

PITCHING IN SOUTHERN LEAGUE



SATURDAY EVENING E-NEWSPAPER

Saturday 30 November 2024

DERBY DRAMA

As November draws to a close, there was plenty of great action across all four divisions this afternoon.

In the Pitching In Southern League Premier South, the top four all won. AFC Totton emerged victorious in our Game of the Day as they beat an in-form Swindon Supermarine 2-1.

Leaders, Merthyr Town, battled out a hard-earned 2-1 away triumph at Brackenell Town as Frazer Thomas hit a late winner, whilst an Ed Williams brace helped Gloucester City to a commanding 4-1 victory over Poole. Top scorers were Havant & Waterlooville as they disposed of Basingstoke Town by five goals to one.

Over in the Pitching In Southern League Premier Central, there was plenty of drama in our Game of the Day as Black Country rivals, Stourbridge and Halesowen Town battled it out.

With the score 1-1, a last minute goal from Ethan McLeod looked to have won it for the hosts only for Kieren Donnelly to hit a stoppage time leveller to keep his side in second place.

There were hat-tricks for Will Glennon of St. Ives Town and Stamford AFC's Jack Duffy.



In the Pitching In Southern League Division One South, Yate Town reached the 40-point mark but they had to settle for a share of the spoils at Melksham Town in a 1-1 draw.

There was drama at Bristol Manor Farm as they played host to second-place Exmouth Town. A delayed start due to a missing match official meant that the visitors' boss, Kevin Hill, took the flag as assistant referee. His side were to lose to a last minute goal from Jacob Spence.

Four players saw red as Bemerton Heath Harlequins turned a one-goal deficit late on into 2-1 victory over Thatcham Town, whilst both Malvern Town and Mousehole hit five goals in commanding home wins over Cribbs and Didcot Town respectively.

Over in the Pitching In Southern League Division One Central, our Game of the Day saw Flackwell Heath inflict only Hadley's second defeat of the season with an excellent 3-0 away success.

Berkhamsted remain top following a routine 2-0 triumph over Biggleswade FC as Real Bedford remain hot on their heels following a 3-1 away win at Northwood.

IMAGE: Anthony Dunn

REPORTS FROM ALL GAMES | STATS | FEATURES



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PITCHING IN SOUTHERN LEAGUE PREMIER SOUTH

AFC Totton 2 Swindon Supermarine 1

With eight minutes gone, the hosts opened the scoring courtesy of Charlie Austin and then Tom Blair added another soon afterwards.

The home team went down to ten men just past the hour-mark as Luke Bennett received a second yellow card and then David Sims-Burgess reduced the arrears to set up a grandstand finish. It ended in a hard-earned victory for the home team against their in-form opponents.

Bracknell Town 1 Merthyr Town 2

It was first blood for the visitors as Lewys Twamley opened the scoring on the 25-minute mark but Jake Scrimshaw levelled matters five minutes from the break. With two minutes to go, Frazer Thomas fired the away team back in front and they were able to hold on to their lead.

Gloucester City 4 Poole Town 1

Recent arrival, Obinna Anaebonam, put the home side in the lead in the 22nd minute but a goal from Joshua Staunton levelled the scores right on the stroke of half-time.

There was still time for Jadyne Crosbie to put the hosts back in front in stoppage time at the end of the opening period.

The second half started in a similar vein as Ed Williams extended the hosts' lead and then added another soon afterwards to secure a deserved three points for his side.

Gosport Borough 0 Plymouth Parkway 0

Defences were very much on top here as neither team, despite their best efforts, could find a way through and the spoils were shared.

Hanwell Town 0 Hungerford Town 0

There was nothing to separate these two teams as it ended in a goalless draw. Both goalkeepers made good saves to keep their sides in it as it ended with honours even.



PITCHING IN SOUTHERN LEAGUE PREMIER SOUTH

Havant & Waterlooville 4 Basingstoke Town 1

The opening exchanges saw the home side take the lead through Reuben Livesey-Austin.

