involved in a mêlée, with arms and elbows flying around with disturbing regularity. Once tempers had been calmed the referee decided to show a red card to Yate captain Lee Jeffries, but was soon corrected by his assistant, rescinded and handed the marching orders to Ashley Williams instead. Vinnicombe was cautioned for the initial challenge; Hopkinson granted a lucky stay of execution, while Griffiths, the main aggressor in the fracas walked away and played on unpunished.

After a four minute hiatus the game resumed with Gould twice firing out of the ground, Knighton found the side netting again, and Paul Wyatt could only head Vinnicombe's cross wide of the mark from eight yards. Hawkins had the final chance for the Bluebells but once again dragged his shot off target after a fine jinking run, and Yate held out for their third consecutive league victory, while Tiverton were left to rue their poor instinct in front of goal. Against Hitchin the Yellows got away with missing chances; Yate punished them, and this aspect of the Tiverton team is the one that currently requires the most attention. With a two-week break until the next match at Corby manager Martyn Rogers will be scouting for a player with confidence in front of goal. Lest we forget that we have a striker currently on loan at Bridgwater Town...

Yate Town: Tony Court; David Biggs, Ed Vahid, Scott Brice, Lee Jeffries, Ashley Williams, Aaron Blakemore, Paul Chenoweth (Adam Sims 71), Jake Reid (Dean Griffiths 60), Darren Hawkins, Craig Davidge

Goals: Blakemore 10, Davidge 66

Booked: Griffiths 81, Jeffries 83

Sent Off: Williams 83

Tiverton Town: Martin Horsell; Danny O'Brien (Tom King 60), Chris Vinnicombe, Matt Villis (Glenn Gould 69), Adam Faux, Jason Hughes, Matt Bye, Tom Knighton (Paul Wyatt 76), Simon Bochenski, Bobby Hopkinson, Radley Veale

Goals: Bochenski 38

Booked: Hughes 34, Hopkinson 68, Vinnicombe 83

Sent Off: None

Attendance: 188