

PITCHING IN SOUTHERN LEAGUE



SATURDAY EVENING E-NEWSPAPER

Saturday 19 October 2024

POPPIES DAY

There was plenty of action and excitement throughout our four divisions this afternoon.

The top of the table clash in the Pitching In Southern League Premier South finished all square as second-place AFC Totton played out a 1-1 draw with leaders, Gloucester City, who had a player sent off late on.

Merthyr Town took the opportunity to move up to second as they left it late to beat Marlow, who took a 20th-minute lead. A goal from Callum Ryan-Phillips levelled things up on the stroke of half-time before sharp-shooter, Ricardo Rees stepped up in stoppage time to win it.

There was drama at Frome Town where the home side equalised in the last minute against Poole Town only for the visitors to snatch a stoppage time winner, whilst managerless Tiverton Town shared six goals with Sholing.

Over in the Pitching In Southern League Premier Central and Kettering Town went top of the table following a hard-earned 2-1 victory over AFC Sudbury.

Behind them in second place are Stourbridge, who bounced back from a 4-1 home reverse on Tuesday, to secure a 5-1 win at Hitchin Town. Bedford Town fell at home to Barwell.



In the Pitching In Southern League Division One South, Yate Town have a five-point lead at the top after they beat Tavistock AFC 2-0. Breathing down their necks now are Evesham United who left it late to defeat Mousehole with Alfie Dunn grabbing the winner with just a couple of minutes to go in what was a tight affair.

There was more drama involving Bristol Manor Farm as they ended Melksham Town's unbeaten start to the season. They trailed 2-1 with nine minutes to go before two more goals from Louis Britton, including an ice-cool stoppage time penalty, to take the points.

Over in the Pitching In Southern League Division One Central, Hadley are clinging onto top spot as they snatched an equaliser at Barton Rovers in the sixth minute of stoppage time through Fin Aldridge.

Just a point behind them and with a game in hand are Real Bedford who had a commanding 3-0 away win at Hertford Town, whilst Northwood came from behind to get their first win of the season courtesy of a 2-1 triumph at Beaconsfield Town, who actually took the lead within the opening minute.

REPORTS FROM ALL GAMES | STATS | FEATURES



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PITCHING IN SOUTHERN LEAGUE PREMIER SOUTH

AFC Totton 1 Gloucester City 1

In this top of the table clash, it was the visitors who drew first blood in the 35th minute when Brandon Smalley found the net.

Just before the hour-mark and Ethan Taylor was able to bring the two sides level.

In stoppage time Daniel Leadbitter saw red for the visitors as the game finished with the top two sharing the spoils.

Basingstoke Town 0 Taunton Town 2

With just under ten minutes to go until the break, Jay Malshanskyj found himself in the right place at the right time to put the visitors ahead.

The afternoon got worse for the home side when Sam Deadfield was sent off less than ten minutes into the second period. A second goal arrived for the visitors as the clock ticked down with Tom Smith getting his name on the scoresheet to complete a successful away day for his side.

Bracknell Town 0 Wimborne Town 0

This was an evenly-matched encounter between two ever-willing sides where defences came out on top as it ended goalless in front of a crowd of almost 600.

Chertsey Town 1 Plymouth Parkway 2

A penalty from Shane White opened the scoring ten minutes from the interval as the away team took the lead.

Thomas Dean added another for the visitors before the break to really put them in a commanding position.

The hosts were given hope with an early second half goal through Jack Mazzone but they were unable to get back onto level terms as the points headed to Devon.

Dorchester Town 0 Hanwell Town 3

It was the visitors who took an early lead courtesy of Daniel Carr who drove the ball home.

Then in first half stoppage time, Jordan Edwards doubled the lead for the visitors following an impressive first half showing.

William Hall added a third goal with 20 minutes left on the clock and it completed the scoring on an impressive away day for the visitors.



PITCHING IN SOUTHERN LEAGUE PREMIER SOUTH

Frome Town 2 Poole Town 3

The visitors found themselves ahead in the opening exchanges as the ball found its way into the net off home 'keeper Kyle Phillips. Right on the stroke of half-time, Matt Wood was able to bring the home side level.

There were just under 20 minutes to go when Toby Holmes found the net to put the away team back in front.