Things went from bad to worse for the visitors when Aleksander Kokoszka was sent off as he gave away a penalty, which Ryan Seager converted.

Rather than let their heads drop, the away team hit back and Rudy Appiah-Allen pulled a goal back as the interval approached.

The second half was ten minutes old when Seager grabbed his second goal for the hosts to make it 3-1.

Another goal for the hosts saw Leon Maloney get his name on the scoresheet to complete a commanding victory.

Marlow 2 Frome Town 1

The first goal came at the midway point of the first half when Naheer Nawaf fired the hosts ahead.

The scores were level early on in the second period as Ethan Vaughan guided the ball home but Mitchell Parker gave the advantage back to the hosts with four minutes to go and they were able to see it out for three important points.

Sholing 0 Winchester City 1

There was nothing to separate the two teams during the opening period, but things came to life after the restart when Ik Hill gave the visitors the lead from the penalty spot.

Harry Taylor was dismissed for the home team with just over 20 minutes to go as they were unable to find a way back into the game.

Taunton Town 2 Chertsey Town 3

With quarter-of-an hour gone, Jack Mazzone put the visitors ahead and then he doubled his tally midway through the first half to make it 2-0.

The home side managed to reduce the arrears just past the half-hour through Jayden Nielsen and then got back on level terms ten minutes into the second half as Owen Brain finished intelligently.

It didn't take long for the pendulum to swing back in favour of the visitors as Mazzone completed his hat-trick and secure the victory.

Tiverton Town 1 Walton & Hersham 0

It took 73 minutes here for the opening goal to arrive when Joe Parker was able to put the hosts in front.

This was to prove to be the winning goal as the Devon outfit claimed a big three points.

Wimborne Town 1 Dorchester Town 1

The home side went ahead in the sixth minute through Will Fletcher, who found the net against his former club.

The visitors went down to ten men just before the hour-mark when Tom Bragg saw red but they were able to level on 61 minutes through Wes Fogden.

Another red card, this time to Will Spetch of the visitors, came late on as this one ended all square.



PITCHING IN SOUTHERN LEAGUE PREMIER CENTRAL

Banbury United 0 Lowestoft Town 2

An early goal from Joseph Duffy put the visitors ahead here and the same player was on hand to secure the victory for his side in stoppage time at the end of the game.

It was a welcome three points for the visitors as the home side's form continues to stutter.

Barwell 3 AFC Sudbury 1

The opening goal arrived with just four minutes on the clock as Myles Cowling was able to find the net for the visitors.

As the clock ticked down at the end, Brady Hickey popped up with an equalising goal and then turned the scoreline on its head with a second in the 86th minute.

A Tyrell Skeen-Hamilton goal made it 3-1 late on and secured the points for the hosts.

Bedford Town 3 Biggleswade Town 2

An early strike from Leon Lobjoit put the hosts ahead and then he was able to double the advantage with just 11 minutes gone.

There was a lifeline for the visitors as they pulled one back through Daniel Izezor just before the half-hour and they were able to level thanks to a Ryan Doherty spot-kick ten minutes into the second half.

James Clifton put the home team back in front with around 20 minutes to go and that proved to be the decisive goal.

Bromsgrove Sporting 0 Alvechurch 2

There was an early goal in this local derby as the experienced Kristian Pearce gave the visitors the lead and then Charlie Wragg doubled the lead just past the half-hour mark.

Two yellow cards equalled a red for Kieran Wakefield midway through the second period as the visitors were forced to play with a man less but they were able to see out the victory.

Leiston 0 AFC Telford United 2

An opening goal from Matt Stenson with six minutes gone gave the visitors the initiative and they doubled the advantage through Ricardo Dinanga midway through the first half.

There was no further scoring after the break as the visitors brought home the points.

Redditch United 1 Spalding United 1

The opening goal finally arrived on 72 minutes when Theo Hudson gave the visitors the lead but it was cancelled out less than ten minutes later by Johnny Johnston.

