



Midland Football League Newsletter

10th August 2016

League News

Following the results in the Extra-preliminary round, the draw for the Preliminary Round of THE FA Cup is as follows:-

FA Cup Preliminary Round

Saturday August 20th

Coleshill Town vs Dudley Sports

Bedworth United vs **Rocester**

Kidsgrove Athletic vs **Lye Town**

Coventry United or **Shawbury United** vs Lichfield City

Hereford vs **Alvechurch**

Rugby Town vs **Bromsgrove Sporting**

Highgate United vs **Boldmere St Michaels**

Sporting Khalsa vs Romulus

Chasetown vs **Brocton**

Westfields vs **Tivdale**

Heanor Town vs **Long Eaton United**

Leicester Road vs Harborough Town

Loughborough University vs Gresley

There was a heartwarming story from last weekend's FA Cup. A young lad who phoned up **Lye Town** in pre season and said could he join the club for he wanted to play football. He joined in training and looked very raw. He played the first friendly and scored the winner and so Lye persevered and he continued to play a part in the other friendlies. On Saturday he played his first ever FA cup tie. Lye Town went 2-0 down to AFC Wulfrunians but he said I'll turn this round and he did getting a hat trick. The player is Jack Till a Black Country Gem – real Roy of the Rovers stuff. Well done Jack and well done Lye for giving him the chance.

The draw has been made for the opening round of the Les James Challenge Cup

Alcester Town vs Boldmere Sports & Social Falcons

Bloxwich Town vs Droitwich Spa

Coton Green vs AFC Solihull

Fairfield Villa vs Enville Athletic

Leamington Hibernian vs Shipston Excelsior

Montpellier vs NKF Burbage

Feckenham vs Sutton United

Alvis Sporting Club vs Barton United

Inkberrow vs FC Stratford

Coventrians vs Knowle

Moors Academy vs Continental Star

Redditch Borough vs Castle Vale Town

Smithswood Firs vs Paget Rangers

Barnt Green Spartak vs Hampton

Byes: **Northfield Town, Earlswood Town**

The draw has been made for the first round of The President's Cup

Coton Green vs Leamington Hibernian

Feckenham vs Droitwich Spa

Paget Rangers vs Fairfield Villa

Knowle vs Smithswood Firs

Redditch Borough vs Hampton

Bloxwich Town vs Barnt Green Spartak

Sutton united vs Alvis Sporting Club

Continental Star vs Earlswood Town

The draw has been made for the first round of The Challenge Vase

Boldmere Sports & Social Falcons vs Enville Athletic

Moors Academy vs Shipston Excelsior

Barton united vs Castle Vale town

AFC Solihull vs Montpellier

NKF Burbage vs FC Stratford

Northfield Town vs Inkberrow

Byes: Alcester Town, Coventrians

Travels of the Press Officer

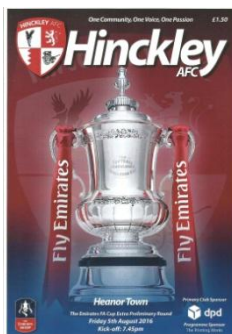
Friday August 5th

FA Cup Extra Preliminary Round (1)

Hinckley AFC 1 Heanor Town 1

An early start to the FA Cup campaign means a Friday evening game due to the Scarecrow festival in Heather (<http://www.heatherscarecrowfestival.com/>). Both sides are expected to be amongst the challengers in their respective divisions this season so a tight encounter was anticipated. A pleasant summer's evening was soon replaced by torrential rain just to remind us all that the football season had started. With St Johns Park looking immaculate, the addition of the new seats in the main stand making a big difference, a very healthy crowd greeted the two sides. The home side made all the early running with the pace of Sean Williams and Darious Darkin causing problems for the Heanor defence. The first effort on target came from Sean Williams in the 4th minute following an initial run by Darkin. Heanor's first attempt on goal came from Joe Naylor but his shot was blocked. Heanor almost gifted Hinckley an opening when a back pass from Greg Marriott was too short but Joe McCormack managed to clear off the boot of Williams. At the other end, a mistake by James Williams let in Arash Abdollahi and his cross was met by Naylor but deflected for a corner. Abdollahi was off target with a header when well placed. In the 33rd minute an excellent move from the home side finished with Rico Taylor forcing a decent save from McCormack. Hinckley took the lead that their first half performance deserved in the 39th minute. A corner from the right from Taylor was headed powerfully home by skipper Ryan Paddock.

