

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

UCL Premier Division
Blackstones 2 St Neots Town 2

It was very much honours even as St Neots maintained their unbeaten away league record and Blackstones preserved their unbeaten at home league record but that bland summing up masks an excellent attacking match full of good football and with quarter neither asked nor given. It was thrill a minute for the most part and either side could have won but Blackstones conceded a two goal advantage and will regard this as two points lost. St Neots rounded off a three match run against championship challenging sides with seven points out of nine since Christmas and they will feel that their determination and character were fully vindicated by the result. They now have two matches against mid table opposition before Blackstones visit Rowley Park for the return match that will be a vital encounter for sides. With Tony Russell injured and Mark Barry suspended St Neots introduced new signing Luke McElroy at full back and he seemed to fit in very well.

St Neots were first out of the blocks and they could have been in front after thirty seconds when a long cross from Paul Bloss found skipper Jon Hoggett at the far post and although his shot beat the home keeper Robbie Blowers was well placed to clear off the line. In subsequent St Neots attacks Kevin Byrne lobbed weakly at Ian Flavell after good work by Steve Dogbe and Hoggett and then Bloss took a return pass to get in a shot that was just a foot wide. Danny Marlow still searching for his first St Neots goal then saw Flavell twist to turn his shot over for a corner and with twenty minutes gone Blackstones had not produced a worthwhile shot on goal. McElroy sliced a clearance over his own bar as the home side began to show but it was against the run of play after 22 minutes when the home side went ahead. The goal came from a Dan Cotton corner and Phil Stebbings was allowed to dart unmarked from the penalty spot to head home at the near post with St Neots defenders looking accusingly at one another. St Neots counter attacked quickly and Rocco headed wide but within eight minutes things were looking black for St Neots when the home side doubled their lead. The goal came from a bizarre free kick award when Mark Burrows and David Fisk collided and with no Blackstones player involved the home team were awarded a free kick some 25 yards from goal. Dan Cotton's free kick was parried by Jon Chatfield who then got down at the feet of Stebbings to smother his follow up shot but the ball again squirmed free and Stebbings forced it over the line. St Neots clambered back into the match three minutes before the break when new boy McElroy crossed over the Blackstones defence for Luigi Rocco to volley into the net.

The second half saw St Neots dominant after the first ten minutes in which either side should have added to their score. Kevin Ainslie shot over the bar and at the other end Danny Marlow headed over from a Bloss corner and Steve Dogbe volleyed wide whilst Jon Chatfield was the St Neots saviour with a brave save at the feet of Ross Watson. For a long spell St Neots dictated play without really creating too many chances but Blackstones appeared to be quite happy to settle for their narrow lead and use a long ball forward as their only method of attack. There were just four minutes left when substitute Mark Franklin sent in a free kick that the home defence failed to clear and Kevin Byrne pivoted to send the ball through the packed area to level the scores at 2-2 and claim his third goal in five matches. It was a much deserved reward for the visitors and their large band of followers and keeps them in the hunt in the crowded chase for the championship.

Saints: Chatfield, McElroy, Bloss, Burrows, Dogbe, Marlow, Hoggett, Rocco, Fisk, Francis, Byrne.

Subs: Franklin (for Francis 76 mins), Kuhne (for Fisk 76 mins), Maitland (for Rocco 90 mins), Ashby & Finch.

Man of the Match: Paul Bloss