

## **EAGLES 3-1 ASHWELL ACADEMICALS**

AT LEAST one big match lived up to its billing over the weekend.

Just over 30 hours before Liverpool and Manchester United bored everyone to death with a total non-event, Eagles took on Ashwell in a game which looked like being significant when the prizes were handed out – even though it was only mid October.

Royston ran out deserved winners but only after a really competitive battle against a side which lived up to its reputation as one of the best yet fairest in the area.

If anything, Ashwell had the better of the early exchanges but even their renowned centre forward, Will, was finding it hard to get behind the Eagles' back three.

The opening goal seemed set to be crucial and the home side grabbed it thanks to a moment of magic by Luca Winterton.

Eagles had been struggling for a final ball and with their composure in the final third. But when Winterton received the ball just outside the box he took a chance with an early shot and was rewarded by seeing it nestle right in the corner of the Ashwell net.

Another moment of class put Royston two ahead 10 minutes into the second half.

Logan Downie powered down the left and put in a fine cross, much as Aaron Cresswell had done the previous evening for West Ham.

And just like Manuel Lanzini, Jack Piggott opened up his body and steered his finish into the net, albeit at the near post rather than the far.

Ashwell were far from done, however, and hit back within two minutes.

Cameron King, Oscar Youngman and Jacob Schroeder had restricted Will mainly to shots from distance and half-chances at best.

But the visitors put together a slick passing move which Eagles could interrupt once but not twice, Will struck the ball sweetly home and it was game on.

Royston knew from the previous year's League Cup semi final that Ashwell were perfectly capable of recovering from a two-goal deficit.

This time, a bit of good fortune settled the nerves just two minutes later.

Ashwell's ever-impressive centre back was adjudged, harshly, to have handled the ball in the box deliberately. If there was significant doubt about the decision, there was none about the penalty, which Sean Blois smashed into the net.

It remained a hard-fought, compelling match right until the end, but with Will their only real goal threat, the visitors did not look like recovering.

Schroeder earned the man of the match award for another composed and committed display at the back, especially in the air.

But this was a fantastic all-round team performance from back to front, a step up even from the previous weekend's County Cup victory which Kev had described as the best he had seen in all his years coaching the side.

To make this result count at the end of the season, Eagles will need to produce more of the same.

Team: Jacob McGlynn, Jacob Schroeder, Cameron King, Oscar Youngman, Will Hamblin, Sean Blois, Kyle Smith, Logan Downie, Luca Winterton, Jack Piggott, Kian Harness, George Palmer, Owen Maslen, Sam Fage.