

BADGERS OUT-FOX NAÏVE NANTWICH

NANTWICH TOWN 2 RETFORD UNITED 3 (H-t: 1-0)
Rhead 23 (pen), 84 Thomas 50, Harvey 63, 81

Retford sneaked victory in this hard fought encounter, making the most of naive Nantwich defending against strong winds in the second half. Neil Harvey's 81st minute strike proved to be the decisive goal and was scored with Nantwich screaming for offside – a shout that proved to be in vain. The Dabbers backline had left the Barbados international in oceans of space at the edge of the penalty area believing he would be flagged offside when Ross Turner's wind-assisted goalkick cleverly picked him out. But you can't be offside from a placed goalkick so Harvey gleefully stabbed the ball past Nantwich keeper Lee Jones for Retford's third goal.

With the gusts behind them, the Dabbers had dominated the first period. Nantwich took the lead midway through the first half when Jones' searching goalkick was flicked on by Matt Rhead into the path of Michael Lennon who was scythed down in the penalty area by Turner. Rhead drilled home the spot-kick to put Nantwich in the driving seat.

Nantwich failed to cash in on their first half possession and soon after the break the Badgers equalised when livewire marksman Darryl Thomas forced home Michael Simpkins' corner.

Thomas rasped the outside of the post with Jones stranded and the visitors were now using the conditions to their full advantage. Just after the hour mark Thomas was in the thick of it again, collecting another of Turner's wind-assisted goalkicks and crossing into the danger area for Harvey to slip Retford into the lead.

Nantwich skipper Dave MacPherson lashed a shot over the bar as the battling Dabbers tried to get back on level terms. Then, 10 minutes from time, came that bizarre goal that put Retford 3-1 up.

But within three minutes the deficit had been reduced. Oldham Athletic loanee Liam Dawson unlocked the Retford defence, stroking the ball into the path of Rhead who neatly clipped it over Turner from 15 yards out. It set up a tense finale but despite their best efforts, the Dabbers couldn't fashion another goal-scoring opportunity.

Holding on to their narrow win, Retford climbed to the top of the UniBond Premier table but both sides can take credit from providing such an entertaining game in difficult conditions.

Nantwich: Jones, Reeves, Tickle, Flynn, Sutton, MacPherson, Ashley Carter, Blackhurst, Rhead, Lennon, Dawson. Subs: Aaron Carter, Whittaker, Mahmoud (for Reeves, 85), Madeley (for Lennon, 76), Chapman.
Retford: Turner, Ludlam, Simpkins, Smith, Ellis, Ellender, Bettney, Barwick, Thomas, Harvey, Marrison. Subs: Ford (for Thomas, 80), Holmes, Smith, White (for Harvey, 85), Kingston.
Att: 364