

High praise for Reds in Trophy defeat

Contributed by John Walsh
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Nantwich Town 3, Workington 1

It's relatively easy to be magnanimous to a defeated opponent in the afterglow of victory.

But there seemed little doubt that Nantwich Town boss Dave Cooke (pictured) was genuine in his appraisal of Workington after his side had beaten Reds 3-1 in last night's FA Trophy tie.

He made a point of coming over to a group of us, all Reds fans leaving after the Trophy exit, to lift spirits with his comments.

Cooke is much experienced, and was part of the Shrewsbury management team which won instant promotion back to the Football League, giving Joe Hart his debut during his time there.

He said: "Workington are the best team that have been to Nantwich since I became manager three years ago.

"If they can get out of the North West Division they will be absolutely fine in the Premier Division and do well.

"They play the game the right way and that's important the further up the Leagues you go."

It was a glowing compliment to a Reds side which had completely dominated the second-half of the first round tie, after going into the break trailing 2-0.

Possession had been even in the first-half but Reds had failed to create enough chances

Manager Danny Grainger said: "The second half was more of what we are about. I was pleased but I'm afraid we paid the price for a first half in which we were sloppy, didn't want it enough and were off the pace."

Reuben Jerome had been late arriving so had to start on the bench and in a re-shuffle came on for the second when he made a difference.

"I was disappointed in Reuben, and he knew he had let himself down, but he showed what we know he is capable of in that second-half," said Grainger.

Although Reds had as much possession as their hosts in the first half they didn't create enough and the two clear-cut chances both went to Nantwich and were taken.

The first on 20 minutes came after Dan Wordsworth made a solid, sliding tackle on Callum Saunders near the by-line in the area. Unfortunately for him the ball rebounded to Saunders and the son of former international Dean Saunders scored with a clever tight-angled shot which his father would have been proud of.

If that was fortunate, the second was not - a really well-worked goal from a flowing move down the right which ended in a low cross from David Webb being drilled smartly home from eight yards by Scott McGowan.

Reds had built well enough on occasions but could not create the chances needed to test the hosts. Dave Symington got in the first shot on target which keeper Godfrey Hall went down well to save.

Then in the closing stages Brad Hubbard clipped the top of the bar with a fierce strike from 25 yards.

The second-half was much better with Workington dictating the game which was played in the Nantwich half for long periods.

All the frantic action was in the Nantwich box, which they defended grittily, but twice goal-line clearances denied the Reds and Hall did well on a couple of occasions to keep out well-struck shots from Symington and Hubbard.

Twice dangerous low crosses into the danger area were deflected just past a post by desperate defenders.

The momentum certainly was with Workington when they reduced the arrears on 77 minutes. Hubbard, twisting and turning in the box was tripped and from the spot Conor Tinnion scored.

Reds continued to push for a late equaliser without reward and early in the five minutes stoppage time Nantwich broke and McGovern settled the tie with Town's third.

Nantwich: Hall, Bourne, Devine (Saunders 8), Langley (Lawrie 70), Harrison, Hughes, Webb, Haywood, Heath, McGowan, Walsh (Koral 90). Subs (not used) Mwasile, Parker, Pope, Hawkins.

Reds: Atkinson, Clark (Jerome 45), Brockbank, Wordsworth, Smith, Casson (Holt 73), Symington, Carroll, Potts (Bowman 64), Hubbard, Tinnion. Subs (not used) Kelly, Robertson, Lightfoot, Ascroft.

Referee: Karl Buckley

Crowd: 272

Star Man: BRAD HUBBOLD