More was expected from Heanor after the break but it was Hinckley who still looked the most likely. Good control from Taylor created an opening but his shot was comfortably held and then a kinking run from the same player had no end result as Heanor scrambled it clear. The introduction of Nathan Benger for Heanor added more physicality to the front line and the visitors began to push the home side back. The equaliser came in the 65th minute. Kieran Debrouwer managed to get on the wrong side of the Hinckley defence and when his shot was saved by Tom Cross it fell to Elliott Reeves who hammered home for a goal on his full debut. It was not the visitors in the ascendancy but the home defence stood firm with Jamal Clarke a growing presence. With 10 minutes left, Naylor blasted over the bar when in a decent position. A free kick from Cory Bowler was floated into the box and Benger's header was deflected wide for a corner. Hinckley went close to regaining the lead when a fine cross from Shaquille Lee was inches away from being converted by David Blenkinsop. The final chance fell to Benger for Heanor but his header was off target and the two sides must do it all again next Wednesday at The Town Ground.



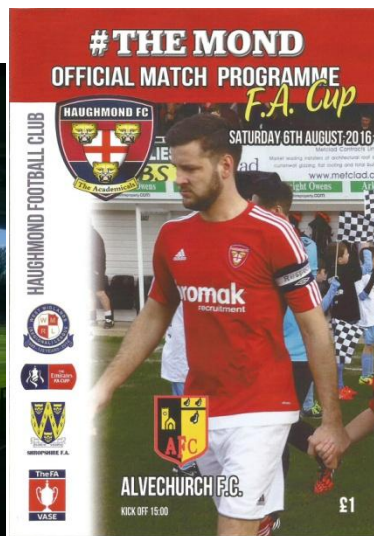
Saturday August 6th

FA Cup Extra-Preliminary Round (2)

Haughmond 0 Alvechurch 2

Haughmond, from Shrewsbury, were making their debut in the FA cup with last season's Premier Division runner-up, Alvechurch, the visitors. Haughmond play in the immaculate surroundings of the Shrewsbury Sports Centre, facilities a lot of sides would be envious of. With the sun beating down and the pitch looking perfect, a decent crowd entered the cage for what promised to be an enthralling cup-tie. Alvechurch took control from the whistle but it took 8 minutes for their first attempt, Josh March wide of the mark following a cross from Tom Turton. Two minutes later, March curled a shot just over the bar and the same player was wide with a glancing header in the 18th minute following an inch perfect cross from Zack Foster. For all their ossession, Alvechurch were failing to work Sam Jones in the Haughmond goal. Jordan Nadat did hit the target on the half hour mark but it was straight at the keeper. Haughmond's first attempt came from a mistake by Foster who was robbed by Dave Howarth. From a narrow angle, the former Shrewsbury Town man saw his cross blocked by Paul Evans. Nadat missed a gilt edged opportunity for Alvechurch, skewing a shot wide when played in by March. On the stroke of half-time, Sam Jones was forced into a decent save as March raced through the Haughmond defence.

Three minutes into the second half, Alvechurch came close to scoring. A cross from Connor Deards was flicked goalwards by Nadat but Jones made a decent save. The opening goal of the game came in the 55th minute when Nadat raced through and sent a left-footed shot into the bottom corner. It was all Alvechurch with haughmond struggling to get out of their own half. Nadat curled a shot wide while March blasted over from a Turton corner. Nadat again flashed a shot wide as Alvechurch continued to press for a second. With 6 minutes left, Haughmond were close to an equaliser. A corner from the left was played into the path of Steve Hole who's shot was inches wide of the post. In the final minute, Josh Sarmiento was adjudged to have been fouled in the box. Zack Foster stepped up and converted the penalty to seal the tie for Alvechurch.



Tuesday August 9th

FA Cup Extra Preliminary Round Replay (3)

Wolverhampton Casuals 1 Lichfield City 2

A five minute drive from home gets me to Brinsford Lane, the home of West Midlands League Wolverhampton Casuals. Tonight's replay with Lichfield City came after a 0-0 draw on Saturday with Cassies missing a second half penalty. Matches with Casuals tend to be full blooded affairs and this was no different. The first chance of the game fell to Casuals in the first minute but Alex Allen volleyed wide. Casuals were having the better of the early play and Jay Holcroft had a shot blocked by the Lichfield defence. Lichfield's first meaningful effort came from Craig Marshall whose 25 yard shot cannoned off the chest of casuals' keeper, Vitor Pinheiro to safety. Pinheiro made a fine save on the half hour mark to keep the scores level. An excellent cross from Dan Baxter was met at the far post Marshall and somehow Pinheiro saved at point blank range. It wasn't the same at the other end as Lichfield gifted Casuals the lead in the 35th minute. A back pass from Joe Clarke was missed by Amrik Virdee, the Lichfield keeper and he stood motionless as the ball crossed the line for the opening goal. Casuals had opportunities to increase their lead before the break but Jordan Uppal headed over and Ian Boswell shot high into the trees when well placed.

