

St. Neots Town Football Club  
Season 2006-07 Match Reports

UCL Premier Division  
**St Neots 3 Holbeach 2**

After playing well for over an hour and deserving what looked like an automatic winning 3-0 advantage St Neots contrived to stretch the nerves of their supporters to breaking point as they did their best to snatch defeat from the jaws of victory. Holbeach totally dominated the last fifteen minutes looking capable of scoring from every attack and although St Neots held out for three priceless points they need to analyse why their game collapsed in the final stages of the match. Their victory came courtesy of a first class performance from young striker Ryan Francis making only his fifth start for the side. He scored twice and made the third goal to open up his account for the Saints and it would have been unfair if he had not finished on the winning side. Also worthy of special mention were defenders Tom Moran and Jimmy Dillnut but they will be happy to forget the final phase of the match.

The opening twenty minutes were disappointing as both sides struggled to come to terms with the bone hard surface and the swirling wind. With the elements in their favour St Neots were soon enjoying the greater share of possession and Craig Reynolds brought an early save from visiting keeper Kevin Cross. At the other end Martyn Patching did well to back peddle to pushing a dipping header from Ross Nichols over the bar and Baz Belgrave might have had a penalty. Patching also did well to fingertip a low shot by Omar Joof away for a corner but St Neots deservedly went ahead after 33 minutes when Tom Moran up for a set piece headed on a Russell Lawes cross and Ryan Francis stretched to head the ball over Cross for his first goal. Six minutes later a superbly created and taken second goal extended the lead. Belgrave was surrounded by defenders but showed fine skill to release Francis who kept his head to claim the important second goal.

With the wind behind them Holbeach looked a more positive side after the break and both Ian Dunn and Joof failed to take openings. Then after 62 minutes Lawes and John Coley combined of the left and Ryan Francis' low cross towards the far post was turned into his own net by Adam Jackson. A double substitution by the visitors with an extra player pushed forward transformed the last twenty minutes of the match. Defensive slackness after 75 minutes allowed Dunn to cross to unmarked substitute Tom Treacher just five yards from goal and he applied the simple finishing touch to give Holbeach a foothold back in the match. St Neots unexpectedly capitulated and six minutes later Treacher became the provider with a low cross that found Dunn who bulldozed the ball into the net. The last nine minutes plus around six minutes added time seemed like an eternity as Holbeach threw the ball forward time and time again and with three added minutes gone defender Dean Elston saw a fierce shot rebound from a post following a corner. However St Neots held out and moved up to 13<sup>th</sup> place in the table – their highest placing so far this season.

**St Neots:** Martyn Patching, Jason Darvall, Russell Lawes (Mark Barry 79 mins), Tom Moran, Jimmy Dillnut, Ashley Deverall (Ed Huckle 83 mins), Barrington Belgrave, Martin Williams, John Coley, Ryan Francis, Craig Reynolds.

**Goals:** Ryan Francis (2) 33 & 39 mins, Own goal 62 mins.

**Subs not used:** Cameron Facey, Mark Franklin & Ryan Hunt

**Saints MOM:** Ryan Francis