

ROYSTON EAGLES 4-2 ASHWELL ACADEMICALS – L/CUP QUARTER FINAL

ON FA CUP third round weekend came a goal to rival the Ronnie Radford classic.

The field may not have been quite as cut up as it was at Hereford in 1972.

The shot may not have been from quite as far out.

The pitch may not have been invaded by dozens of urchins all wearing Parkas.

But to paraphrase John Motson, no goalkeeper in the world would have stopped Sean Blois' shot.

The Eagles midfielder has scored the odd cracker but this was one of the best strikes you are likely to see in any level of football.

Blois' moment of magic put Royston 2-0 up and on the way to a well-deserved victory which took them into the semi-finals of the League Cup.

But brilliant as it was, the goal should not overshadow a fantastic all-round team performance.

Blois won man of the match for his all-round contribution in another every-blade-of-grass display.

He had rivals all over the pitch, though, as the Eagles harassed and bullied Ashwell, with all 13 players doing their bit to make a very good team look very ordinary.

The back three did not give a sniff to the visiting No 18, their notoriously strong and dangerous striker, who went away without scoring for the first time anyone could remember.

Birthday boy Will Hamblin filled in superbly for the injured Jacob Schroeder, while Cameron King and Oscar Youngman were calm, competitive and classy as ever.

Kyle Smith fought hard alongside Blois to ensure the Eagles won the midfield battle.

And up front Kian Harness ran himself into the ground for the team. He has scored many more goals in individual games but this was a performance to be measured in impact rather than match balls.

Having said that, it was Harness who gave Eagles a nerve-settling early lead.

The home side had pressed Jurgen Klopp-style from the start, the ball broke to Luca Winterton and his cute pass found Harness with space in the box to open the scoring in the third minute.

Eagles were bossing the game and should have added to their tally, particularly from the corners they kept forcing.

But then came Blois' thunderbolt, a shot from outside the box which tore high into the net and caused cries of wonder from both sets of parents.

Ashwell were just finding their way into the game when Winterton's quick-thinking once more paid dividends, as he found himself suddenly in space and scored off the post.

The second half was a more scrappy and more even affair, but Royston still posed the greater threat.

They were unlucky not to score again before that man Harness hit a shot which the visiting goalkeeper could only parry, leaving Jack Piggott to force the ball home on the follow-up.

Then came the only bad bit of the morning. At 4-0 up with less than 10 minutes left, it should have been game well and truly over.

But the Ashwell No 11 was left unmarked at a corner and scored from about a yard out.

As Gaffer McGlynn noted, the angry response from the defence was pleasing. What wasn't pleasing was conceding a penalty soon afterwards which gave Ashwell a faint glimmer of hope.

But Eagles regained their composure and closed out the game in the remaining minutes, which included a fair amount of stoppage time.

It was a pity not to keep a clean sheet after restricting Ashwell for so long.

But it would have been an even greater shame if Blois and that goal had not ended up on the winning side.

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