A dramatic final minute saw Wood grab his second to level the scores at 2-2 only for Holmes to put the away team back in front and take all three points.

Gosport Borough 3 Swindon Supermarine 2

The deadlock was broken early on by the home side with Asher Yearwood the man on target.

A penalty just before the break was coolly converted by Michael Elias-Fernandes to restore parity.

The second period was only four minutes old when Dan Wooden restored the hosts' lead and then Alfie Stanley further extended their advantage.

Harry Williams pulled one back right at the death, but it was not enough for his side.

Havant & Waterlooville 0 Hungerford Town 0

The home side were guilty of missing the better of the chances here as they had to settle for a point against well-organised opponents.



Merthyr Town 2 Marlow 1

It was the visitors who grabbed the lead on the 20-minute mark through Harry Hoath but that was cancelled out three minutes from the break through Callum Ryan-Phillips.

The home side snatched the winner in the third minute of stoppage time through Ricardo Rees to leave the visitors with nothing to show for their efforts.

Tiverton Town 3 Sholing 3

Having seen their managerial team depart this week, the hosts took the lead in the seventh minute through recent arrival, Evander Grubb.

Parity was restored through Dan Mason on 21 minutes, but Grubb hit back again to restore his side's lead as the interval approached.

The visitors hit back again when Mason grabbed his second of the game with just under 15 minutes left to play, but the pendulum swung back in favour of the hosts when Jevan Wright put them back in front.

Daniel Fitchett made it 3-3 as the visitors refused to let their heads drop and that's how it ended following an entertaining afternoon.

Winchester City 2 Walton & Hersham 1

An early goal from Nana Owusu gave the visitors the initiative but it was cancelled out by Thomas Wright four minutes into the second period.

There was joy for the home side when Simbarashe Mlambo put them ahead in the 88th minute and they were able to hold on to get a hard-earned and much-needed home win.



PITCHING IN SOUTHERN LEAGUE PREMIER CENTRAL

Alvechurch 0 St Ives Town 1

The hosts lost for the third time in a row at home as Kaziboni came off the bench to grab all three points for the visitors with a goal on 78 minutes.

Bedford Town 1 Barwell 3

It was the visitors who got their noses in front on five minutes as Deen Master was able to find the net. The returning Carl Mensah levelled matters as the half-time interval approached. On 76 minutes Ethan Hill put the away team back in front and Riley Moloney added another in stoppage time at the end to give them a good away victory at high-flying opponents.

Biggleswade Town P Royston Town P

Following a deluge of rain during the course of the morning, the pitch failed an inspection around lunchtime and the game was postponed.

Bishop's Stortford 1 Halesowen Town 2

The visitors took the lead on 18 minutes through Kieren Donnelly but that goal was cancelled out just before the hour when Cole Dasilva equalised. It looked like heading for a draw after that before Donnelly snatched the winner with a couple of minutes to go for the visitors.

Harborough Town 1 AFC Telford United 2

Just past the half-hour mark, Remi Walker gave the visitors the lead but that was cancelled out by a second half penalty from Riley O'Sullivan. The points were claimed by the visiting team late on when Ricardo Dinanga was able to slot home.



PITCHING IN SOUTHERN LEAGUE PREMIER CENTRAL

Hitchin Town 1 Stourbridge 5

It took Ethan Freemantle just five minutes to put the visitors ahead. That was soon cancelled out by Rio Deal who made it 1-1 within the opening quarter-of-an-hour. Souleyman Mandey restored the visitors' lead on 31 minutes before Freemantle added his second goal of the afternoon for the visitors early in the second half to further extend their lead.

Also going on to score his second was Mandey before Jack Fletcher rounded things off late on with a fifth goal.

Kettering Town 2 AFC Sudbury 1

The in-form home team finally got their noses in front right on the stroke of half-time through Connor Johnson, but there was still time before the half-time whistle for Joe Neal to nip in and level the scores. Luca Miller put the hosts back in front in the 64th minute and it proved to be the winner to take his team to the top of the table.

Redditch United 1 Leiston 2

Ten minutes from the end of the opening period and it was the away team who took the lead through Jamar Loza.

The hosts weren't behind long before Reuben Wyatt levelled matters, but Loza regained the lead for his side with 20 minutes to go and that proved to be the decisive goal.