In the end, both teams took a share of the points.



PITCHING IN SOUTHERN LEAGUE PREMIER CENTRAL

St Ives Town 3 Hitchin Town 1

Will Glennon put the home side ahead on the quarter-hour mark and then added a second right at the end of the first half. As the clock ticked down, Henry Snee was able to pull a goal back for the visitors but any hopes of a comeback were ruled out as Glennon completed his hat-trick to confirm the victory.

Stamford 3 Royston Town 1

With half-an-hour gone, Jack Duffy gave the hosts the lead but parity was restored before the break through Damaray Anyadike.

The visitors' cause was made more difficult when Adam Murray was sent off in the 61st minute and Duffy took full advantage to give the home team a 2-1 lead before adding a third at the death to complete his hat-trick.

Stourbridge 2 Halesowen Town 2

This local derby went the way of the visitors when leading scorer, Kieren Donnelly, put them ahead on 33 minutes. Defender, Joel Kettle, steamed in to level the scores with eight minutes left on the clock before there was late drama as Ethan McLeod fired the hosts ahead in the final minute.

There was still time for more drama as Donnelly levelled four minutes into stoppage time and that's how it remained.

Stratford Town 1 Bishop's Stortford 0

A penalty from Callum Ebanks put the home side in front with 19 minutes on the clock and it was to prove to be the only goal of the afternoon as the visitors were unable to find a way back into proceedings.



PITCHING IN SOUTHERN LEAGUE DIVISION ONE SOUTH

Bemerton Heath Harlequins 2 Thatcham Town 1

The opening exchanges saw the away team get their noses in front thanks to Kyle Daniel-Spray.

As they battled hard to hold on to their advantage, Roberto Nditi was sent off late on along with his team-mate, Muhamadou Ceesay, plus home duo Brandon Mundy and James Ward.

When order was restored, the visitors' woe was compounded when an own goal from Zion Nditi levelled things up late on, but there was more drama in stoppage time as Leighton Thomas fired the hosts to victory in what was a breathless finale.

Bideford AFC 2 Larkhall Athletic 1

An early penalty from Billy Tucker put the hosts ahead and they were able to double their advantage in the third minute of first half stoppage time from a Finn Roberts free-kick.

As the clock ticked down at the end, Alex Lambert pulled a goal back for the away team but it wasn't enough to get them anything from this one.

Bishops Cleeve 0 Willand Rovers 0

With the scores locked at 0-0, the visitors were reduced to ten men at the end of the opening period as Ashton Hewitt was sent off.

It led to a battling second half showing from the Devon club as they managed to frustrate their hosts to battle out a point.

Bristol Manor Farm 1 Exmouth Town 0

There was a delayed kick-off here as an assistant referee was sought. In the end it was the visitors' manager, Kevin Hill, who took the flag.

It was an evenly-matched opening period that ended goalless and the second half followed a similar pattern until Jacob Spence grabbed a last minute winner for the home team.

Cinderford Town 2 Tavistock AFC 3

The visitors got themselves in front early on when Harry French found the net but it was cancelled out by Joe Keeping as the first half went on.

The opening exchanges of the second half saw Ed Harrison regain the lead for the away team and boosted by the goal, it wasn't long before Liam Prynne added another.

A stoppage time strike from Alex Bonthron proved too little, too late for the hosts.



PITCHING IN SOUTHERN LEAGUE DIVISION ONE SOUTH

Evesham United 4 Falmouth Town AFC 0

It was the hosts who edged in front when Amer Awadh was able to beat the 'keeper and then a second goal arrived as the ball found its way into the net off Morgan Coxhead for an own goal.

A third goal early in the second half from Levi Steele put the home side firmly in the driving seat and he was able to go on to get another to complete a solid afternoon's work from him and his side.

Helston Athletic 1 Bashley 1

A goal from Scott Bungay gave the visitors the lead with just over ten minutes to go until the interval.

The hosts wasted little time at the start of the second half to draw level as Jacob Smith continued his recent impressive scoring spell.

