



2012

“The One That Got Away”

Knights claim their third Milan Lakoseljac Memorial Trophy with win over Eagles

Eagles lose title on last day

Southern Premier League 2012 – Final Standings

TEAM	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
South Hobart	21	16	2	3	62	15	50
New Town Eagles	21	15	2	4	69	20	47
Clarence United	21	10	2	9	37	33	32
Kingborough Lions Utd	21	8	6	7	47	45	30
Tilford Zebras	21	8	5	8	51	52	29
Olympia Warriors	21	8	3	10	42	44	27
Glenorchy Knights	21	5	4	12	23	43	19
University	21	0	4	17	12	91	4

Last-second goal gives Eagles win over Clarence

Walter Pless | Sunday, 18 March 2012

(Southern Premier League, KGV Park, Saturday, 17 March 2012)
Clarence United 2 (S Reibel 73, Malcolm 87) lost to New Town Eagles 3 (A Leszczynski 2, 4, 90+5)
HT: 0-2 Attendance - 120 Referee - I Jozeljic

Clarence United: Cornish - Toghill, Lewis, Cannamela, A McIntyre (A Hedge 25) -Nicholson, Stephens (Brown 47), Grant, Hoppitt (S Reibel 65) - Cairns, Hamlett (Subs not used: Rees)

New Town Eagles: Pitchford - Clark, Page, Cox - Marshall, Hudson - Whitehall, Collins (Ayres 77) - McKeown, Leszczynski, J Clamp (Bunt 82) (Subs not used: Anderson, T Clamp, Quan)



A hat-trick by Alex Leszczynski gave Eagles a 3-2 win over Clarence United in a match played at KGV Park because Wentworth Park is not yet available to Clarence. Clarence were shocked as Eagles took a 2-0 lead after only four minutes. In the 2nd minute, Jeremy Marshall won a ball in the air and, when Adam McKeown shot at goal, Trent Cornish could only parry and watch as Leszczynski netted.

Four minutes into the match, McKeown broke clear on the left and played a low ball across the box to the unmarked Leszczynski, who was untroubled in making it 2-0.

Clarence suffered a blow midway through the half when Adam McIntyre broke his wrist and had to be replaced. He was to have surgery later that day on the injury.

Clarence were well served by Scottish import Aaron Cairns, whose use of the ball was classy, but the Eastern Shoe outfit were struggling to create chances. Cairns and Grant Malcolm had half-chances, but, Eagles keeper Nathan Pitchford did not have any anxious moments.

Eagles had the ball in the net through McKeown, but they were denied a third goal by the off-side flag. A brilliant piece of skill by McKeown before the interval almost yielded a third for Eagles. He mesmerised a defender and shot, but Cornish somehow got his hands to it. The ball looped up in the air and looked as if it might drop into the net, but Sam Cannamela was on the scene in a flash and headed it over for a corner. Clarence were struck a further blow just after the resumption when midfielder Joseph Stevens was stretchered off after sustaining a leg injury.

But they began to create chances as the game got physical and several players saw yellow from Mr Jozeljic. Eagles had the ball in the net again midway through the half when Jacob Clamp hit home a pass from McKeown, who might have had a go himself, but the off-side flag again halted the celebrations. With just under 20 minutes remaining, Clarence were thrown a lifeline when substitute Sam Reibel, normally a goalkeeper, scored. Pitchford had saved Cairns's shot and Ben Hamlett's follow-up, but the youngster, who was playing his third match of the day, made no mistake and made it 2-1.

Reibel again showed his value in the 87th minute when he set up Grant Malcolm and it was 2-2. Five minutes into stoppage time, Eagles grabbed the winner and Clarence's hearts sank. Leszczynski attacked through the middle one last time and curled a magnificent low shot just inside Cornish's right-hand post. The keeper appeared to have it covered, but he did not react, and the inch-perfect shot crept just inside the post to make it 3-2. It was a costly game for Clarence - three points lost, and two players injured, one of whom will be out for a while.



Clarence United coach, Ronnie Bolton, said:

I think it was a really fiercely contested game and we got off to a real shocker. There's no doubt about that. Silly goals. I thought we gradually wormed our way back into the game but unfortunately lost two players. In fairness, I would have been happy with a draw today. I don't think we deserved to lose three points. But credit to Eagles. They keep going and they keep working hard, same as our boys. I would have been happy with a draw.