Lichfield came out for the second half on the front foot. Liam Holt flashed a shot wide of the target while Marshall blasted wide. In the 50th minute, a free-kick from Luke Chapman was headed wide by Marshall. Four minutes later the same two players combined for the same result, Marshall firing over the bar. Pinheiro mad a wonderful double save in the 59th minute to keep Lichfield at bay. Marshall' shot was on target and beaten away and when Holt hit the rebound, the keeper was there again. In the 71st minute, tempers boiled over as a poor challenge by Jon Holcroft for Casuals ended in the first appearance of handbags this season! Casuals almost clicnhed victory in the 77th minute. Ashley Evans found space and his shot took a defelction but Virdee reacted well and palmed the ball to safety. Lichfield were back on terms in the 81st minute. Good work down the right from Jordan Evans teed up Marshall who hit a low shot into the far corner. The turnaround was completed two minuted from time when a poor defensive header by casuals was met on the volley by Clarke and he made no mistake giving Pinheiro no chance. There was still time for Jay Holcroft to shoot just wide but Lichfield had done enough to get through to the next round.



Wednesday August 10th

FA Cup Extra Preliminary Round replay (4)

Shawbury United 0 Coventry United 1 (Abandoned after 87 minutes)

A second FA Cup trip into Shropshire to the town of Wem for the replay between Premier Division new boys, Shawbury United and Coventry United. This was my first visit to the Butler Sports Ground and my first impressions were positive. The main stand which forms the back of the social club has plenty of seating and a decent view of the pitch. These two sides drew 1-1 on Sunday and most of the supporters were expecting another close encounter. Shawbury were the first to show but Stuart Ellis' shot was well off target. Kai Williams, for Coventry, whipped a cross from the left but it was just in front of Brian Ndlovu. Kieran Dovey managed to get the wrong side of the Coventry defence and set-up Liam Brant and his shot was saved by Richard Morris. Midway through the first half, a Josh O'Grady free-kick for Coventry was straight at Matthew Bullard. Marc Stallard missed a decent chance for Shawbury heading wide from a corner. O'Grady was the main threat for Coventry and in the space of 5 minutes at the end of the first half he had 4 shots blocked and a volley over the bar.

The second half began with Coventry well on top. A fierce drive from Kevin Thornton was palmed over by Bullard. In the 50th minute, Bullard excelled with a fine double save to thwart Jean Dakouri and Kai Williams. O'Grady continued to cause problems but he wasted one effort when trying to make the perfect opening instead of letting fly. In the 63rd minute, Coventry's pressure told and they took a deserved lead. A cross from the left by O'Grady was headed powerfully home at the far post by Chris Cox. Two minutes later, O'Grady's curling effort was saved by Bullard. Shawbury were denied an equaliser in the 76th minute by a wonderful save from Morris. Ellis created space and hit a superb shot which Morris tipped onto the crossbar. Within a minute, the woodwork saved Coventry again when Stallard rattled the bar. Stallard should have equalised in the 80th minute but his shot from Steve Faux's excellent cross was turned away by Morris. Coventry substitute Adam Bilic had a shot deflected wide for a corner. With three minutes left on the clock, the game was brought to a halt due to a serious injury to Liam Brant. With Brant receiving attention and being kept still by the physios, the game was held up for 53 minutes. The referee deemed that there was 8 minutes left to play and that there was time to play those 8 minutes (The floodlights have to be switched off at 2230). With the game about to restart, the ground was plunged into darkness as the lights went out. With the clock at 2223, the hoped for conclusion was not to be and the referee had no option other than to abandon the game. The most surreal of endings.



