

St. Neots Town Football Club  
Season 2007-08 Match Reports

UCL Premier Division  
**Sleaford 1 St Neots Town 1**

It is a strange irony that one rare mistake by goalkeeper Roy Bloxham effectively cost St Neots two points at Sleaford for he was probably St Neots man of the match in a below par performance for he produced three stunning saves to deny the new boys further goals. Although St Neots undefeated record remained intact Manager Scott Houghton was quick to acknowledge that his team had not played well – ‘better to have played badly and drawn than to have played well and lost’ was his cryptic comment. Sleaford have taken several matches to find their Premier Division feet and confidence but on this showing they will hold their own in the higher division. So St Neots relinquished their hold on the top spot and there were signs that the Manager has still not decided which his best line up is with three substitutes introduced and several players switching roles in the second half.

Barrington Belgrave had an early shot comfortably saved by home keeper Andrew Scott but at the other end St Neots had two early warnings of the task they faced. Firstly Gary Holderness’ pace took him behind the St Neots defence but he could not pull his cross back far enough to set up a colleague and then Matt Lunn exchanged passes with Carl Sedlan and only a fine low save by Bloxham prevented a goal. Then without having really found a rhythm St Neots found themselves in front as Ryan Francis rose almost unchallenged to power a header into the net from an Arin Fehmi corner to give him his first goal of the season. Gary Holderness once again took on the St Neots defence to bring another smart save from Bloxham whilst at the other end Tony Russell saw a shot blocked from a Mark Franklin corner. After 24 minutes the scores were levelled from a Kris Jones cross. Bloxham elected to leave his line in an attempt to gather the ball but inexplicably he changed his mind and was left in no mans land five yards off his line as Mick Stones looped a header over him and into the net. Belgrave was denied a very good shout for a penalty when he was bundled over in the area and the half ended with Paul Ward heading over the bar for Sleaford when he should have got his header on target.

Manager Houghton knew he had to inject a greater urgency into his side as well as plug the worrying defensive gaps and after the break he introduced the defensively minded Mark Barry for Fehmi. With three minutes Barry had been booked for his first tackle and then the referee ignored what looked like an obvious penalty when Steve Kuhne was blatantly pushed in the back. Now in midfield Francis sent a free kick just over the bar and with more than half an hour left Houghton gambled further using his two remaining substitutes in a bid to pep his side. With Russell Lawes sweeping and the dominant Jon Hoggett in midfield St Neots showed some improvement but created too few clear chances. Francis directed a David Fisk cross over the bar and Steve Kuhne’s first real attempt on goal was comfortably saved by Scott. In the last ten minutes Sleaford could have sneaked a wining goal. Bloxham produced the save of the match to push a Stones header over the bar, Jon Machin got the ball in the net but was denied a goal because Bloxham had been fouled and finally goalkeeper and a defender lost the ball after a poor back pass and only a great last ditch clearance by Lawes ensured that St Neots returned home with a point.

**Saints:** Bloxham, Finch, Russell, Hoggett, Buckland, Belgrave, Franklin, Reynolds, Kuhne, Francis, Fehmi.

**Subs:** Barry (for Fehmi 46 mins), Lawes (for Reynolds 57 mins), Fisk (for Franklin 57 mins), Murray & Houghton

**Scorer:** Francis (9 mins)

**MOM:** Roy Bloxham