There was to be no further scoring as both teams shared the spoils.

Malvern Town 5 Cribbs 1

It was first blood to the hosts with a third minute goal from Miles Ferguson but it was to last barely two minutes before David Duru levelled matters.

A lively opening then saw Jack Watts fire the home team back in front before the quarter-hour mark and then he added his second to make it 3-1 on 18 minutes. Harry Clark added a fourth goal ten minutes from the interval and then helped himself to another midway through the second period and that was to be the end of the scoring here.

Melksham Town 1 Yate Town 1

After a goalless opening period where both sides cancelled each other out, there were just four minutes gone in the second half when Henry Sady put the home team ahead.

Matters were levelled just past the hour when Ross Stearn was able to find the back of the net for the away team and that's how the scoreline stayed.

Mousehole 5 Didcot Town 0

Just before the half-hour mark Tim Nixon gave the home team the lead and it wasn't long until Tallan Mitchell made it 2-0.

It was Mitchell who found the net again just before the end of the opening period but the first half ended with Mark Goldsworthy receiving his marching orders.

Despite having a man less, Jordan Hackett further extended the hosts' lead early in the second period.

At the death, Torin Ntege made it 5-0 to complete a good afternoon's work for his side and there was still time for a late red card for Cameron McNeill to complete a miserable afternoon for the away team.

Westbury United 0 Shaftesbury 2

The visitors went ahead on 12 minutes through Toby Bailey but they were reduced to ten minute on 25 minutes when Jack Hoey was dismissed.

A stoppage time strike from Remus Nixon sealed a good away win for his team.



PITCHING IN SOUTHERN LEAGUE DIVISION ONE CENTRAL

Barton Rovers 4 North Leigh 0

A penalty from Taylor Rhiney set the home side on their way in the tenth minute before John Shamalo doubled the advantage.

The home side were asking all of the questions as Shamalo bagged his second and then Rhiney did the same with just over 20 minutes left on the clock to complete a commanding win.

Beaconsfield Town 0 Thame United 1

This game was finely balanced with neither side able to take the initiative until the 88th minute when Curtis Brown found the net for the away team to give them a smash-and-grab victory here.

Berkhamsted 2 Biggleswade FC 0

Midway through the opening period, Matt Bateman put the home side in front and the lead was doubled with quarter-of-an-hour to go courtesy of Daniel Newton. The hosts were always in control of their lead and they went on to secure a deserved success.

Hadley 0 Flackwell Heath 3

This battle of the high-flyers saw the visitors take the lead on the 20-minute mark courtesy of Wiktor Makowski.

The same player weighed in with a second goal in the opening exchanges of the second period and then Sean McGuinness made it 3-0 to complete an excellent away day showing and result for his team.

Hertford Town 4 AFC Dunstable 1

The deadlock was broken when Riley Carr drove the home side ahead on the 20-minute mark and then the hosts went further ahead through Zen Cunningham just before the hour.

Soon afterwards, Adeniyi Gbolahan made it 3-0 to put the hosts into a commanding position and he was able to further extend the lead.

In stoppage time, Kyle Brooks hit a consolation for the away team who were well beaten.



PITCHING IN SOUTHERN LEAGUE DIVISION ONE CENTRAL

Leighton Town 2 Kings Langley 2

The hosts took the lead through Jack Sayell early on and it was an advantage that they held going into the second period. Parity was restored on the hour as Brad Smith found the net but Toluwalope Ikuyin-minu soon restored the home team's lead. A goal from Alistair Gould levelled things up again on 72 minutes and it was to stay that way with both teams taking a point each.

Leverstock Green 1 Enfield 1

With no goals to report during the first half, the deadlock was broken in the opening exchanges of the second period when Sami Bessadi put the away team ahead. The scores were evened up on 84 minutes as Lewis Collins found the net for the hosts and that's how the scoreline stayed.