Review

FA Cup

The opening game of the weekend saw **Hinckley** and **Heanor Town** draw 1-1 in a competitive cup tie. A double from Joe Halsall eased **Boldmere St Michaels** into the next round with a 3-0 win at AFC Bridgnorth. **Quorn** went down by the odd goal in a seven goal thriller at Ashby Ivanhoe. Two goals from Nathan Dale looked to be sending Quorn through but the home side bounced back with a winner from James Parslow. League newcomers, **St Andrews**, bowed out of the competition losing 2-0 at Blaby and Whestone Athletic. Veteran striker Paul McMahon scored an 85th winner for **Brocton** as they beat fellow Premier Division side **Walsall Wood** 2-1 at Silkmore Lane. **Coleshill Town** took a 2-0 lead inside the first half hour at home to West Midlands League Cradley Town but the Black Country side came back to take the game to a replay on Tuesday. **Highgate United** scored 5 second half goals to progress at **Coventry Sphinx**. Both teams were reduced to ten men before Jak Jeys scored two quick goals to send Gate on their way. A Tom Bates goal in the first half for **Nuneaton Griff** was cancelled out by Dudley Sports and the two sides meet again at The Pingles Stadium on Wednesday. **Alvechurch** scored two second half goals to see off Haughmond to set-up a mouth watering tie at Edgar Street against Hereford. **Bromsgrove Sporting** continued their excellent pre-season form with a 3-0 victory at **Heath Hayes**. **Lichfield City** and Wolverhampton Casuals must meet again on Tuesday at Brinsford Lane following a goalless draw, Casuals missing a penalty in the second half. There was remarkable game at The University Stadium as **Loughborough University** and Shirebrook Town drew 4-4. Shirebrook were 3-1 up with 15 minutes left however the Students drew level in the 90th minute. Shirebrook regained the lead 6 minutes into time added on only for Loughborough to equalise within a minute through Jeremiah Dasaolu to take the game to a replay. **AFC Wulfrunians** took a 2-0 lead against **Lye Town** at Castlecroft but a hat-trick from newcomer Jack Till gave Lye the win, with the winner coming five minutes from time. **Rochester** were victorious at Malvern Town, 2-1 the margin. **Long Eaton United** are also through to the next round as they beat Oadby Town 2-1 with **goals from Tom Marshall and Kevin Hemagou**. **Luke Kingsley Smith was on target for Leicester Road** as they drew 1-1 at Retford United. Matty Stenson missed a penalty late on for Leicester Road and the two sides meet again on Tuesday night. Shepshed Dynamo suffered a disappointing home defeat against AFC Mansfield going down 4-0, former Aldershot Town winger Ryan Williams scoring twice. Former Stafford Rangers and Leek Town striker Dan Cope scored a 90th minute equaliser for Hanley Town at **Sporting Khalsa**. Khalsa had taken early lead through the prolific Craig Bannister but the two sides must meet again on Tuesday evening in the Potteries. There was a seven goal thriller at Walshes Meadow with a stoppage time goal from Craig Jones settling the game in **Westfields** favour in a 4-3 win over **Stourport Swifts**. **Tividale** raced into a 2-0 lead inside 8 minutes at home to Wolverhampton Sporting Community but had to endure a nervy finale as they held on to win 2-1. **Coventry United** and **Shawbury United** must meet again after a 1-1 draw at Sphinx Drive on Sunday. Josh O'Grady gave the home side the lead but an equaliser from James Askey took the game to a replay at Wem on Wednesday evening.

FA Cup Replays

Sporting Khalsa got the better of Hanley Town in their replay winning 3-1 in the Potteries. **Coleshill Town** also progressed beating Cradley Town 4-1 with Luke Barlone scoring a hat-trick. **Loughborough University** overcame Shirebrook Town 3-0 following their dramatic late equaliser on Saturday. There was an excellent win for **Leicester Road** as they beat Retford United 4-2 courtesy of a Matty Stenson hat-trick. **Lichfield City** had to come from behind to beat Wolverhampton Casuals, Joe Clarke scoring for both sides. **Heanor Town** are through to the next round with Nathan Bengner scoring 3 in a 5-1 win over **Hinckley AFC**. **Nuneaton Griff** went out, beaten on penalties by Dudley Sports after it finished 3-3 after extra time. There was a dramatic finish in the replay between **Shawbury United** and **Coventry United**. With the visitors 1-0 ahead, the game was stopped with three minutes on the clock due to a serious injury to Shawbury's Liam Brant. After a 53 minute delay, the game was about to restart when the lights went out forcing the referee to abandon the game. The two sides will have to do it all over again.