New Town Eagles coach, Stephen Pitchford, said:

It certainly was [a close call] in the end. I think we played well enough for long enough to put them well and truly out of the game. When you don't get that third goal, 2-0 is always dangerous. When they got that goal to get back to 2-1, they had that momentum and they actually had a chance to go 3-2 in front. But I think at the end of the day, the better team that played the better football for longer in the game won and took the three points. It was certainly relief at the end when we managed to get those. Albie [Alex Leszczynski] has always been a good forward. In the past, we've had a bigger need in the middle of the park and this year we seem to have found a different combination that allows us to play three up front.



Eagles' Blayne Hudson (left) in a battle for possession with Clarence's David Hoppitt [PlessPix]



Eagles' skipper Mark Page (right) tackles Clarence's David Hoppitt [PlessPix]

Eagles win ‘home game’ at Warrior Park

Walter Pless | Monday, 26 March 2012

(Southern Premier League, Warrior Park, Saturday, 24 March 2012)

Olympia Warriors 1 (B Phillips 56)

New Town Eagles 2 (A Leszczynski 28, B Whitehall 42)

HT: 0-2 Attendance - 130 Referee - B Kopra

Olympia Warriors: Kay - Phillips, Begovic (Kumpulainen 20), Y Mohamad, W Page -Lapolla, Fielding, Mason, Meredith - Grillas, Wadawau (Subs not used: S Page, Voss, Woolley, A Mohamad)

New Town Eagles: Pitchford - Clark, Page, Cox, Collins - Marshall, Anderson, Whitehall - J Clamp, McKeown, Leszczynski (Quan 77) (Subs not used: McCormack, T. Clamp, Scott, Ayres)



No points from two games at Warrior Park and things are already looking bleak for Olympia Warriors. If that isn't bad enough, they had two players sent off in this match and veteran defender Janko Begovic, who was returning from injury, went off after a mere 20 minutes with a recurrence of a hamstring problem. New Town Eagles, on the other hand, are looking good. They are equal top of the league with two wins from two outings.

This game could even have been 3-1 in their favour had what looked like a perfectly good goal near the end not been mysteriously ruled out for off-side. Officially, this was Eagles' home game after an agreement between the two club presidents. Clare Street is not yet ready for football.

Olympia should have scored twice in the opening stages of the game, but didn't, prompting some of their more pessimistic supporters to say this was a sign they would lose. In the 13th minute, Lee Mason smashed a great volley against the Eagles crossbar, while Kosta Grillas missed a relatively easy header shortly after. That was the signal for Eagles to begin to assert their superiority and Ben Whitehall sent a free-kick narrowly over the Olympia crossbar. Begovic limped off after 20 minutes, to be replaced by Chris Kumpulainen, who was himself coming back after injury. Olympia had another great chance in the 23rd minute when Whitehall cleared a Nick Meredith effort off the line.

Eagles took the lead in the 28th minute with a simple move. A long kick by Nathan Pitchford bounced just outside the Olympia box and Kumpulainen's back-pass was too soft, allowing Alex Leszczynski to nip in and score past the advancing Robert Kay. In the 42nd minute, Adam McKeown went close to adding a second for Eagles, his cross from an acute angle on the left glancing the face of the crossbar but staying out. Two minutes later, however, it was 2-0 as Whitehall cut inside from the right before chipping the ball over Kay and into the net. Deep into stoppage time, Pitchford was called into action and saved superbly from Meredith. In the 56th minute, Ben Phillips pulled a goal back for Olympia when he smashed home an unstoppable first-time shot from the right corner of the box.

Olympia suffered a huge setback in the 77th minute when Josh Fielding was sent off after an altercation with an opponent that led to players from both sides rushing in to calm frayed tempers. Two minutes later, however, Meredith went close with a rising shot that just cleared the angle of crossbar and post. Eagles had a 'goal' disallowed near the end for off-side and, a minute into stoppage time, Wadawau was shown a second yellow card for tripping Whitehall and Olympia were down to nine men. The three points gave Eagles equal top spot with Tilford Zebras, who have a better goal-difference.



Olympia Warriors coach, Franco Previdi, said:

I'm very proud of my boys how they played in the second half. The only thing that let down the boys was a bit of discipline by a few players. I thought the red cards that have been given were very soft. Anyway, saying that, it's all about discipline. Thoughts about the game? I'd rather not say anything about the game before I get myself into trouble

New Town Eagles coach, Stephen Pitchford, said:

Three points when you've got to play your home game on this plastic stuff is fantastic.

An absolute magnificent win. From my point of view, I can't see how he could have been off-side [the late disallowed goal] because the keeper had the ball initially. We ended up winning it and the keeper kicked the ball into a defender, it comes back to our bloke. Where's our other forward? Anywhere in that situation, how could it be off-side? Unless there was something earlier in the piece that made him off-side. I don't know. That's two in two games and, I suppose, you could argue that had that goal been allowed, there might not have been any other incidents up this end that ended up with a send-off.