Northwood 1 Real Bedford 3

It took the away team six minutes to break the deadlock as Ben Stevens guided the ball home. The lead was doubled shortly afterwards by Tom Hitchcock and then Josh Setchell weighed in with a third goal as half-time approached. Troy Perez-Duah reduced the arrears from the spot in the final ten minutes but it proved to be mere consolation.

Ware 1 Kidlington 1

It was first blood to the home side when Johnny Allotey was able to find the net just past the half-hour mark. The visitors got back on level terms with just over 20 minutes to go when Charlie Bacon brought home an equaliser and a point for his side.



MACK SHINES

We head to the New Forest where a teenage goalkeeper from a famous footballing family is making a name for himself in the Pitching In Southern League Division One South. Ashley Hammond reports...

Talented teenage goalkeeper, Mack Allan, was offered a one-year professional contract with FA Premier League outfit, AFC Bournemouth, last week, and is crediting this season's ongoing loan spell with Bashley in the Pitching In Southern League Division One South for securing him the opportunity.

The 18 year-old shot-stopper has been in good form for the New Forest side so far this season, as he balances life as a third-year scholar with AFC Bournemouth U21s with his first extended run in men's senior football on loan at Bashley.

"I think Bash have helped me get that," he said of his Cherries offer. "The other day I played for AFC Bournemouth and felt more mature after having played for Bashley.

"I felt more calm and more relaxed because I've been playing all these games and I've learnt so much, I just felt like I could go in and show them what I've been doing.

"I'm noticing the difference straight away, as soon as I started playing, some of the saves I was making, I wouldn't have made those before Bashley, and some of the positions I was getting myself in, I felt like I've improved so much already just for being here [at Bashley] this short amount of time." Playing for Bashley in the men's game, he said, felt more cut-throat than age group football with The Cherries.

"It's like you need to win at Bashley to help players earn their wages," he added.

"Whereas at AFC Bournemouth it's more about progression and how we play. I kind of like the pressure, you have to win because otherwise you are letting people down."



IN THE PINK | Mack Allan is enjoying his time at Bashley

Of his time at the club so far, he said; "I think I've done well, I've started every game bar a few cup games and made a couple of clean sheets.

"The feedback from the manager and the lads is that I've done well and shown what I'm about both on and off the pitch.

"Some people would come in on loan and be shy and not show themselves but I feel like I've come in and got stuck in straight away to the non-League environment."

His highlight so far he said was his last minute save off the line against Bideford AFC a couple of weeks ago to rescue a 3-2 home win.

"I was buzzing after that, that's why I'm here to have moments like that," he added. "It's really early days and sometimes I realise I'm only 18 and I've got a lot of learning to do. Sometimes I make a mistake and let a goal in and beat myself up over it but sometimes it's good to make mistakes and learn from them and that's what Bashley is about, going on loan and not just making mistakes but learning from decisions."

Thankfully Allan has a big support network around him to look out for him and offer him advice, not least Cherries' first-team 'keeper, Kepa Arrizabalaga, formerly of Real Madrid, with whom he has been training with at AFC Bournemouth almost every day this month.

"It's such a good experience to train with him because he's such a big name and has two Champions League winning medals [at Chelsea and Real]," Allan continued. "I wasn't even speaking to him the first few days because I was a little nervous but watching him and learning from what he does is great experience and I take what he tells me or what I've seen him do into my games."

Then there is his uncle Jimmy Ball who manages AFC Totton in the Premier South. "I speak to him quite a lot because he's in non-League as well, and he gave me lots of advice regarding my pro contract. He told me what to expect from that meeting because he's usually the one on the other side of the table.

"He's quite hard on me and I like it that way, I don't want him to be soft and tell me I'm doing well when I'm not, I'd rather him tell me, which he does."

If you've worked out the Ball family name connection, then you would have realised that Mack is also the grandson of England's 1966 World Cup-winning midfielder Alan Ball, who managed Saints, Pompey and Man City, and also starred for Arsenal and Everton. He's also a cousin of the McAtee brothers, John who plays for Bolton and James, who plays for Man City.



