

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

UCL Premier Division
St Neots Town 2 Sleaford 3

It should have been farewell party time for St Neots as they staged their final home first team match of the season but unfortunately visitors Sleaford Town had forgotten to read the script. The newcomers to the Premier Division this season returned home to Lincolnshire with their seventh away victory of the season that looks certain to ensure a creditable mid table finish in their first top flight season. It was a match high in entertainment as a result of both defences making elementary errors and St Neots will think they could have gone out with a victory after taking advantage of their first half wind assistance. However Sleaford will have to thank recent signing goalkeeper Lee Crockett for two stunning second half saves that effectively won the game for them. With three players suspended St Neots had to dig deeply into their resources and they blooded two new signings in midfield with one of them Craig Rydeheard looking very effective on the left hand side. In the second half there was also a senior debut for substitute Luke Swain and he made a very significant contribution three days after scoring the winning goal in the Reserve Scott Gatty Cup Final victory.

Opting for wind advantage St Neots dominated the opening phase with another debutant Dean Hamilton shooting narrowly wide and Dean McElroy seeing his cross cleared off the line by Kris Jones after goalkeeper Crockett had spilled the ball. Then after seven minutes David Fisk recalled to the side celebrated by scoring his first goal since the opening day of the season – a shot from 35 yards that dipped over the keeper and under the crossbar. Sleaford did not create a chance until 25th minute when top scorer Jamie Shaw wriggled past two defenders to have his low shot deflected for a corner and a minute later Dean McElroy was on hand to clear off the line from Matt Lunn. After 32 minutes St Neots almost doubled their lead with a slick move involving McElroy, Hoggett and Fisk with the final cross being headed goalwards by Barrington Belgrave but Crockett twisted in the air to turn the ball away for a corner. Then after 38 minutes the visitors were level when a Jason Sedlan through ball released Jamie Shaw and his electric pace took him away from his marker to angle a shot across Jon Chatfield for a well taken goal. Two efforts by Rydeheard were close to restoring St Neots lead but the keeper again saved well.

Two goals from well struck free kicks in a five minutes spell early in the second half proved St Neots undoing. The first after 53 minutes saw Jamie Shaw score from almost the identical spot of Fisk's opener and again the wind played its part with Chatfield unable to read the flight of the ball. Then after 58 minutes from the opposite side of the pitch a firmly struck low free kick by Matt Hodgkin seemed to pass through the St Neots defensive wall to leave Chatfield helpless on the wrong side of the goal. To Sleaford's credit once two goals to the good they did not shut up shop and play continued end to end. St Neots began to exert pressure on the visitors and after 70 minutes were rewarded when substitute Ben Cole flicked a super goal in with his head from a Rydeheard cross to put the match back in the meting pot. Another St Neots substitute Luke Swain then had his shot pushed away, Belgrave saw an acrobatic volley just skim the bar and Cole shot onto the roof of the net. However the match winning save came from Crockett with just three minutes remaining when a powerful volley from Swain was brilliantly saved when a draw beckoned.

Saints: Chatfield, McElroy, Bloss, Dogbe, Burrows, Hoggett, Fisk, Hamilton, Belgrave, Fox & Rydeheard.

Subs: Cole (for Fox 65 mins), Swain (for Hamilton 65 mins), Ashby, Wale & Sincock

Man of the Match: David Fisk