

NANTWICH TOWN 1 (Carter 9)
CREWE ALEXANDRA 2 (Pope 6, Elding pen, 63)

Pre-season friendly (at Newcastle Town)
Monday 4 August 2008

Nantwich slipped to their first pre-season reverse against a strong Crewe side at Newcastle Town's Lyme Valley Stadium. The Alex paraded £150,000 summer signing Anthony Elding but it was local lad Tom Pope who took the plaudits as he posed a constant menace to the Dabbers' defence.

Indeed, it was the former Biddulph Vics striker who nosed the Alex in front on 6 minutes. Danny O'Donnell got a touch on Steven Schmacher's cross and Pope powered home a header. Rather than feel overwhelmed, though, the spirited Dabbers got straight back on level terms.

Crewe keeper Adam Legzdins tipped a drive from Ashley Carter over the bar and when the Alex defence failed to clear a short corner, Carter was on hand to fire a low drive into the net.

Crewe had the better of the first half exchanges and should have gone into the interval ahead. Just before the break, Charlie O'Loughlin was caught in possession on the edge of the box and he was forced to claw back Pope as the Alex striker set himself to pull the trigger inside the area. Schumacher stepped up to take the spot kick but Lee Jones pulled off an acrobatic save to make sure the sides were level at half-time.

In the second half, the Alex continued to hold the upper hand but the Nantwich rearguard restricted their neighbours to few clear-cut chances. The ball bounced off Elding into the grateful arms of Jones with the goal gaping and the former Leeds man also swept the ball over the bar when well placed.

But the Alex newboy secured victory with a penalty on 63 minutes. O'Loughlin clumsily brought down the tricky Pope as he weaved his way to goal and, this time, Jones was well beaten by the spot-kick.

Not even the introduction of former Crewe favourite Rodney Jack could spice up the Dabbers' attacking options and it was left to a foraging run from defender Richard Smith and a cleverly curled strike from Nick Linford to threaten the Alex goal.

Pope almost capped a fine performance with his second when he juggled the ball on the six yard box before sweetly striking just past the upright.

In all, Steve Davis can be pleased that his hard-working side were up to the task and gave their more illustrious opponents a tough work out.

Nantwich: Jones, Taylor, Tinson, Smith, O'Loughlin, Parkinson, Carter, Beeston, Nagington, Lennon, Tickle. Subs: Linford (for Beeston,64), Walker (Lennon,73), Kiss (Tickle,68), Jack (Nagington, 59), Hawthorne (Parkinson,57), Green (Taylor,75)
Crewe: Legzdins, Abbey, Danville, Rix, O'Donnell, Enroes, Moore, Schumacher, Pope, Elding, Daniel. Subs: Carrington, Johnson, Clements, Westwood (for Abbey,30), Murphy.
Attendance: 430