Spalding United 2 Banbury United 0

The deadlock was broken by the home team as Bartosz Cybulski put them in front but they had to play the final 15 minutes with ten men after Lamine Sherif saw red following two bookings.

The hosts were able to breathe easier when Abduramane Sano doubled their lead late on to secure a good win.

Stamford 3 Bromsgrove Sporting 2

It was the home side who took the lead here courtesy of Lee Shaw who got his name on the scoresheet in the 16th minute.

The lead was doubled by Connor Bartle as the interval approached and it wasn't long before James Blunden added a third to really put them in the driving seat.

The visitors were given hope when James Meddows fired home from the penalty spot late in the first half and then Carter Lycett added a second just past the hour-mark to make things interesting.

A red card late on for Harry Crook did not help the visitors' cause as they chased something from the game.

Stratford Town 1 Lowestoft Town 1

The away team edged in front early on thanks to Kyle Haylock and they held the lead until the 76th minute when Callum Ebanks fired in an equaliser.

It ended with both sides having to settle for a share of the spoils.



PITCHING IN SOUTHERN LEAGUE DIVISION ONE SOUTH

Bemerton Heath Harlequins 2 Willand Rovers 1

Midway through the opening period, Joe Smith gave the home team the lead but the leveller came in the opening exchanges of the second half as Harvey Dorothy was able to fire home.

Oliver Balmer put the hosts back in front just past the hour-mark but then a late red card for Leighton Thomas made it a nerve-wracking ending for them but they held on to secure the victory.

Bideford AFC 1 Bishops Cleeve 0

The home side took the initiative within the opening four minutes as Scott Robinson put them in front.

Any hopes that the visitors had of getting back into the game were hit late on when Josh Nelmes saw red to leave his side with ten men.

Cribbs 1 Cinderford Town 3

The home side grabbed the lead as half-time approached thanks to Bailey Croome after the visitors had been reduced to ten men with the dismissal of Lewis Powell.

An equaliser arrived for the away team ten minutes into the second period from the boot of Alex Bonthron, who then went on to grab two further goals in quick succession to complete his hat-trick and put his side 3-1 up.

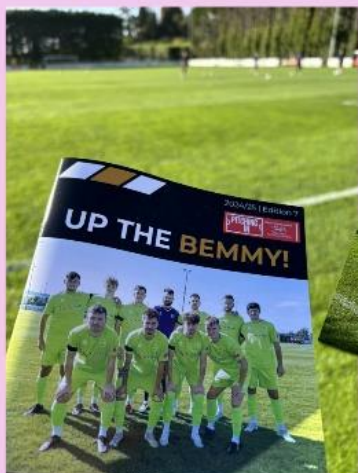
In the end, it was an away success for the visiting team.

Evesham United 1 Mousehole 0

This game was extremely closely-fought and looked like heading for a goalless draw as both sides cancelled each other out until Alfie Dunn popped up in the closing stages to put the home side ahead. It proved to be the all-important goal to give the hosts a good and hard-earned three points.

Falmouth Town AFC 0 Bashley 3

The visitors came out with purpose and they were rewarded with the opening goal in the second minute from Steve Walker. It was Walker again who was on target to double the lead on the half-hour mark and then Jamie Arnold made it three in first half stoppage time. A red card for Conor Whitely saw the visitors reduced to ten men and then Charlie Wagstaffe followed him for an early bath late on. Despite the red cards, it was a good away result for the visitors.



PITCHING IN SOUTHERN LEAGUE DIVISION ONE SOUTH

Helston Athletic 3 Westbury United 3

The unbeaten hosts started on the front-foot here and Reece Thomson put them in front within the opening ten minutes.

On 29 minutes Jordan Bentley was able to double their advantage but Josh Jenkins gave the visitors some hope as he pulled a goal back in first half stoppage time and Bevan Cross levelled matters with virtually the last kick of the half to send the teams in at 2-2.

Cross began the second as he had ended the first as he put the visitors ahead and it took until the fourth minute of stoppage time for Steven Colwell to bring the scores level once more and that's how it remained.

Larkhall Athletic 3 Didcot Town 2

The deadlock was broken with seven minutes on the clock when Taylor-Jay Bedwell gave the visitors the lead.