I mean, the referees see it as they see it and they call it as they see it, but to me, that's two pretty big errors in two games. I suppose from our point of view we've ended up with six points. We've managed, notwithstanding those couple of decisions, which are big points in the game. Our blokes have kept going and got the points. Yeah, [I was] really happy. Six points from two games.



Eagles Adam McKeown tries to evade the attentions of Olympia's Ben Phillips [PlessPix]



Olympia keeper Robert Kay blocks a scoring chance that fell to Eagles' Alex Leszczynski [PlessPix]

Eagles make most of defensive lapses to punish Knights

Walter Pless | Friday, 30 March 2012

(Southern Premier League, KGV Park, Friday, 30 March 2012)

Glenorchy Knights 2 (Dawes 42, Marney 65) New Town Eagles 3 (McKeown 36, 74, Whitehall 86)

HT: 1-1 Attendance - 120 Referee - K Barker

Glenorchy Knights: Peter - Hey, Johnson, Holmes, Clay - Robb (Roberts 87), Griffin, Huigsloot, Marney Dawes (Letiko 91), Strang (Subs not used: Marsh, Smith, Le Rossignol)

New Town Eagles: Pitchford - Clark, Page, Cox, Collins (Hudson 69) - Whitehall, Marshall (Quan 91), Anderson - Leszczynski (Scott 46), J Clamp, McKeown (Subs not used: T Clamp, Ayres)



New Town Eagles went to the top of the Southern Premier League standings with this 3-2 win over Glenorchy Knights. It was a fierce contest that was eventually settled by a goal from Ben Whitehall direct from a corner from the right 4 minutes from the end. Knights goalkeeper Ben Peter misjudged the flight of the ball and virtually palmed the ball into his own net. There were defenders nearby and it was amazing that no-one covered the near post.

Knights should have taken the lead in the 12th minute when Jade Clay picked out Jayden Hey with a cross from the left, but Hey chested the ball against the crossbar and it rebounded into play. Two minutes later, Peter did well to deny Adam McKeown in a one-on-one after the Eagles striker had shown the Knights defence a clean pair of heels. McKeown again broke clear on the half-hour and looked as if he might score, but Callen Griffen recovered his ground and dispossessed McKeown in the nick of time.

Simon Strang, the former Eagles player, chipped just over the bar in the 33rd minute, but it was Eagles who took the lead 3 minutes later. Alex Holmes failed to shut down McKeown on the right of the box and he curled a low shot beyond Peter and inside the far left-hand post. Knights were level in the 42nd minute when Jason Dawes played a neat one-two with Aaron Marney and fired home from the edge of the box, beating Nathan Pitchford at his left-hand post. Liam Scott made his senior debut for Eagles at half time. The former South Hobart defender replaced the injured Alex Leszczynski and played in midfield. Pitchford tipped a stinging shot from Griffin over the bar in the 57th minute, while at the other end a couple of minutes later, Peter acrobatically turned Whitehall's effort over the bar.

Knights hit the front in the 65th minute when Peter punched a corner clear and Marney collected the ball on the half-way line. He made a beeline for goal and then made a diagonal run from right to left, beating five opponents on the way before shooting inside Pitchford's left-hand post.

Eagles equalised in the 74th minute when Peter fluffed Sam Johnson's back-pass and gifted the ball to Jacob Clamp, who squared it for McKeown to slam home from close range. In the 78th minute,

Eagles almost took the lead, but Michael Anderson's header, from Whitehall's free-kick from deep on the right, came back off the crossbar. Peter denied Scott in the 86th minute, turning the midfielder's effort over the bar for the fateful corner from which Whitehall scored the winner.



Glenorchy Knights assistant coach, Anthony Grundy, said:

Obviously, very disappointed tonight. I thought we played well enough to beat Eagles. In fact, I think we lost it as opposed to Eagles winning with just silly mistakes. Definitely, the two goals in the second half were from our mistakes. I even thought the first goal was from an error which allowed McKeown to score from a one-on-one with Holmes. Quality finish, obviously, but it was just the little things that led up to it. If you don't capitalise and put goals away, you don't win games and that's what happened today, unfortunately.

New Town Eagles coach, Stephen Pitchford, said:

It was what we expected. It was always going to be a hard game. We knew they'd run at us. Chris [Hey] had his midfielders working overtime, backwards and forwards, one side of the ground to the other, moving our defence around and our midfield around. Obviously, that made us work very, very hard. I think the couple of goals we leaked were poor goals on our part. For a bloke to run around five blokes almost from the half-way line isn't good from our defensive point of view. But the boys showed that they've got that fighting spirit and that they will work for each other.

