

St. Neots Town Football Club  
Season 2008-09 Match Reports

UCL Premier Division  
**St Neots Town 3 Desborough 3**

St Neots showed great character and determination to earn a draw from this match and extend their unbeaten run to five games. Twice they trailed by two goals and their unbeaten run looked destined to be drowned in the Rowley Park surface water that threatened to see the match abandoned. However an inspired second half double strike by James Hall saw the points shared and with Desborough starting the night on the same number of points this result was vital. For far too long the visiting side looked the better because they appeared to have chosen the right tactics in the atrocious conditions. Their long ball game kept the home defence extended and St Neots neat passing game was more often frustrated by the surface water rather than by their opponents. In the end a goalkeeping error at either end contributed to the entertainment of the brave few who defied the constant rain and ultimately a draws the right result. St Neots made some enforced changes with Steve Dogbe, Dean McElroy and Matt Bannister replacing the suspended Ben Dyett, Luke Knight and the unavailable Kevin Ashby whilst Pete Okechukwu was preferred to Matt Kenneford.

Desborough got the perfect start for in their first attack after four minutes Mike Tolton hit the bar with an opportunist shot from distance and as tthe home defence stood statuesque Iain Blakie followed up to net the rebound. At the other end James Hall had a low shot well saved after good work by his brother but Jon Chatfield was the busier keeper saving from Tolton and Richard Forbes. After 16 minutes the visitors doubled their lead but there was a touch of fortune as Blakie mis-controlled a Forbes cross and Liam Boath pounced to hit a shot past the unsighted Chatfield. St Neots thought they should have had a penalty when Okechukwu was bundled to the ground but the referee awarded a free kick ten yards back for an earlier challenge and Rogers skied the free kick over the bar. A Rogers cross then landed on top of the cross bar but seven minutes before the break St Neots were back in the match when Rocco crossed and Declan Rogers scored his sixth goal of the season with a crisp finish. At the break the Referee made a detailed inspection of the waterlogged surface but allowed the match to continue.

A second fully justified penalty appeal by the home side was denied when Dominic Piggott appeared to handle the ball on the goal line and to compound St Neots disappointment they fell two goals behind again when Mike Tolton hit a surprise cross-cum shot from around 40 yards out that sailed over Jon Chatfield's head and just under the crossbar. That could have ended St Neots hopes but they do not give up and when the lively James Hall was impeded on the edge of the penalty area Luigi Rocco's net bound shot was deflected wide by a defender. After 69 minutes Rocco lifted a pass over the defence and James Hall collected the Ball and ran diagonally across two defenders before unleashing a low shot into the corner of the net. With Kenneford on for Okechukwu it was now all St Neots and after 75 minutes Rocco again set up James Hall whose swirling shot was misjudged by visiting keeper Tom Smith as he helped the ball into the net. It was no less than either Hall or St Neots deserved and they survived a late chip by Anthony Page and clipped the crossbar.

**St Neots:** Chatfield, McElroy (K), Jon Hall, Hoggett, Dogbe, McElroy (D), Rocco, Bannister, Okechukwu, James Hall, Rogers.

**Subs:** Kenneford (for Okechukwu 65 mins), Eno, Colmer & Duckett (R).

**Man of the Match:** James Hall