An equaliser arrived on the half-hour mark courtesy of Lewis Graham and the hosts went on to take the lead early in the second period through Ryan Beckinsale. This was a game that ebbed and flowed as Pat Osborne made it 2-2 on 68 minutes but three minutes, Spencer Dymond-Hall put the home lead back in front and they held on to claim the points from a breathless afternoon.

Malvern Town 2 Shaftesbury 0

There were 13 minutes gone when Alex Bell gave the hosts the lead in the sunshine and Bell chimed again in the opening exchanges of the second period as he was able to double the lead.

It proved to be the home side's second home success in succession.

Melksham Town 2 Bristol Manor Farm 3

13 wasn't an unlucky number for the visitors as that was how many minutes had been played when Daniel Dodimead put them ahead.

The hosts hit back as the game edged closer to half-time and Jake Andrews was able to grab an equaliser.

Then the scoreline was turned on its head as Jacob Brown gave the home side the lead for the first time just before the hour-mark.

Louis Britton, who hit four goals in the previous game, was on hand to level the scores for the visitors with less than ten minutes to go and then he stayed cool to convert a stoppage time penalty to send the travelling contingent into raptures.

There is certainly entertainment and drama when the visitors are involved in the action!

Thatcham Town 2 Exmouth Town 3

Alfie Bridgman celebrated his call-up to the Malta U21 squad by firing the hosts ahead in the opening exchanges here.

The lead was cancelled out midway through the first half as Ben Griffith found the net only for Shamar Moore to convert a penalty to regain the lead for the home team.

With almost an hour played. Tom Bath was able to level things up with a clean strike for the visitors and then they lead for the first time thanks to a goal from Ace High, which proved to be the winner.

Yate Town 2 Tavistock AFC 0

The kick-off was slightly delayed here but Ollie Dewsbury wasted little time in giving the hosts the lead within the opening minute.

Dewsbury was on the mark again on the hour to double the lead for his side and that's how it stayed.



PITCHING IN SOUTHERN LEAGUE DIVISION ONE CENTRAL

AFC Dunstable P Flackwell Heath P

The wet weather was the winner here as a lunchtime inspection deemed the pitch unplayable and the game was postponed.

Aylesbury United P Biggleswade FC P

Despite the home club's best efforts following heavy rain in the morning, the pitch failed its inspection by the referee and was postponed around an hour before the scheduled kick-off time.

Barton Rovers I Hadley I

This one was locked at 0-0 until just past the hour-mark when Alfie Warman was on target to put the hosts ahead. It was deep into stoppage time at the end when Finley Aldridge equalised for the away team and earn a share of the spoils.

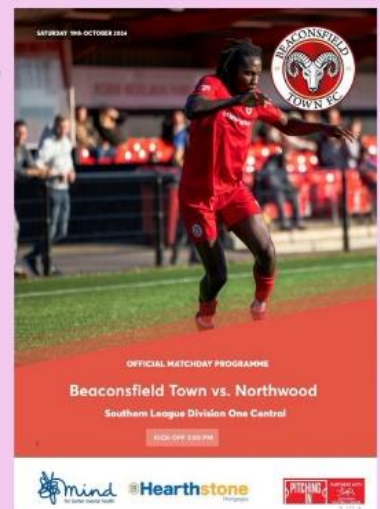


Beaconsfield Town I Northwood 2

It took the home side barely a minute to get in front as Ben Tricker beat the 'keeper to open the scoring. The leveller arrived from Godlove Oppong with 33 minutes gone and then the scoreline was turned on its head in first half stoppage time through Adeniyi Gbolahan. The visitors held on to claim their first win of the season.

Hertford Town 0 Real Bedford 3

Just before the quarter-hour mark and Jack Morrell opened the scoring for the away team and they were able to double their advantage soon afterwards through Josh Setchell. An impressive away performance was rounded off when Harrison Knight notched a third in stoppage time.



PITCHING IN SOUTHERN LEAGUE DIVISION ONE CENTRAL

Kings Langley 2 Kidlington 3

The home side went ahead on the quarter-mark as Brad Smith was able to guide the ball home.

An own goal from Cian Moore levelled the scores early in the second period before Powfil Raposo put the visitors ahead from the penalty spot and Cheyce Grant added a third goal for them late on.

