

Eagle Bitter UCL Premier Division (Saturday 16th October 2004)

St Neots 2 Cogenhoe 1

In his programme notes St Neots Manager Jon Taylor complained that his side were 'not getting the rub of the green' and that 'lady luck seems to be eluding us at present'. Over his post-match pint he may have had to revise his opinion because this has to go down as a rather fortunate victory with Damian Matthews claiming the winning goal in the last action of the match deep into injury time. To be fair St Neots shaded the first half but the longer the second period went on the stronger the visitors seemed to become and a draw looked to be a fair result for a good defensive home performance. With new central defender Mark Burrows out with the 'flu Taylor shuffled his pack with Jon Hoggett employed in his former position as sweeper and he was the lynch pin in the St Neots back line.

After a tight start with both defences looking solid St Neots took the lead with a rather fortunate goal from a Russell Lawes free kick. The ball fell to Damian Matthews and his mis-hit shot hit Liam Harrold and deflected into the opposite corner of the net to give the striker his fifth goal in four matches. Harrold should have doubled his tally shortly afterwards but off balance he volleyed high over the bar after good work by Ozzie Foster. Then after 25 minutes the sides were level again after an awful clearance across goal by Paul Bloss presented the ball to Jamie Wright. His cross seemed to be covered by Jon Chatfield but Darren Collins got a telling deflection that wrong-footed the keeper and the ball finished up in the net. In the fifteen minutes before the break St Neots made three more excellent chances. Russell Lawes shot over the bar following a free kick, and in the best move of the game Foster and Harrold combined to outwit three defenders before Harrold's clinical shot rebounded from the crossbar. Then the industrious Danny Griggs carved out a chance but saw his shot block and Harrold drove the rebound over the bar. Lucky still to be level Cogenhoe attacked the second half with great enthusiasm and much more method. They attacked St Neots down both flanks with substitute Kuriya very dangerous. Jon Chatfield had been underemployed in the first half but he had to make good saves from Darren Collins (twice) and Richard Turner to keep the home side on terms. St Neots were lucky when they allowed Jamie Wright too much space but he shot over the bar. With time running out St Neots sent on two substitutes but they never had much opportunity to impress. Then in injury time after a series of disappointing near post corners easily defended Paul Bloss pulled one back and Damian Matthews sent in a perfectly placed glancing header to send Cogenhoe home pointless and disappointed.

St Neots: Chatfield, Finch, Lawes, Hoggett, Matthews, Trott, Giscome, Griggs, Harrold, Bloss, Foster.

Substitutes: Kingsbury (for Lawes 73 mins), Webb (for Foster 85 mins), Houghton (not used), Green (not used) and Jelley (not used)

Goals (St Neots): Harrold (11 mins), Matthews (93 mins)

Goal (Cogenhoe): Collins (25 mins)

Referee: Anthony Howitt (Grantham)