Eagles go top

Walter Pless | Sunday, 08 April 2012

Southern Premier League, Clare Street, Saturday, 7 April 2012
New Town Eagles 4 (Leszczynski 2 pen, McKeown 43, 78, Clark 56)
Tilford Zebras 3 (K Engels 22, Walsh 25, Fagg 69)
HT: 2-2 Attendance - 90 Referee - B Kopra

New Town Eagles: Pitchford - Anderson, Page, Cox, Clark - Whitehall (J Clamp 90), Hudson, Scott, Marshall (Collins 76) - McKeown, Leszczynski (Subs not used: Quan, T Clamp, Ayres)

Tilford Zebras: Minty (Heggie 46) - Mullen, Telega, McIntyre, Fagg - Self (Otte 81), J Foley-Donoghue, Palmer, Welch - Walsh, K Engels (Subs not used: Wilcock, Luttrell, E Engels)



It's strange to see New Town Eagles perched on top of the Southern Premier League ladder. But, that is exactly where they are after they downed Tilford Zebras 4-3 at home at Clare Street on Saturday afternoon and previous leaders South Hobart lost 3-2 away to Clarence United at Wentworth Park on Saturday night. Olympia Warriors remain last after they could only draw 2-2 away to University at Olinda Grove.

Glenorchy Knights moved into sixth place by overcoming the previously unbeaten Kingborough Lions United 3-2 at KGV Park in what was a home game for the Lions as their Lightwood Park pitch is still recovering after a botched repair job.

Eagles earned a penalty in the opening minute of their match against Zebras when visiting goalkeeper Craig Minty brought down Alex Leszczynski, who had been put through by a long ball out of defence by Andrew Clark. Leszczynski tucked away the spot-kick with ease, sending Minty the wrong way. Minty, a former Eagles man, had a miserable homecoming to Clare Street. He had to be replaced at half-time after suffering concussion after a collision with Eagles striker Adam McKeown. Zebras were level midway through the first half when Jon Foley-Donoghue released Ricky Self on the right and his short cross from inside the box was headed beyond keeper Nathan Pitchford and under the crossbar by Kurt Engels.

In the 25th minute, Zebras hit the front when Clark botched a back-pass and gifted the ball to the speedy Dwayne Walsh, who easily beat Pitchford in a one-on-one situation. McKeown headed narrowly wide for Eagles from a free-kick in the 32nd minute, but he made amends two minutes before the break when he nodded home Ben Whitehall's right-wing cross to make it 2-2 at the interval.

Clark ventured forward for Eagles in the 56th minute and gained possession when Zebras gave the ball away in midfield. He played a neat one-two with Whitehall before steering his shot past substitute keeper Rowan Heggie to put Eagles 3-2 ahead. Henry Fagg hit a marvellous volley out of nowhere into the top right-hand corner of the net in the 69th minute to make it 3-3 as the match entered an exciting final 20 minutes.

With 12 minutes remaining, McKeown broke clear down the right flank and scored with a low shot past Heggie and inside the far post to give Eagles a 4-3 win.



Eagles' keeper Nathan Pitchford leaps for a corner [PlessPix]

SOUTHERN PREMIER LEAGUE (As at 7 April 2012)

TEAM	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
New Town Eagles	4	4	0	0	12	8	12
South Hobart	4	3	0	1	12	5	9
Kingborough Lions Utd	4	2	1	1	13	7	7
Clarence United	4	2	0	2	14	9	6
Tilford Zebras	4	2	0	2	14	15	6
Glenorchy Knights	4	1	0	3	9	13	3
University	4	0	2	2	3	13	2
Olympia Warriors	4	0	1	3	9	16	1

New Town Eagles went to the top of the Southern Premier League ladder with this 4-3 win over Tilford Zebras at home at Clare Street. It was the second consecutive loss for the Zebras, who conceded four goals in both those defeats. They dropped to fourth on the ladder, which must be of concern to coach Eamonn Kelly. Zebras went behind to a 2nd-minute penalty scored by Alex Leszczynski. He was brought down by goalkeeper Craig Minty after just 40 seconds after a long pass out of defence by Andrew Clark created the opportunity inside the box.