A goal from Rayan Clarke reduced the arrears for the home side but it proved to be too little, too late.

North Leigh 0 Enfield 0

Neither side was able to take the initiative and make the breakthrough here.

The visitors had to play the closing stages with a man less after Sam Coombes was red-carded but they were able to secure a point and a clean sheet apiece.

Stotfold 0 Berkhamsted 2

The visitors got their noses in front just before the half-hour mark as Adam Watkins fired home.

That lead was doubled in the 65th minute when Roger James found the net and that was enough to clinch three points on the road.

Thame United 4 Ware 0

It was just past the half-hour mark when the hosts opening the scoring when Gregory Hackett was able to beat the 'keeper to put his side in front.

Harry Alexander added his name to the scoresheet eight minutes from the end of the first half to double the lead for the home team.

The second half started with Mark Riddick grabbing a quickfire brace to extend the advantage to four goals.

The afternoon got worse for the visitors when Freddy Moncur was dismissed leaving them with ten men for the final ten minutes.

Welwyn Garden City 4 Leverstock Green 0

There were five minutes gone when Lewis Jones headed the home side in front and shortly afterwards, Lewis Taaffe made it 2-0 with another header.

The opening exchanges of the second period saw Taaffe notch his second to put his side firmly in the driving seat.

With quarter-of-an-hour to go, Matthew Whichelow weighed in with a fourth goal and that's how it remained.



SMART MOVE

There were smiles aplenty last weekend as **Leverstock Green** secured their first win of the season in the **Pitching In Southern League Division One Central**.

No one was more proud at the final whistle of their 4-0 triumph over AFC Dunstable than Chair, Emma Smart, whose family history is steeped in the club. "I have been associated with Leverstock for 18 years now," said told us. "There is a real family history with the club; my grandad was always a keen supporter, so too my dad and my uncle.

"Dad was Football Secretary and Bar Manager and then took on the role of Chairman. I started off as bar maid at 18 and slowly got the football bug, which led to me becoming a committee member.

"When dad sadly passed away five years ago, it seemed like an opportunity for me to step up to continue pushing the club in the direction that I know dad wanted and also put my own stamp on things.

"I put myself forward and was duly appointed as Chair and I have thoroughly enjoyed the journey ever since!

"I don't think I can put into words how proud I am of the management team, the players and the club for what we achieved last season. To get promotion was always an aim and to actually do it was a dream come true.

"It's a true privilege to be able to Chair this amazing club and group of people and to say I'm proud would be an understatement.

"Life in the Southern League is very different to the 20+ years we spent in the Spartan League. However, it's been great getting to meet new people, visit new clubs but always go back and see teams that we used to play in years gone by.



EYES ON THE PRIZE | Emma Smart with the silverware

"It's a very local and well-run League. Everything is so professional but also everyone is so welcoming and helpful.

"To get the first win on Saturday against AFC Dunstable was brilliant. The boys have deserved so much more from a lot of our games so far, so it was nice to finally get that elusive first win under our belts.

"To see all of the hard work and dedication rewarded was fantastic. We then went on to beat Berkhamsted 1-0 in the Hertfordshire Senior Cup on Tuesday night, so from a personal point of view I hope this gives the boys the confidence they need to keep pushing on and getting the results they have been unlucky not to achieve so far.

"We want to keep moving up that table and prove that 'little Levy' deserve to be here!"

LEVERSTOCK GREEN | EMMA SMART



ON THE UP | The team celebrates promotion into Step 4 at the end of last season

So what are the philosophies of the club from the beautifully-named Pancake Lane?

“Our main philosophies are just to maintain the friendly atmosphere, the family feel and the general sense of community that we’ve always had. People often tell us they enjoy coming to Leverstock and we just want this continue. “We want to keep aiming as high as we can and to keep pushing. This season is a season of firsts for everyone, so we are just taking everything in our stride and will continue to give it our all.