HELPING HAND | The legendary Neville Southall has given plenty of good advice to the young goalkeeper

"I did meet my grandad but I can't remember him [Alan died when Mack was aged one], but I feel like he's been with me my whole life because of how much people talk about him and how many people come up to me to tell me how much they loved him, or to tell me a story about him.

"I feel like he's been in my life the whole time, he's my greatest inspiration, so anything I do I look up to him.

"I wouldn't say I feel any pressure to carry on his name, but obviously I want to, and that's what I aspire to do."

Because of his grandad's Everton links being part of the Holy Trinity in midfield with Howard Kendall and Colin Harvey that won the 1970 league title, Mack is a massive Toffees fan and has legendary keeper Neville Southall on speed dial.

"Whenever I go to watch Everton I get random people coming up to me telling me different stories about grandad and it's crazy to think they know more about my grandad than I do," Allan admitted. "But it's good to hear anything and I would never not listen. I want to know everything."

Of Southall, he said; "I've got quite close to him and chew his ear off. I've watched all his highlight reels and speak to him quite a lot.

"I ask him about how he dealt with pressure moments and he just says go out, puff your chest out and smile."

WORDS: Ashley Hammond

NEWS ROUND-UP

SWINDON SUPERMARINE | FULLY FOCUSED

Last Saturday's come-from-behind victory made it five games unbeaten for Swindon Supermarine as their climb up the Pitching In Southern League Premier South table.

The Wiltshire outfit now sit seventh, just a couple of points and places off the play-off zone.

"We started the season poorly," admitted skipper, Ryan Campbell, who broke through the 300-appearance mark for the club earlier this season.

"We had quite a few new faces come in over the summer, so it took a little while for us to gel, but recently things have really started to click into place and we've hit some good form.

"I think we're fifth in the current form table, so it's a case of keeping this momentum going for as long as we can.

"We knew how tough this League would be; there are some really strong teams involved this year and it's nice to see us sitting seventh as opposed to this time last year when we were in the relegation zone.

"The League is the most competitive that it's been in a few years, so that makes our current position even more impressive. There are shock results week in, week out and you have to be on your game in every minute of every game or else you will get found out.

"We've got a really good mood within the camp right now. Being in form always helps in that, of course, but we're fully focussed and trying not to listen to any outside noise.

"We keep everything in-house; we know what we are capable of and we know where we want to be. Our aim is to ensure that we achieve that goal.

"There's still a lot of football to be played and we will keep ticking games off one-by-one. For me personally I will be looking to contribute to us winning football matches. Keeping clean sheets is just as important as scoring goals so I want to be able to play my part at both ends of the field.

"If I can do that, then my job will be done."

A mouth-watering trip to AFC Totton took place earlier today.



WESTBURY UNITED | THE BUTCHER IS BACK!

It hasn't taken Westbury United's Charlie Walton long to get back into the swing of things. His first start last weekend since returning from injury saw him make his mark within the opening 60 seconds.

Known as The Butcher, Walton carved open the Willand Rovers defence to put his side ahead with just a minute on the clock and then he served up a second before quarter-of-an-hour had even been played.

As the wind and rain continued to lash down, Westbury went in at the break three goals to the good before leaving the field at the end caked in mud but celebrating a commanding 4-0 away win, a result which pulled them away from the bottom four.

"It was a magnificent team performance," Walton told us. "The conditions were absolutely ridiculous throughout the game, but the boys grabbed hold of the challenge with both hands and showed our hosts, and the rest of the League, that we are not here to be messed about with!

"To be fair, this type of performance has been coming for a while. We've been knocking on the door for weeks for a result like this and it just showed what we are capable of across the whole team with everyone playing their part and making a contribution.

"We've secured back-to-back wins now and hopefully we can build on this momentum and take it into Saturday's game at home to Shaftesbury.

"We're all ready to go again and looking forward to the task in hand. I am sure that with the squad we have here, we can start climbing the table sooner rather than later.