Preview

Premier Division

On Saturday, the Premier Division season gets underway with a full round of matches. **AFC Wulfrunians** open their campaign at home to **Boldmere St Michaels**. The two teams had contrasting results in the FA Cup last weekend and the Mikes will start slight favourites. Last year's runners-up, **Alvechurch** start their campaign at home to another of last season's leading clubs, **Heanor Town**. Both clubs look strong again this season and this is a tough encounter to kick off the season. **Coleshill Town** welcome **Lye Town** to Pack Meadow where there were goals a plenty last season. With a season on the 3G under their belts, a lot is expected of Coleshill this season. **Coventry Sphinx** had a disappointing afternoon in the FA Cup last weekend and they will be hoping to put things right when they welcome **Brocton** to Sphinx Drive. **Long Eaton United** welcome **Stourport Swifts** to Grange Park with a side that looks capable of challenging for honours. Swifts bowed out of the FA Cup last week at home to Westfields and will be hoping for a strong start to the campaign. **Loughborough University** and **Highgate United** scored 9 goals between them last Saturday and on the bowling green of The University Stadium this should be a superb game. **Shawbury United** begin life in the MFL with a home game against **Quorn**. The West Midlands League champions will be an unknown quantity for many of the MFL clubs and visitors Quorn, after a disappointing campaign last season, will set the marker. **Shepshed Dynamo** are well fancied to challenge this season although last week's FA Cup defeat will have hurt. Visitors **Rocester** won well away from home last week and will be hoping to build on last season's mid table finish. There is a huge opening game at the Aspray Arena as two of the expected challengers go head to head on opening day. **Sporting Khalsa** had a great first season in the MFL and will want to improve on their third placed finish. Visitors **Coventry United** have quickly moved up the leagues and last season's Division 1 champions have made some excellent signings for their debut at Step 5. **St Andrews** begin their life in the MFL with a home game against **Westfields**. St Andrews won the East Midlands Counties League by 7 points scoring 115 goals in the process and are expected to be a force in the MFL. Westfields had a poor season last time out but some notable recruits could see them back at the top end of the table. **Tividale** return to the Midland football League following relegation from Step 4. They welcome **Walsall Wood** to The Beeches on Saturday in a game that is very hard to call. Tividale have a mixture of youth and experience while Walsall Wood, a top 6 side from last season, have added some quality to their squad

There are a full round of midweek fixtures:

Tuesday 16th August

AFC Wulfrunians vs Stourport Swifts

Brocton vs Tividale

Coventry United vs Rocester

Highgate United vs Shepshed Dynamo

Long Eaton United vs Boldmere St Michaels

Loughborough University vs Lye Town

St Andrews vs Alvechurch

Wednesday 17th Augusts

Heanor Town vs Coleshill Town

Quorn vs Coventry Sphinx

Shawbury United vs Walsall Wood

Westfields vs Sporting Khalsa

Division 1

A full programme in Division to start the campaign on Saturday. **Atherstone Town** welcome **Stafford Town** to Sheepy Road and much is expected from the Adders this season. Stafford have had a change in management and have pretty much a new squad which will be an unknown quantity as the season begins. Last year's runnersup **Bromsgrove Sporting** start as red hot favourites to clinch promotion this season. Their summer recruitment has been excellent and they start the campaign at home to **Southam United** who were reprieved from relegation at the end of last season. **Cadbury Athletic** welcome **Pelsall Villa** to the TSA Sports ground in their opener. Cadbury started well last season and the same again could set them up for a superb season. Pelsall struggled last term but a close season reprieve allows them to remain in Division 1 and start again. **Heath Hayes** made a slow start to last season but came good after Christmas. Visitors **Heather St Johns** looked destined for relegation for most of the season but a good finish turned their season around. If they can take that momentum into this season, it could be exciting times at St Johns park. **Hinckley AFC** are always tipped to do well and this season is no exception. They have recruited well and their performance against premier Division Heanor Town last week gave huge cause for optimism. **Littleton** are first up at St Johns Park and they too will be hoping to progress from last season's mid-table finish. **Leicester Road** had a superb first season at Step 6 and will be aiming for promotion. **Coventry Copsewood** are the visitors on Saturday and they can never be discounted. **Pershore Town** have been busy over the summer bringing back a number of former Pershore players to strengthen the squad. Visitors **Nuneaton Griff** were superb last season and that success has meant that a number of the players have been snapped up by other clubs. Whether Griff can reach last season's heights, only time will tell. **Racing Club Warwick** have seen major improvements to their Townsend Meadow ground over the summer. They welcome **Bolehall Swifts** in the opener and both sides finished last season in good form. **Studley** welcome **Lichfield City** to the Beehive. Both clubs would have been disappointed with their finishes last season but both will be optimistic ahead of the season. **Uttoxeter Town** return to the MFL and welcome promoted **Chelmsley Town** to Oldfield Sports Centre. How will Uttoxeter fare on their return and how will Chelmsley cope with the step up? An intriguing start.