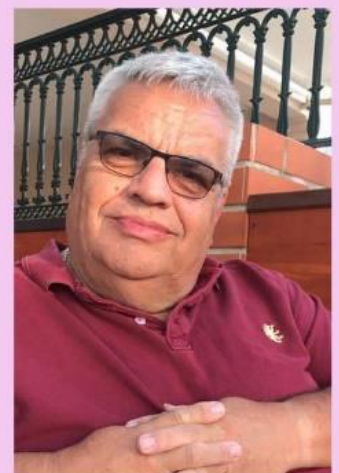
“The short-term for this year would be a good first season in Step 4 football; we’d like to finish mid-table and not be worrying about those bottom places. As I said, this year is new for a lot us behind-the-scenes as well as the management and players, so we are taking things very much as they come.

“Next year we will hope to push on with stadium upgrades and make ourselves a fully-fledged Step 4 side.

“As anyone in this position would agree I’m sure, you always want to strive to be the best and to push the club forward as far as we can go and that doesn’t stop because we’ve got promotion. The hard work and ambition continues.”

The Green were at Welwyn Garden City this afternoon looking to build on their positive week.

INSPIRATION | Graham Smart was such a well-respected figure at the club and a true inspiration to daughter, Emma



NEWS ROUND-UP

GLOUCESTER CITY | JUST THE START

Gloucester City hit top spot in the Pitching In Southern League Premier South last Saturday following a hard-earned 2-1 victory over Havant & Waterlooville.

Both goals were scored by Joe Hanks, with the winner coming in the last minute.

The popular Hanks returned to the club at the start of last term and his form so far this season has been one of the main reasons why the Tigers have been roaring as they look to bounce back from relegation at the end of last term at the first attempt, but he is not letting himself get too carried away.

"We left it late, but we fully deserved the win," Hanks admitted to us. "We played really well in the second half and personally, it was nice to add a couple of goals to my tally to help us get the three points.

"It's still too early to be worrying about being top of the table, of course. Nothing is decided in October, but having said that, it is nice that we are up there amongst the leading pack.

"We've started the season well but there is still a lot more to come from us. Hopefully we can keep everyone fit and we've got some important players to come back from injury in the near future, which will definitely help to push us on.

"The important thing is to stay within the leading pack. There are going to be plenty of ups and downs as the season goes on, we know that, but fingers crossed we will be there or thereabouts in the final reckoning. There's no reason why we can't be.

"The standard of this League is very good. There are no easy games at this level and I think that non-League football as a whole now is much stronger than it has ever been and that can only be a good thing.

"There are some big teams in the Premier South and I am enjoying the challenges that we face each week.

"As a team we want to be competing up at the top end of the table. We've started well, but it's only a start and there are a number of teams who have also had a solid start; I can't see just one team running away with it.

"Hopefully I can keep playing well and scoring goals to help the team. I'm really enjoying my football at the moment; we've got a cracking group of lads together here and it's a great place to be."

The Tigers had a mouth-watering game at AFC Totton this afternoon.



HARBOROUGH TOWN | DAIRE TO DREAM

It may not have been the most glamorous of draws, but Harborough Town are enjoying creating history with their first-ever appearance in the first round proper of the Emirates FA Cup.

The Pitching In Southern League Premier Central new-boys saw their 1-0 victory over Bury last weekend earn them a trip to Tonbridge Angels in the draw that was made on Monday evening.

"We were one of the last balls to come out and there were still a couple of big clubs left, including Birmingham City" said front-man, Tendai Daire. "That's just the luck of the draw, though, and now our focus is on making further progress in the competition.

"It's an amazing feeling and achievement to get this far. It's something that non-League clubs dream about and to do it the way we have feels so special.

"I've been with the club since we were at Step 5 and now to be in Step 3 and looking forward to a first round proper tie in the FA Cup, it's just fantastic.

"The Premier Central is certainly a tough League, but you want to be involved at this level because the competition is better and there are some big games.

"As a player you always want to be coming up against the best teams and players and this season has given us all that chance. I am really enjoying my football and the challenge that each game provides.

"It's fair to say that we're still finding our feet, but we have adapted well to our new surroundings and we will continue to learn.

"To finish in the top ten would be a real achievement and personally, I go into every season aiming to score 30 goals. That hasn't changed just because we've moved up a level; I always set my standards high and never shy away from a challenge."

Harborough Town have 13 points to their name from their opening ten League games this season following Tuesday's fine 4-1 triumph at Stourbridge, and beat Darlaston Town following a replay, Stourbridge, Leamington and Bury to reach the Emirates FA Cup first round proper.

