

Sports and Hooky get set to put their claims on the line

Spaull hits hat-trick at Addison Road while Brewery Boys retain top spot

By STEVE SMITH

steve.smith@banburyguardian.co.uk
01295 817675

Easington Sports and Hook Norton will be getting to know each other very well over the festive period.

The two sides meet in Wednesday's Oxon Senior Cup tie at The Bourne before the UHLSport Hellenic League Boxing Day derby at Addison Road.

And, with both teams enjoying a good first half to the campaign, the two games should be evenly contested with Sports looking to gain revenge for their defeat at the start of the season.

Mike Spaull completed a hat-trick as Sports cruised to a 9-1 victory against Old Woodstock Town in Saturday's Division One West clash at Addison Road.

Sam Grant broke the deadlock after the Woodstock defence were unable to clear and Sports were soon 2-0 up moments later. Andrew Stidder outpaced the full-back and his cross was flicked on by Craig Robinson to the far post where Spaull slammed the ball into the roof of the net.

Sports threatened with every attack as they shifted the ball around well.

At times, the visitors struggled to get into the game and before they had a chance to threaten Jack Goode's goal they were another goal down.

Spaull was on hand to finish



Easington Sports chairman Richard Meadows and manager Phil Lines at Addison Road, where the new stand was open for the first time on Saturday

ish off another well worked move. Robinson was thwarted by a defender but the ball fell kindly into Spaull's path and his side-foot finish beat the keeper.

In the closing stages of the half Grant grabbed his second goal with a fine turn and swivel at the near post to shoot under the keeper.

Josh Northam should have netted just after the restart

but the ball skidded past him and Stidder took advantage to score. Spaull completed his hat-trick with a low drive after Stidder turned provider.

Tom Smith was next to get on the score sheet with his first senior goal for the club, firing home from 25 yards.

Old Woodstock reduced the arrears through Patrick Beckford after he rounded off a fine move with a good finish

from the edge of the box.

But Robinson's fine solo run was finished off with a shot that squeezed under the keeper before Stidder bagged his second goal following more unselfish play from Northam.

Meanwhile, Hooky kept up their title challenge with a 3-2 victory over Purton.

Dan Reeves gave the Brewery Boys the early lead at The

Bourne and two goals from Steve Howkins put the leaders firmly in charge.

But Anton Stephens reduced the arrears before the break and Shannon Pocock pulled another goal back in the second half to set up a tense finish.

And on Saturday, the leaders will be looking for another three points when they entertain Letcombe at The Bourne.

Making a stand for the next generation

Easington Sports have concluded developments on two phases of improvements at Addison Road, thanks to a £61,336 grant from the Premier League, through the Football Stadia Improvement Fund (FSIF), which is delivered by the Football Foundation.

The UHLSport Hellenic League club was also aided with further funding from Banbury Charities and Cherwell District Council.

The funding has enabled Sports to make significant improvements at Addison Road to meet ground grading standards as well as provide much needed improvements for players of all ages.

Key changes include a mini-grandstand, hard standing, perimeter fencing and two new car parks, which also provide additional parking for all staff at Blessed George Napier School.

Funded with £5.2m each year from the Premier League, the FSIF is the country's largest provider of grants towards projects that help improve lower league grounds in professional and amateur football.

Sports chairman Richard Meadows said: "I'm proud of the achievements of all members of the club who have raised money through fund-raising events and tournaments to pay for the improvements. We have worked tirelessly to raise the funds to make the necessary improvements."

"We have developed a thriving youth section and are providing a facility that benefits all teams as well as enabling the first team to continue to play Hellenic League football."

"Five years ago we set out a development plan to improve the opportunities for young players as well as improving the quality of coaching and facilities. We remain on track and hope the improvements will enable us to progress further."

"We are very excited about the future and are passionate about providing a pathway for talented players to come through into senior football at the club and, perhaps, through to Banbury United."

"We are grateful to all organisations including the Football Foundation, CDC, Banbury Charities and, in particular, Hawkins Construction of Banbury, for their support and construction of mini-grandstand. They have been brilliant throughout the process."

Davis salutes Ardley's performance



Ardley manager Paul Davis was delighted with his side's display

Manager Paul Davis saw Ardley United return from Tuffley Rovers with three more UHLSport Hellenic League points in what he felt was his side's best display so far.

A resilient Ardley outfit won 2-0 in Saturday's premier division clash at Glevum Park, where Leam Howards and James McCarthy got the goals.

Rovers started well, Macaulay Herbert fired wide, Chris Jackson denied Warren Mann as he lined up to shoot and Mark Pritchett fired wide

from the edge of the box.

Ardley's Jack Heap fired over the bar as did Luke Cray from the corner of the box before the visitors took a 21st minute lead. Howards was brought down in the box and he got up to fire home the ensuing spot-kick via the inside of the post.

Rovers hit back strongly, Marcus Foxwell had a shot blocked and Mann fired over from the rebound with Lee Farrow stranded. Shayne Anson saw Farrow tip the ball over the bar and from the en-

suing corner Carl Tappin denied Shayne Bradley with the rebound from Ashley Davies being blocked by Jackson.

Just before the break a low cross from Bradley Cox hit a defender but Howards saw his close range effort cleared.

Just after the restart Tappin again came to the rescue to block another effort from Davies.

Matt Cruse shot just wide before Ardley doubled their advantage in the 72nd minute when McCarthy curled a superb free-kick over the wall

and into the top corner.

Troy Bryan cleared one off the line late on and Cruse saw his shot tipped away by Dave Evans at the other end.

Davis said: "That was our best performance, not in terms of how we played, or the chances we created, but in terms of character and the way we went about our business."

"I'm extremely pleased with our defensive performance, to come to a team that are just below us and keep a clean sheet is very pleasing."