



yellow card, whilst Michael Lennon clinically dispatched the resultant penalty for his 21<sup>st</sup> goal of the season.

'Dabbers' right back Damion Jarrett's half volley on the quarter hour proved an easy take for Ashton but the visiting 'keeper might have found his task a shade harder had Danny Griggs free kick from deep on the FC United left been an inch or two closer to goal. At the other end, 'United' winger Tristram Whitman's curling in swinger drifted wide of the right hand post whilst midfielder Adam Carden went considerably closer with an angled shot from deep on the 'Dabbers' left. The visitors continued to enjoy a spell of pressure, earning a couple of corners in the process, but despite Wright latching on to a clearance, his finish left a lot to be desired. Meanwhile, the closely contested match edged toward the half hour mark and when Tong found Michael Lennon bearing down upon him on the left hand edge of the 'United' area, the big central defender responded with a reckless tackle, that lifted 'Lenny' clear of the deck! Despite Nantwich protests, Tong, on this occasion, escaped without a caution, leaving even the 'United' faithful to scratch their heads in disbelief.

But despite trailing at the break, FC United's crisp interchanges had been the more impressive of the two teams. However, the absence of goal poacher Wilson was apparent and whilst there was no lack of effort from his fellow forwards, their profligacy in front of goal proved to be a major weakness.

The second half was played in similar pattern to the first period, except that Nantwich were noticeably sharper. On 51 minutes, back to back corners left FC United stretched in defence and from the second, a defenders boot was the only thing that stood between Dave Whittaker's powerful short range effort and the ball heading into the net. Three minutes later, Damion Jarrett delivered a masterful cross field ball from deep in his own half into the path of the unmarked Michael Lennon - 'Lenny' meanwhile setting off on a mazy run before 'United' right back Danny Warrender found just enough pace to force 'Lenny' to the bye line, albeit at the expense of a corner during his attempt to cut the ball back inside. From the corner, Charlie O'Loughlin clipped the ball over a crowded 6 yard box before a 'United' head sent it clear, albeit into the path of Michael Lennon, who responded with a powerful ground shot into the area which, had it not been for the embattled Tong, the ball would have crept through, giving Ashton little time to respond.

But on the hour, Ashton could do nothing to prevent Ashley Carter scoring one of the finest goals of his Nantwich career. The build up to the goal, ironically had begun in defence, from where Dave Whittaker had dropped back from his forward position to assist during a moment of pressure from the visitors. 'Whitt' meanwhile, picked out Dave MacPherson stationed half way inside his own half, 'The Dabbers' recent midfield signing working the ball over the half way line to unleash an incisive pass straight down the middle into the path of 'Ash' who, despite pressure from the central defensive partnership of Tunji Moses and Tong, held them at bay long enough to produce a clinical finish from 12 yards and leave Ashton stranded in the bargain. The resilience of FC United was now clearly being put to the test but, despite falling further behind, the visitors continued to place 'The Dabbers' under pressure. However, Nantwich were in no mood to allow 'United' back in and on 68 minutes FC's manager Karl Margison clearly had seen enough for him to introduce all three substitutes at once in an effort to claw back the deficit. But it was to no avail. Four minutes from normal time, an unselfish pass, but a decisive one at that, from Glyn Blackhurst, across the bows of the committed Ashton into the path of Michael Lennon, was the instrument that set up 'Lenny' for him to score his 22<sup>nd</sup> goal of the season and secure maximum points for 'The Dabbers'.

Steve Davis commented: - "I thought they (FC United) were the better side in the first half. They passed the ball around better than us but in front of goal they were mostly wasteful which gave Lee Jones a relatively quiet afternoon. Unfortunately, we were carrying two or three players in the first half, and during the break I had a go at them. To be fair, the players responded and were more competitive. Naturally, with having five regulars out on the day, that was a cause for concern at the start but credit to the lads, they proved their worth. It's not often I question decisions but the referee's handling of the Tong situation proved embarrassing to say the least. Even FC's officials conceded he should have been dismissed".

Rodney Densen Wines 'Man of the Match'. Dave Macpherson (Nantwich Town).