"There are a lot of games coming up and it's an opportunity for us to keep growing and moving in the right direction.

"Things are so close; we're only six points off the play-off places and four points away from the relegation places. The festive period ahead is really going to determine which direction ourselves and the other teams will be heading in during the second half of the campaign."



INFLUENCER

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

GEORGE HIGGINS (BEMERTON HEATH HARLEQUINS) > RONALDINHO

Ronaldinho was just a pure joy to watch! What natural skill and ability he had, one of the greats.

EMIRATES FA CUP SECOND ROUND PREVIEW

Sunday is going to be a big day for our two remaining representatives in the Emirates FA Cup.

It all starts at noon when Pitching In Southern League Premier Central leaders, Kettering Town step out at home to Doncaster Rovers of Sky Bet League Two.

Then history is made for Harborough Town, also of the Premier Central, as they face their first-ever tie at this second round of the competition as they head to Sky Bet League One outfit, Reading.

Both clubs did us proud in the previous round, with the Poppies winning at Northampton Town and the Bees stinging Tonbridge Angels with a convincing away win.

We caught up with two players who are set to have a key role to play in both games.

"This is a massive opportunity for us," Kettering Town goalkeeper, Dan Jzeph, told us. "We're really looking forward to the challenge that stands before us and the prospect of joining the big boys in the third round.

"It will be great to have 3,000 fans at Latimer Park; there's going to be a fantastic atmosphere and hopefully it will help us get the job done.

"As a group we're in a great place. We're unbeaten in our last nine games in all competitions, which alone is a good record to have. Not only are we doing ourselves proud in the FA Cup, but we're also four points clear at the top of the table and we're excited about what we can achieve this season."

So, what is the secret to this success so far?

"There's no secret," he added. "We have so much belief within the group; we know that we have something good going on here. "In the previous round, we went to Northampton and played our own game. We didn't change anything, we didn't sit back at all, we just did what we would normally do.

"Playing on a decent pitch with the quality we have on the ball really helped us on that occasion and it showed in our performance to win away at a side four Leagues above us.

"This season has started really well for us. I was part of the group last season after Nuneaton withdrew from the League. When I first joined we were in the bottom three and the difference from then to now is night and day.

"That's credit to the Gaffer and his staff for the players that they have been able to bring in and the high standards that they have set.

"We're ticking along nicely in the League; I just hope that when the time comes that we exit the FA Cup, we don't have that 'hangover' and can maintain what we're doing in the League.

"Our aim for the season is pretty clear; promotion, by whatever means, be it by winning the title or going through the play-offs.

Personally I want to keep the goals we concede as low as possible. It's credit to the back four that so far we've been solid and have conceded the fewest goals.

"If that continues then we have more than enough firepower up top to win games, so it's a healthy combination!"

Over at Harborough Town, the sense of anticipation is also building nicely.

They warmed up for Sunday's game with a commanding 4-1 victory over Banbury United last weekend, a result which sees them reach the 20-point mark from their opening 17 games at Step 3.

There has been a buzz around The Beehive this week, which has been enhanced by former Brazil international, Sandro, stepping up his training with a view to being involved in the engine room.

"It's just going to be a surreal experience," admitted local lad, Freddie Robinson. "To reach this stage of FA Cup and play at such a fantastic stadium as Reading's, alongside a former FA Premier League player and Brazil international, it's crazy!

"What an experience it's going to be, something we could only dream of and we'll be looking to take it all in, enjoy the occasion, but ultimately try to continue our progress in this competition.

"For a club who had only previously reached the second qualifying round, this is dreamland. People are talking about us, which is fantastic.

"We went into the previous round with a game plan and it worked perfectly; everything just clicked for us and it was an afternoon that we will never forget. Hopefully we'll be able to say the same on Sunday, although this time we will be up against opponents from a much higher level.

"This is what the FA Cup is all about, anything can happen. We'll have 3,500 supporters behind us and we go into the tie on the back of a brilliant team performance last weekend to beat Banbury United.