There are a full round of midweek fixtures:

Tuesday 16th August

Bolehall Swifts vs Lichfield City

Chelmsley Town vs Pershore Town

Heather St Johns vs Coventry Copsewood

Pelsall Villa vs Leicester Road

Southam United vs Cadbury Athletic

Studley vs Racing Club Warwick

Uttoxeter town vs Nuneaton Griff

Wednesday 17th August

Atherstone Town vs Heath Hayes

Littleton vs Bromsgrove Sporting

Stafford Town vs Hinckley AFC (at Stafford Rangers FC)

Division 2

Barnt Green Spartak get their Division 2 campaign under way with a home game against **Sutton United**. Both sides were comfortably in the middle of the table last season and will have ambitions to challenge at the top end of the table. New club **Bloxwich Town**, taking over from Rostance Edwards, welcome promoted **Leamington Hibernian** to the Red Lion Ground. With the momentum with Hibs from last season, it would be no surprise to see them mount a challenge. **Droitwich Spa** challenged for the title all the way through the season finishing a creditable third. They begin with a home game against **Coton Green**, who finished 7th last season. **Fairfield Villa** finished one off the bottom last season but have added to their squad over the summer to allow them to challenge. Visitors **Continental Star** finished bottom of the Premier Division and chose to drop two divisions. They will have a young and exciting squad and should be a pleasure to watch. **Hampton** open up with a home tie against **Feckenham**. The visitors struggled more than most with the weather last season and they will be hoping for a more clement winter. **Redditch Borough** begin their first season in Division 2 with a home game against last season's 4th paced **Paget Rangers**. This game will take place at Littleton FC as The Valley is not yet ready following the installation of a 3G pitch. Both sides finished the last campaign in super form and are expected to be amongst the front runners this season. **Smithswood Firs**, promoted from Division 3, begin their season against mid-table **Knowle**. Smithswood have a strong looking squad and could well take Division 2 by storm.

Tuesday August 16th

Coton Green vs Fairfield Villa

Earlswood Town vs Redditch Borough (1830)

Feckenham vs Droitwich Spa (1830)

Smithswood Firs vs Paget Rangers (1830)

Sutton United vs Continental Star (1830)

Wednesday 17th August

Alvis Sporting Club vs Bloxwich Twon (1930)

Hampton vs Barnt Green Spartak (1830)

Knowle vs Leamington Hibernian (1830)

Division 3

Division 3 could be a really exciting place to be this season with the addition of new faces alongside some of last season's strong performers. **AFC Solihull** endured a challenging introduction to the MFL. One year on, expect them to be much improved as they welcome **Northfield Town** to Tudor Grange. **Alcester Town** spent most of the season near the top of the table only to miss out in the run-in. They welcome league newcomers **NKF Burbage** to Old Stratford road on Saturday. Four promotions in 6 seasons indicates that NKF should be a force in the MFL. **Barton United** had a successful season finishing with silverware and a top 6 finish. Visitors **FC Stratford** finished just above Barton last season and both should be there or thereabouts. A great game to start the season. **Boldmere Sports & Social Falcons** welcome **Shipston Excelsior** to Boldmere Road in their opening game. Shipston acquitted themselves well in their first season and a late run of victories kept them in the promotion mix. Can they build in it? League newcomers **Castle Vale Town** welcome **Coventrians** to their Vale Stadium home. With a strong youth set-up at both clubs, expect to see some exciting young talent gracing the MFL. Two new teams go head to head at Badsey as **Montpellier** host **Moors Academy**. The home side have had some excellent results in pre-season and look like the team to beat this season. They couldn't ask for a more difficult opening with the youngsters from the Solihull Moors Academy.

Reserves

Rocester vs Gresley (Challenge trophy)

Coton Green vs Continental Star (Challenge trophy)

Romulus vs Lichfield City (League)

Tipton Town vs Brocton (League)