

St. Neots Town F.C.
Season 2005-06 Match Report

UNITED COUNTIES LEAGUE CUP QUARTER FINAL

St Neots 2 Woodford 2 (*after extra time*)
(St Neots won 3-2 on penalties)

Having beaten Cup holders Potton in the last round the runners up last season Woodford were the favourites to lift the League Cup this season but after two hours football and a penalty shoot out they returned home out of the competition leaving St Neots to progress to their second semi-final in three seasons. It was the perfect setting for a pre-Christmas thriller in freezing conditions with the two sides who had been disappointed with runners-up medals in successive seasons meeting in this showdown and they produced a memorable match and a dramatic conclusion. St Neots recent record in penalty shoot outs is mixed with three victories (over Yaxley in the Hinchingsbrooke and League Cup and Beaconsfield in the FA Vase) and two defeats at the hands of Langford in the Premier Cup and Hotpoint in the Senior Cup but after being outplayed by their visitors in this match they must have been glad of the chance to progress. Their hero was goalkeeper Steve Young who saved three of the six penalties fired at him although one of those was cancelled out by a retake ordered by the Referee and it was left to Danny Griggs to fire home the winning penalty kick after Manager Steve Kuhne and Russell Lawes had also been successful.

The match began with an unchanged St Neots enjoying a good start that lasted just ten minutes. However significantly in that period they snatched a precious lead with Andre Maltay crossing from deep on the right for Steve Kuhne to time a late run to perfection as he headed powerfully past visiting goalkeeper Matt Finlay. That sparked Woodford into action and for almost the whole of the remainder of the first half they laid the St Neots goal to siege. With central defenders Nicky Hurst and Damian Matthews outstanding the home side repressed wave after wave of visiting attacks with Woodford striker Russ Dunkley unlucky not to get his name on the score sheet in the first 45 minutes. He brought an outstanding save from Young who turned his header over the bar, another header rebounded from a post with the goalkeeper beaten and a third effort produced a full length save from the home goalkeeper. In addition Nicky Gordon twice shot wide when scoring looked easier.

The second half saw St Neots reorganise with Matt Endersby on to replace Maltay and the game became more evenly competitive. Neil King had a shot deflected agonisingly wide but at the other end the hard working Gary Walker might twice have extended the lead. His first effort was cleared off the line from a Danny Griggs cross and his second shot was well saved by Finlay. However he was not to be denied and after 67 minutes when the Woodford defence failed to clear an Endersby cross his shot crashed into the net to extend the lead. For a spell Woodford seemed stunned but in the last quarter of an hour of normal time they dominated once again. However there was controversy as they got back into the game after 82 minutes with Russ Dunkley's shot beating the keeper as St Neots appealed vainly for offside. Two visiting players were left in an offside position as the St Neots defence rushed out but the officials ruled that they were in a legal position when the shot was taken. Two

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minutes later with Woodford fired up a clearance was deflected into the path of Dunkley and he joyously squared the match that had to go into extra time. Both sides had extra time chances with Nicky Hurst missing St Neots' best opening and Cameron Clark clearing off the line to deny Tom Fountain. Few of the freezing spectators left before the final drama of the penalty shoot out and it is St Neots that will progress to the last four.

St Neots: Young, Clark, Lawes, Matthews, Hurst, Hoggett, Maltay (Endersby 46 mins), Phillips (Dellar 75 mins), Kuhne, Walker, Griggs.

Sub not used: Franklin and Shamlian

Goals: Kuhne (5 mins) and Walker (67 mins)

Penalties: Kuhne, Lawes and Griggs (missed Hurst and Clark)