"I am so proud to be representing my town. They say that you have to play the game and not the occasion, so that's what we will be aiming to do. Our preparations have gone well; everyone is level-headed and ready to go, so bring it on!"

The Southern League would like to send our best wishes to both Kettering Town and Harborough Town. Keep doing us proud!



MY CLUB, MY SHIRT



The Southern Football League will be participating in its very first My Club, My Shirt campaign during the month of December, which aims to promote equality and inclusivity at our clubs.

Our volunteers and supporters are the lifeblood of our clubs, and we know that you all do a remarkable job in making your clubs inclusive environments that allows anyone and everyone the opportunity to enjoy football.

This campaign is a simple one! We believe that visual representation is a powerful tool in bringing people together and that football is the perfect conduit to making that happen. Fusing football and photography together, promotes equality in the most picturesque way! We would like each club to reach out to their volunteers and supporters and find a representative who is willing to share a photo of themselves in their club shirt.

As this is an equality campaign, we want the imagery to show that regardless of age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage or civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex or sexual orientation, that your club is welcoming, inclusive and a place for absolutely everyone.

The photographs should contain a natural pose, be of only the individual participant, in an environment they are comfortable in, wearing their Southern Football League club shirt. All photographs should be submitted to our Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Director Stephen Hyde, no later than the 31st December 2024, via: sfl.diversity@gmail.com

The best photographs selected to be displayed in a joint FA and Southern Football League equality event in 2025, as well as on the Southern Football League website and media channels.

All photographs should come with a small paragraph detailing the name of the person who is pictured, the club whose shirt they are wearing, and why they feel proud to wear the shirt they have on.

FIXTURES | THE WEEK AHEAD

Pitching In Southern League Premier South

TUESDAY 03 DEC 24

AFC Totton v Chertsey Town
Hanwell Town v Frome Town

SATURDAY 07 DEC 24

Bracknell Town v Sholing
Dorchester Town v Hungerford Town
Marlow v Tiverton Town
Merthyr Town v Basingstoke Town
Poole Town v Frome Town
Swindon Supermarine v Walton & Hersham
Taunton Town v Winchester City

Pitching In Southern League Premier Central

TUESDAY 03 DEC 24

Lowestoft Town v Biggleswade Town

SATURDAY 07 DEC 24

Banbury United v Kettering Town
Bishop's Stortford v Bromsgrove Sporting
Halesowen Town v Stamford
Harborough Town v AFC Sudbury
Hitchin Town v Redditch United
Royston Town v AFC Telford United
Spalding United v Barwell
Stourbridge v Bedford Town
Stratford Town v St Ives Town

Pitching In Southern League Division One South

MONDAY 02 DEC 24

Melksham Town v Helston Athletic

TUESDAY 03 DEC 24

Bishops Cleeve v Thatcham Town
Yate Town v Cribbs

We are extremely proud of the Southern League Goals of the Week Show that David Square and his team work so hard to produce on our behalf each week of the season and we urge clubs to please send your goals footage for use in the show each week. The email address to send your footage to, by 7pm each Tuesday evening, is:
thesouthernfootballleague@gmail.com
The show can be viewed via our Official You Tube Channel from 7pm every Wednesday evening.

Pitching In Southern League Division One South

SATURDAY 07 DEC 24

Bashley v Malvern Town
Cribbs v Evesham United
Didcot Town v Bishops Cleeve
Exmouth Town v Bemerton Heath Harlequins
Falmouth Town AFC v Westbury United
Larkhall Athletic v Helston Athletic
Shaftesbury v Mousehole
Tavistock AFC v Bristol Manor Farm
Thatcham Town v Cinderford Town
Willand Rovers v Melksham Town
Yate Town v Bideford AFC

Pitching In Southern League Division One Central

MONDAY 02 DEC 24

Biggleswade FC v Stotfold

WEDNESDAY 04 DEC 24

Aylesbury United v Barton Rovers

SATURDAY 07 DEC 24

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

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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