

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

UCL Premier Division  
**St Neots Town 0 Stotfold 1**

UCL Premier Division champions Stotfold may have undergone lots of close season changes in their squad but they are not going to surrender their crown without a fight if Tuesday evening's performance at Rowley Park is an indicator. They inflicted St Neots' first defeat in their new stadium with a single well taken goal leaving the home side deflated but Marvin Johnson's charges might well have earned at least a point had they converted their chances. A disputed disallowed goal and a first half injury contributed in no small part to St Neots' defeat and the outcome of the match seemed to hinge on two second half free kicks on the edge of either penalty area. Stotfold converted their chance with the perfectly placed free kick whilst the St Neots effort at the other end was chipped tamely into the arms of visiting veteran goalkeeper Brad Gilham who was outstanding.

It looked good for St Neots in the early stages with Luigi Rocco bringing a full length save from Gilham and then firing wide from the resultant corner and then Pete Okechukwu might have done better than plant his header into the side netting from a Luke Knight cross. At the other end Jon Chatfield palmed away a stinging Ryan Aldrin cross but the pattern of the match changed after 24 minutes when Okechukwu limped off injured. Without a recognised striker on the bench Johnson sent on Jon Hall and persisted with his tactical plan of playing just one player up front and although Hall performed well the side looked unbalanced. Both sides continued to create first half chances with Callum Donnelly having a shot deflected and Aldrin bringing a save from Chatfield for the visitors and Rocco and Dean McElroy both sending their shots wide when well placed in front of goal.

Stotfold made a half time substitution with Ryan Mitchell replacing Stuart Lochhead and this seemed to give them a more attacking approach. However Jon Hall shot just wide of the near post and Rocco was clear of the defence but denied as Gilham sprinted off his line. Then after 58 minutes a superb move seemed to put St Neots ahead as Dean McElroy collected a pass from Ben Dyett and split the visiting defence with a long diagonal pass to free Declan Rogers and he put the ball past Gilham but the celebrations were cut short by a flag from the Assistant Referee although the 'scorer' had looked well onside. Rocco again failed to finish and Rogers fired across the face of goal with St Neots looking just to have the edge. However after 69 minutes Callum Donnelly appeared to run in to two defenders as he dribbled along the edge of the St Neots area and as he tumbled a free kick was awarded. Callum Donnelly's dummy run over the ball saw the St Neots defensive wall move and visiting skipper Paul Donnelly sent a perfectly placed free kick into the St Neots net to put his side ahead. When St Neots had an identically awarded free kick at the other end fifteen minutes later Declan Rogers' free kick finished comfortably in the arms of Gilham and with Rocco and Rogers both finishing weakly St Neots ran out of chances to claim the goal that would have given them a deserved share of the points.

**Saints:** Chatfield, McElroy (D), McElroy (K), Hoggett Dogbe, Dyett, Knight, Albone, Okechukwu, Rocco, Rogers.

**Subs:** Jon Hall (for Okechukwu 24 mins), Bannister (for Albone 85 mins), Kenneford (for Rocco 85 mins), Sturnolio & Webster

**Man of the Match:** Ben Dyett  
(att 226)