Minty is a former Eagles keeper and he must have been horrified at the turn of events on his return to Clare Street. Zebras, who were missing Aaron Brazendale and Ryan Smith, levelled in the 22nd minute. Jon Foley-Donoghue released Ricky Self down the right and his short chip into the box was flicked over and past Eagles keeper Nathan Pitchford by Kurt Engels. Zebras hit the lead in the 25th minute when Clark was unable to clear and was outpaced by Dwayne Walsh, who went on and slid the ball past the advancing Pitchford. Adam McKeown went close to equalising for Eagles in the 32nd minute when his header from a free-kick flew narrowly wide.

Two minutes before the break, McKeown showed his aerial prowess and courage when he nodded home Ben Whitehall's cross from the right to make it 2-2. Minty had been concussed in a challenge from McKeown and did not reappear for the second half. In a controversial move, Zebras put Rowan Heggie in goal rather than their substitute goalkeeper, Kieron Siedler, who, in fact, was not even on the bench. Heggie has been a keeper in Futsal and was no stranger to the position. Once he settled down, he acquitted himself well and turned a dangerous shot over the bar in style.

It was a defensive error in the outfield that saw Eagles regain the lead in the 56th minute. Zebras needlessly gave possession away in midfield and Clark played a one-two on the right with Whitehall before scoring with a low drive to make it 3-2 for the home side. Henry Fagg restored the equilibrium with a brilliant goal for Zebras in the 69th minute, his half-volley out of nothing screaming into Pitchford's top left-hand corner of the net. McKeown grabbed the winner in the 78th minute when he raced down the right before beating Heggie to make it 4-3 and stun a shocked Zebras outfit and their supporters.

**New Town Eagles coach, Stephen Pitchford, said:**

Look, obviously, at the end of the day, you win by a goal and take three points home anytime when you play Zebras is excellent. I thought we probably should have finished them off a bit better at the start of the second half when they had their new goalkeeper in, and we had a few chances. He looked a bit suspect, but he ended up playing pretty well towards the end.

Again, my blokes, at 3-3 you would have thought that Zebras might have finished over the top of us, but our blokes just kept going and going and got that fourth goal and finished off.

Tilford Zebras coach, Eamonn Kelly, said:

After half-time, we were still in it.

A stupid penalty we gave away. No need for it. One-nil down in the first few minutes.

I think they showed a bit of character and a bit of guile and we did come back to half-time.

It makes it hard when you've got to replace that sort of man (goalkeeper Minty) in that position. To the boys' credit, I thought in the second half we were still in the game and we got to 3-3. I thought two of their goals were blatantly off-side, and not by a yard, but by five yards.



Zebra's Dwayne Walsh is surrounded by Eagles players [PlessPix]



Eagles keeper Nathan Pitchford catches a corner [PlessPix]

Eagles end Northerners' prospects in Milan Lakoseljac Memorial Trophy

Walter Pless | Thursday, 12 April 2012

(Milan Lakoseljac Memorial Trophy, Round of 16, Clare Street, Monday, 9 April 2012)
New Town Eagles 5 (Scott 11, Clamp 28, McKeown 62, Leszczynski 68, 75)
Prospect Knights 1 (Claxton 14)
HT: 2-1 Attendance - 90 Referee - K Barker

New Town Eagles: Clark, Cox, Page (Bates 65), Anderson (Quan 72) - Marshall, J Clamp, Scott, Collins - Leszczynski, McKeown (Subs not used: McCormack, Ayres)

Prospect Knights: Beardwood - Firth, Claxton (Young 72), N Balym, Pickering - La Palomba, Baker, Omenihu, Van Asch (Hartnett 68) - Crosswell, Compagne (Subs not used: A Balym)



New Town Eagles played with a confidence worthy of league leaders, a position they attained on the weekend when they beat Tilford Zebras 4-3 and South Hobart lost 3-2 to Clarence United.

The home side looked confident and were certainly not in awe of the reigning Northern Premier League champions, Ben Crosswell and all. Michael Anderson was assigned to man-mark Crosswell and he did an excellent job until being substituted after 72 minutes. By that time, Eagles were leading 4-1 and the game was over.

Crosswell had been given few chances. When he did manage a shot, it was tame and directed straight at the goalkeeper. His frustration told when, in the 65th minute, he was shown the yellow card by Mr Barker. Prospect Knights were in a good frame of mind even when behind and it was good to see that they did not make an issue of decisions that went against them. They took it in their stride and good-naturedly accepted the referee's call. They encouraged their young players and did their best, even though it was not good enough to come away with a win.

Liam Scott headed Eagles in front from Alex Leszczynski's delicate chip from the left in the 11th minute, the ball looping over keeper Kristan Beardwood, who was unable to react. The visitors were level 3 minutes later when Eagles showed their defensive frailties at a corner. When the ball came out to the edge of the box, Tim Claxton drove a low shot through a crowd of players that left keeper Nathan Pitchford unsighted and helpless as it flashed into the net.

