

British Gas Business Football League - Premier Division – Saturday, 12th January 2008

Halesowen Town 2 Hitchin Town 1

Shane Paul broke struggling Hitchin's hearts by firing home an 88th minute winner to record Halesowen's 400th Southern League win in a game brought forward by an hour due to floodlight problems.

The Yeltz started brightly and in the 12th minute Darren Caskey played a fine ball out to the right wing for Paul to cleverly turn his marker before picking out Dean Brennan but Hitchin escaped as Brennan's shot struck the foot of the post. The Canaries then enjoyed a good spell with goalkeeper Mark Osborn tipping away a curling 17th minute free-kick from Paul Armstrong. Osborn then managed to drive Owen Beale wide in a one-on-one after the home defence was carved open two minutes later.

But Halesowen regained the upper hand when a 24th minute cross from Rodney Hicks was beaten away by goalkeeper Ricky Perks and Perks held onto a shot from Zema Abbey seconds later. Defender Ricky Miller then sliced a clearance off his own goal-line from Abbey's header on the half-hour. Halesowen went on to take a 33rd minute lead when **ABBEY** glanced home a header from Caskey's corner against the club who launched him onto a league career.

But Halesowen failed to build on their lead and once again allowed the opposition back into the game by failing to keep a clean sheet. Wayne Mills blasted over the bar in the 49th minute as Halesowen failed to live up to expectations by barely creating a chance in the whole of the second period bossed by the visitors.

Hitchin were gifted an equaliser on 54 minutes with defender Dennis Pearce at fault for losing the ball to Mills and although his shot struck the post, Richard **PRINGLE** was on hand to tap home the rebound. A good move then ended with James Nash lofting the ball high over the bar from 15 yards after 64 minutes. Three minutes later another Nash shot was deflected wide for a corner by Stuart Pierpoint – who will now serve a one-match suspension against Merthyr Tydfil for previously accumulating five yellow cards.

Tricky Ikechi Anya made his Yeltz debut from the substitute's bench by replacing Hicks during the second period and Brennan was replaced was Nathaniel Waite shortly after striking across the face of goal. However, former club-captain Nick Amos remained frozen out once again on the substitute's bench. With six minutes remaining David Deeney floated a dangerous free-kick into Halesowen's six-yard box but Osborn collected and at the other end Anya weaved down the left wing but Waite put the ball over the bar with an overhead kick.

But Hitchin's plucky resistance was finally broken in the 88th minute when Caskey's corner was only partly cleared and **PAUL's** low drive took a nasty deflection to leave goalkeeper Perks stranded.

Halesowen Town: Osborn; Lycett, Perpetuini, Pearce, Pierpoint, Denny, Paul, Caskey, Abbey, Brennan (Waite 66), Hicks (Anya 57). Unused Subs: Amos, Hamilton, Hill.

Hitchin Town: Perks; Deeney, Ellams, Williams, Gilbert, Pepper, Mills, Beale, Pringle, Armstrong, Miller (Nash 52). Unused Subs: Kenneford, Edgerley, Hay, Bennett.

Referee: N. Day (Stoke-on-Trent)

Attendance: 420

Booked: Lycett (89), Williams (90)

Sponsors' Man of the Match: Shane Paul