Elsewhere in the Emirates FA Cup draw, Kettering Town have a trip to local Football League club, Northampton Town, to look forward to, which is being screened live on television. On League business this afternoon, they played host to AFC Telford United.



INFLUENCER

We find out which players most influenced our Pitching In Southern League stars...

LEON LOBJOIT (BEDFORD TOWN) > LIONEL MESSI

I've always been a Messi fan; he is just the guy everyone looks up to, a fantastic talent.

MALVERN TOWN | MAKING AN IMPRESSION

Recent loan arrival, Ibrahim Olateju, has certainly made a big impression in his first two games for Malvern Town.

The teenage striker arrived at the Pitching In Southern League Division One South club on loan from Sky Bet League Two outfit, Cheltenham Town ahead of last weekend's trip to Willand Rovers and having scored a late equaliser in that game, he followed it up with a brace in the thrilling 5-4 home victory over Bristol Manor Farm on Tuesday evening.

"I am really pleased to be able to hit the ground running straight away," he said with a smile.

"Scoring the equaliser in my first game gave me plenty of confidence and belief, which I took into Tuesday's game.

"It has been great to play my part in helping the team pick up four points from the last two games and start climbing up the table.

"The supporters have really got behind me and that has meant so much to me as I settle into life here.

"I am really looking forward to the challenge that stands before me: I have played in this division before so I know what a good level it is.

"It's very physical and there is some good football played, so for a young player like myself it is a great place to come and continue my education.

"The team has played some good football in both games so far and it's clear that there is a lot of ability within the team.

"I have thoroughly enjoyed my first two games and want to add more goals to my tally. I'll be working as hard as I can to achieve this and help the team kick-on. These last two games can give us a platform on which to build.

"This is a real opportunity for me to make an impact and show what I can do."

For Bristol Manor Farm, it was the second high-scoring encounter that they have been involved in over the past few days having played out a 5-5 draw at Helston Athletic last Saturday.

Spare a thought for striker, Louis Britton, who scored all four of their goals on Tuesday yet still ended up on the losing side.

Today saw Malvern Town play host to Shaftesbury whilst Bristol Manor Farm were at unbeaten Melksham Town.



LEIGHTON TOWN MIDAS TOUCH

Three games ago, Leighton Town Head of Football, Guy Kefford, was asked to step into the breach to take charge of the team following the departure of manager, Gary Flinn.

Nine points later, including a highly-impressive 4-1 away win at previously-unbeaten League leaders, Hadley, last weekend, and Kefford has been asked

by the Executive Committee of the Pitching In Southern League Division One Central club to remain in position for the 'foreseeable future'.

So, what has been the secret behind this turn around in fortunes? We asked Kefford to explain.

"The work on the training ground has been key," he told us. "This has given this talented group the structure from which to play.

"Initially we concentrated on our out of possession set-up, which has then given them the platform in these last few games.

"The coaching staff and I have quickly formed credibility with the players and the players are responding through the learning and adaptation of play. You can't have one without the other, the environment is always the key.

"Last Saturday was our biggest test to date, coming up against a very good and well-organised Hadley side who hadn't been defeated previously.

"We gave them due respect and did our due diligence, as we always do, and the reward was the performance on the pitch. The whole squad contributed to secure a fantastic win that really made people sit up and take notice.

"I did a similar role last season at the club when I stepped in to the helm of our Development team in early December and stayed until May before we appointed a replacement during the summer.

"I would say it's always a privilege to be in and around a special group of people, and in both these situations that's what we have; players that want to improve, are prepared to listen and learn and during the process are prepared to run and sweat for the cause.

"That's only achieved by creating an environment in which the relationship between staff and players is allowed to flourish. Once you have that anything is possible."

Kefford has been impressed by the standard of Division One Central so far this season in what remains an extremely competitive division.

"In my new role this season as Head of Football I've watched every game we've played in, bar one," he added. "It's a very good standard; the technical and tactical elements in the game are now higher than I've known previously and so you have to do the work off the pitch to prepare.

"I think our game on Saturday shows how competitive the League is and will be for the rest of this season. We saw last season how many teams there were vying for the play-off places, right up until the final week and it will be the same this time around too."

