

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

UCL Premier Division
St Neots Town 0 Boston 1

Behind every score line there is a story and that was certainly the case at Rowley Park in this match. The outcome was probably decided after just four minutes when St Neots keeper John Chatfield strayed a foot outside his area as he reached for a high ball and was penalised for hand ball and sent off. It looked a harsh decision but the law makes it clear that handball by a goalkeeper outside the area is an automatic red card so Referee Graham Kinnear was left with no option. St Neots brought on substitute goalkeeper Ben Webster sacrificing midfield player Matt Bannister who had hardly not had a touch of the ball and they then had to play against the unbeaten in-form Boston for 86 minutes with just ten men. It was to St Neots credit that they only conceded a single goal with a committed hard working performance but the end result was their third defeat in four league starts this season. Manager Marvin Johnson made his first significant team changes of the season leaving Kevin McElroy and Declan Rogers on the bench bringing in the Hall twins in their places.

The unfortunate sending off was the first real notable action of the match but St Neots reorganisation was swift and Dean McElroy might have put them in front after 14 minutes but Nathan Iley blocked his shot on the line after a good three man move. However after twenty minutes Paul Goodhand was allowed far too much space in midfield and he advanced to the edge of the area before beating Webster with a clinical finish. St Neots' response was decisive with Luigi Rocco tormenting the Boston defence and brought down on the edge of the penalty area. James Hall's floated free kick beat the keeper but rebounded from the crossbar and Jon Hoggett's brave follow-up header was blocked on the goal line. On the half hour James Hall was denied a second time by the woodwork when he weaved past two defenders only to see his shot clip the cross bar but Boston were creating chances as well and Ben Webster made a great full length save to deny Miles Mason. A fierce drive by Matt Kennedy was then push away by the St Neots keeper but right on half time St Neots were denied what looked a certain penalty when Pete Okechukwu was pushed to the ground from behind by Shaun Baker.

The first period of the second half saw fewer scoring chances but Goodhand twice had shots blocked by Steve Dogbe and Ben Dyett. A mid pitch flare up saw both Knight and Goodhand booked and Goodhand then went clear but shot tamely over the bar. St Neots best effort of the match came from a swift attack down the right involving James Hall and Dean McElroy with Okechukwu's final shot being acrobatically cleared off the line by Matt Price with his keeper beaten. Boston's record goal scorer Gary Bull was marked out of the game by the St Neots central defenders and his one real chance came six minutes from time when he sent Webster full length to claw away his shot and St Neots final effort was from James Hall who shot narrowly wide. Boston settles for their narrow victory ten minutes from time when they blatantly played keep ball to smother St Neots chances of a late equaliser.

Saints: Chatfield, McElroy (D), Jon Hall, Hoggett Dogbe, Dyett, Knight, Bannister, Okechukwu, Rocco, James Hall.

Subs: Webster (for Bannister 4 mins), Thomas (for Knight 64 mins), Rodgers (for Rocco 64 mins), Kenneford & McElroy (K)

Man of the Match: Steve Dogbe
(att 223)