



SHORTWOOD UNITED FOOTBALL CLUB

FOCUS.....

By Harry Ash

Monsoon!

Shortwood 2 Cheltenham Saracens 1 – UHL Hellenic League Division 1

In truly terrible conditions, with biblical rain and a strong wind combining for the majority of the ninety minutes, Shortwood came from behind to beat Cheltenham Saracens, a good reaction to last week's disappointing defeat to Stonehouse.

Wood got off to the worst possible start when Joe Wright fumbled Josh Aldridge's corner into his own net. The conditions were certainly a mitigating factor, but Wright will still have been very disappointed to gift Saracens such an early lead.

Despite the early setback, Wood began to make inroads into the Saracens half in the following minutes. Alfie Bradshaw broke away down the left and crossed towards Jai Underwood, who controlled well but sent his half-volley over.

A few minutes later it was Asamoah Afriyie's turn to be released down the left, with Bradshaw this time on the end of the cross, but his header was well saved by Alex Kovacevic. The ball was then recycled back out to the left, where Harvey White sent it back in, but Elliot Martin couldn't connect properly with his head. The visitors' only other chance of the half came in the closing moments, Wright once again dropping a cross but the subsequent shot was smothered by a covering defender.

Saracens started the second half how they ended the first, coming close to doubling their lead. Former Wood fullback Essa Sabally squared for Tom Bound but he could only shoot wide of the near post. Wood quickly reassessed their position as the dominant force though, and Bradshaw really should have equalised when Harley Mulraney's corner found him completely alone eight yards out, but his header and rebound shot were both blocked, before Afriyie's follow-up was also smothered by the desperate Saracens rear-guard.

With twenty minutes to play, Wood finally found an equaliser. White's throw was well won in the air by Afriyie, finding Underwood. Bradshaw chose his moment perfectly to charge forward from deep, Underwood released him in on goal, and he sent Kovacevic the wrong way to make it 1-1.

Five minutes later the comeback was complete. Mulraney was on hand to clear Saracens' free kick, and Bradshaw did well to win his duel on halfway. Travis Cooke pulled off a lovely flicked pass into the path of fellow substitute Jack Gardner, who used his pace to streak away before squeezing his shot just inside the left-hand post.

Cooke himself nearly pulled off a carbon copy of Gardner's finish a few minutes later, but, having been found by Martin's pinpoint through ball, he sent his effort agonisingly wide.

A nervy final ten minutes ensued, with Saracens' final chance coming through substitute Dequon Ebanks, but his square ball for a would-be tap-in was brilliantly blocked by Joe Tryner.

A very good win, and two very nicely constructed team goals to boot. Wood's next assignment comes in the GFA Challenge Trophy, hosting Newent on Tuesday.

Shortwood: Wright, Blacker (Royer), White, Mulraney, Tryner, King E, Cronin (Cooke), Underwood, Bradshaw, Martin, Afriyie (Gardner)

Star Player – Harvey White