For Kefford, he will be in charge for the battles ahead, continuing with Tuesday's home encounter with Berkamsted.

"The Executive Committee got together this week to discuss and agree the way forward," he continued. "We've decided on the best structure and direction for the club to take at this point in time, taking into consideration a number of factors, including our unbelievable supporters, sponsors and the incredible work off the field in the close season, which has seen major ground improvements to meet the grading for the level in which we now compete.

"The upshot is that I am delighted to continue at the helm and look forward to the ongoing challenges ahead.

"We are a members' club who rely on volunteers to operate, everyone is valued here and everyone is working hard to continue moving this club forward."



FIXTURES | THE WEEK AHEAD

Pitching In Southern League Premier South TUESDAY 22 OCT 24

AFC Totton v Taunton Town
Basingstoke Town v Hungerford Town
Bracknell Town v Swindon Supermarine
Chertsey Town v Sholing
Dorchester Town v Plymouth Parkway
Frome Town v Walton & Hersham
Winchester City v Gloucester City

WEDNESDAY 23 OCT 24

Gosport Borough v Marlow
Havant & Waterlooville v Hanwell Town

SATURDAY 26 OCT 24

Merthyr Town v Frome Town
Swindon Supermarine v Basingstoke Town
Tiverton Town v Poole Town

Pitching In Southern League Premier Central

MONDAY 21 OCT 24

Redditch United v AFC Telford United

TUESDAY 22 OCT 24

Biggleswade Town v Banbury United
Bishop's Stortford v Royston Town
Harborough Town v Bromsgrove Sporting
Hitchin Town v Lowestoft Town
Kettering Town v Stourbridge
Spalding United v Leiston
Stamford v St Ives Town
Stratford Town v Barwell

SATURDAY 26 OCT 24

AFC Sudbury v St Ives Town
Lowestoft Town v Harborough Town

Pitching In Southern League Division One South

MONDAY 21 OCT 24

Melksham Town v Bishops Cleeve

TUESDAY 22 OCT 24

Bemerton Heath Harlequins v Larkhall Athletic
Cinderford Town v Didcot Town
Cribbs v Helston Athletic
Falmouth Town AFC v Bideford AFC
Malvern Town v Yate Town
Thatcham Town v Evesham United
Westbury United v Bashley

WEDNESDAY 23 OCT 24

Exmouth Town v Mousehole
Tavistock AFC v Shaftesbury
Willand Rovers v Bristol Manor Farm

Pitching In Southern League Division One South SATURDAY 26 OCT 24

Bideford AFC v Melksham Town
Bishops Cleeve v Falmouth Town AFC
Didcot Town v Exmouth Town
Evesham United v Willand Rovers
Helston Athletic v Malvern Town
Larkhall Athletic v Thatcham Town
Mousehole v Bemerton Heath Harlequins
Shaftesbury v Cinderford Town

Pitching In Southern League Division One Central

MONDAY 21 OCT 24

Biggleswade FC v Leverstock Green

TUESDAY 22 OCT 24

AFC Dunstable v Aylesbury United
Barton Rovers v Stotfold
Hadley v Beaconsfield Town
Hertford Town v Northwood
Kings Langley v Flackwell Heath
Leighton Town v Berkhamsted
North Leigh v Thame United
Ware v Enfield

SATURDAY 26 OCT 24

Beaconsfield Town v AFC Dunstable
Berkhamsted v Ware
Enfield v Biggleswade FC
Flackwell Heath v Real Bedford
Leverstock Green v Leighton Town
Stotfold v Kings Langley
Thame United v Hertford Town
Welwyn Garden City v North Leigh

Next Saturday is also Isuzu FA Trophy first round proper day with some of our member clubs involved.

Fixtures are subject to change. Compiled in association with Atos.

There is plenty of great action coming up throughout the Pitching In Southern League. Please show your support wherever possible and if you are interested in getting more involved and finding out about volunteer opportunities, check out the Pitching In Volunteer Hub via: southern-football-league.co.uk/Pitching-In-Volunteer-Hub

We hope that you enjoyed this edition as we look to showcase all that is good within the Pitching In Southern League. Feedback is always welcome, please email: news@southern-football-league.co.uk

Enjoy the rest of your weekend...

Andy Poole (Editor)

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