The Northerners were not level for long. In the 28th minute, Eagles prised open the Prospect defence on the left and McKeown squared the ball for the advancing Jacob Clamp to side-foot home from 12 metres. Leszczynski should have added a third in the 32nd minute when he had only Beardwood to beat from the right of the box, but he lost his composure and blazed wildly high and wide of the target.

The visitors were not entirely without prospects, however, and with a minute of the first half remaining, Andrew Compagne broke through, only to be denied by the alert Pitchford. Leszczynski again shot wide in the 52nd minute as Eagles' greater fitness began to tell. Prospect hit back again, however, when Crosswell got onto the end of a long kick by Beardwood in the 57th minute and beat David Cox, but Pitchford blocked the shot in style.

Beardwood was called into action on the hour-mark and parried a McKeown effort wide for a corner. In the 62nd minute, Mark Page crossed towards the far post from deep on the right and McKeown stooped low to send a header flashing past Beardwood and into the net and make it 3-1 for Eagles. Eagles were completely in control by this stage and McKeown might have had another goal in the 64th minute, but he spurned the chance and shot wide.

Two minutes later, Leszczynski did the same as Eagles created chances, only to let the visitors off the hook. In the 68th minute, Nathan Balym seemed to be caught in two minds as to whether to clear or control the ball. He did neither and surrendered the ball to McKeown, who squared it for Leszczynski to score and make it 4-1. In the 75th minute,

Leszczynski added Eagles' fifth when he flicked the ball nonchalantly into the air and turned and volleyed it home. Prospect Knights were not quite finished and, in the 77th minute, Toby Omenihu broke clear down the inside-left channel after substitute Adam Bates missed his clearance completely. But, Omenihu's last touch was a little too strong and the ball escaped him, allowing Pitchford to make a timely clearance. To Prospect's credit, they refused to lie down and Pitchford had to block a Crosswell shot 4 minutes from the end. Fortunately for the keeper, it was directed straight at him. With 2 minutes remaining, Eagles fashioned a beautiful build-up that should have been capped by a goal, but Clamp shot wide.



New Town Eagles coach, Stephen Pitchford, said:

A 5-1 score-line might say that [an easy win], but they made us work really hard, certainly in the first half and again in the early parts of the second. Obviously, once you go a couple of goals up in a cup match, and, given the style of football we were playing, I think it made it hard for them to get a touch of the ball. We didn't convert all our chances. We played really good approach football, but some of the shots on target and maybe that last pass occasionally wasn't quite there. But I was very pleased with the performance.

Prospect Knights coach, Anton Balym, said:

Obviously, the result wasn't close, but we had three or four blokes out, so we knew it was going to be tough coming down here. White Eagles are a good side, so credit to them. They knocked the ball around really well early, which put us under pressure from the very start, so we were chasing our tails all day. We were beaten by a better side by a mile.



Eagles' Adam McKeown (right) engaged in defensive duties against Prospect Knights' Toby Omenihu [PlessPix]

South Hobart back on top and Eagles exposed as pretenders

Walter Pless | Sunday, 15 April 2012

(Southern Premier League, South Hobart, Saturday, 14 April 2012)

South Hobart 1 (Brennan 45)

New Town Eagles 0

HT: 1-0 Attendance - 130 Referee - I Jozeljic

South Hobart: Ferguson - Duffy, Bladel, Ludford, Williams - Feral, Merkuzic, Eaves - Mizael (Postma 67), Hickey, Brennan (Subs not used: Ince, Lees, Moncur)

New Town Eagles: N Pitchford - Clark, Cox, Page, Anderson - Marshall (Quan 64), Hudson, Scott, Whitehall (J Clamp 83) - Leszczynski, McKeown (Subs not used: Ayres, Bates, T Clamp)



South Hobart are back where they have been for the past four years - on top of the ladder - after beating New Town Eagles 1-0 at South Hobart on Saturday.

This must rank as the weakest South Hobart team I've seen in that time, but they were still too good for so-called title aspirants New Town Eagles, who were very disappointing. In fact, the game was disappointing and looked nothing like a top-of-the-table clash.

It was characterised by poor passing, deficient technical skills, lack of understanding and abysmal finishing when it came to chances. Even the goal was a result of mistakes rather than brilliance.

An Eagles forward pass was intercepted by Hugo Bladel, whose clearance went straight to former team-mate and now Eagles midfielder Liam Scott. Scott had a few touches in an attempt to control the ball but was dispossessed. Shae Hickey played it inside to Loic Feral near the half-way line and he put Mizael away in acres of space on the left, when the going started to get good.

Mizael took on Mark Page and beat him. As Eagles defenders converged on him, Mizael deliberately played a low ball from the left touchline across the goalmouth towards the far post, where Andy Brennan, all on his own, smashed the ball home. Atrocious defending by Eagles. They had three players around Mizael, but not one within a bull's roar of Brennan, who everyone knows is the danger man. Michael Anderson may have kept Brennan quiet for most of the game with his robust play, but he wasn't there when it mattered.

When, oh when, will teams learn that to ignore Brennan is suicide? Eagles had enough chances to win this game. But the team fell in a heap and was a fizzer. Alex Leszczynski was a huge disappointment, especially considering the way Eagles fans had been raving about him. He was slow off the mark, didn't read the play, and missed a couple of sitters.

Adam McKeown did a lot of running, but the service he received was poor and he had no real chances. He set up two for his pal Leszczynski, but they went begging. Liam Scott could have scored against his old club, but he fired wide when given the best chance of the game from Josh Quan's cut-back from the right midway through the second half. Quan should have been on earlier. He created chances with his pace and clever running when he came on in the 64th minute, but these were squandered by his team-mates.

As well as Scott's miss, Leszczynski shot wide of the far post from Quan's pass in the 71st minute to again let South Hobart off the hook. South Hobart had chances, too, with Hickey firing over, Bobby Eaves shooting just wide from long range, and Mizael and Feral also off target from range.

Bladel also had a couple of efforts after set-pieces cleared on the line. South also had numerous efforts blocked by the hard-working Andrew Clark, who must have looked like a piece of Swiss cheese by the end of the match, given the number of shots that ricocheted off his body. South Hobart will be relieved to have got away with three points after this performance.

New Town Eagles will need to be much more clinical if they want to win the title. This type of performance signifies that they could well be on the precipice of failure. Some of the physical challenges from Eagles were over the top and they were fortunate to get away without any red cards. I'm thinking of the elbow to Brennan's head late in the match. To give the youngster credit, he got up, shook his head to clear it, and got on with it.

Hugh Ludford, the South skipper, must be made of solid material, too. He crashed to earth heavily early in the game and the back of his head struck the ground in a whiplash-type of action. He looked groggy for a while after that but saw out the match. Hickey also saw out the match. That must be a relief to him these days. His performance was not up to his usual high standards at times, but who was there on the South Hobart bench to replace him?

The talent is spread a little thin these days. There was no sign of that perennial substitute, Nick Di Falco. The word is that he is finished at South, disenchanted at always being on the bench and getting little game time.

I wonder what Mr Chapman, now 82 years of age and a member of the 1959 South Hobart side, thought as he watched from the stands during a visit from England? I sat with a former Eagles and South Hobart player from the 1970s who goes to about one or two games a year. He won't be back this season.



South Hobart coach, Ken Morton, said:

For the first hour, we were absolutely terrific. Then we got a little bit sloppy and put a bit of pressure on ourselves because we didn't get the second goal to get away from them. I thought we were really good in the first half. We were dominant and strong for that first hour and played with a good purpose and I thought we deserved the win.

New Town Eagles coach, Stephen Pitchford, said:

I think it was a game befitting a top-of-the-table clash and both teams gave it everything. Unfortunately, today, we created enough chances but didn't put them away.

They punished us by taking one of their chances and that just about sums up the game.

We could possibly have brought Josh Quan on earlier, but we felt Marshall was doing enough. Quan coming on as a fresh player did liven things up out there and he created enough chances. He did his job.

Eagles trounce University and perch on top of the ladder

Walter Pless | Sunday, 22 April 2012

(Southern Premier League, Clare Street, Saturday, 21 April 2012)
New Town Eagles 6 (A McKeown 32, 54, 66, 71, A Leszczynski 52, B Whitehall 73)
University 2 (M Barnard 50, P Watts 83)
HT: 1-0 Attendance - 80 Referee - S Natoli

New Town Eagles: N Pitchford - Clark, Page (Ayres 85), Cox, Anderson - Quan, Hudson (Marshall 75), Scott - Leszczynski (Whitehall 70), J Clamp, McKeown (Subs not used: T Clamp, Collins)

University: Piesse - Scott, Merry, D Booth, Hewson (Galloway 46) - Watts, Hindmarsh, H Booth, Barnard - McCallum (Garcia 62), Conroy (Subs not used: Andrews, Proud)



New Town Eagles opened up a 2-point lead over South Hobart at the top of the Southern Premier League with this 6-2 win over second-last University at home at Clare Street on Saturday. Reigning champions South Hobart could only draw 1-1 at home to fourth-placed Kingborough Lions United the same afternoon.

Eagles had the better of the opening half-hour, Liam Scott thumping a great shot against the University crossbar, while the Students relied largely on sporadic counter-attacks.

In the 32nd minute, Eagles hit the front when University goalkeeper Martin Piesse did well to block a shot from Alex Leszczynski and Adam McKeown swept home the loose ball. University were level 5 minutes after the interval when

Miles Barnard hit a great shot from range that hit the back of the stanchion inside the goal-frame and rebounded into play. Two minutes later, Leszczynski restored Eagles' lead from a free-kick from just outside the box, while another two minutes passed before McKeown made it 3-1 for the home side with a low drive from the right.

Patrick Watts squandered a good chance for the visitors on the hour when he broke through the Eagles defence but, with only keeper Nathan Pitchford to beat, he lifted the ball over the bar. In the 66th minute, McKeown completed his hat-trick after collecting Scott's pass from the left and lobbing the ball over the advancing Piesse.

McKeown notched his fourth goal of the match with a brilliant first-time volley out of the blue from just outside the box in the 71st minute.

Ben Whitehall, who had replaced Leszczynski, made it 6-1 with a fine free-kick from 22 metres in the 73rd minute. Watts pulled another goal back for University 7 minutes from the end after a corner, but it was a mere consolation goal for the Students, who were well beaten at that stage.



New Town Eagles coach, Stephen Pitchford, said:

I thought we went out and played some really good football today and created plenty of chances. By half-time, we hadn't taken many of those chances and they were certainly well in the game. They gave us a wake-up call with a cracker of a goal from 35 and then, within about five minutes, we were two goals in front. We got a few more after that and could probably have gone on with it a bit more. But, a 6-2 win against anybody is pretty good. We're two points clear now, so, hopefully, we'll be able to maintain that going forward.

University's assistant coach, Saleh Bintalib, who coached the side in the absence of Gary Slicer, said:

Obviously, a very painful result to swallow. Honestly, when we got the equaliser, I honestly thought that we were coming back into the game very strongly. Very, very disappointing to see defensive lapses made at this level of football. The boys will just have to learn from the mistakes we made today. It's back to the drawing board.



Adam McKeown nets Eagles' fourth by lifting Liam Scott's pass over keeper Martin Piesse [PlessPix]



University's Harry Booth tries to outwit Eagles' Ben Whitehall [PlessPix]

Eagles have to settle for second spot after losing to Lions

Walter Pless | Sunday, 29 April 2012

(Southern Premier League, Lightwood Park, Saturday, 28 April 2012)
Kingborough Lions United 2 (Bevan 15, Schuth 23)
New Town Eagles 1 (Scott 62)
HT: 2-0 Attendance - 100 Referee - C Phillips

Kingborough Lions United: Duncan - Hawkins, Cowen, Iseli, Cuthbertson - Di Falco, Bevan, D Pearce, Schuth (Palmer 87) - Cooper, T Pearce (Farquhar 67) (Subs not used: F Kang, Bilson, Leamey)

New Town Eagles: N Pitchford - Clark, Cox, Page, Anderson - Whitehall, Scott, Hudson, Quan -McKeown, Leszczynski (Subs not used: J Clamp, Ayres, Collins, Bates, McCormack)



New Town Eagles were unable to regain the lead in the Southern Premier League, which they had relinquished to South Hobart, who had beaten Olympia Warriors on Friday night, because of this 2-1 loss away to fourth-placed Kingborough Lions United. The Lions were playing their first game at their Lightwood Park home this season and were delighted with the three points.

They had their backs to the wall for most of the second half as Eagles mounted challenge after challenge in a desperate attempt to at least equalise if not win, but they held out and survived some close calls through good shot-blocking by goalkeeper Andrew Duncan and resolute defending by his team-mates. The Lions keeper was, however, wayward with his clearances and poor passing by his team-mates enabled Eagles to press high and exert intense pressure on their opponents for most of the second half, making for a nail-biting finish.

Eagles should have taken the lead in the 13th minute when Liam Scott put Adam McKeown away and his square pass found Alex Leszczynski, but Leszczynski missed a very good chance from inside the box. Two minutes later, poor defending by the visitors enabled the Lions to go ahead as Ryan Bevan's corner from the left flew into the net off the inside of the far post. It was almost 2-0 a couple of minutes later, but Andrew Clark came to Eagles' rescue by clearing off the line.

Joel Schuth did make it 2-0 in the 23rd minute when his powerful volley out of nothing from the edge of the box left Eagles keeper Nathan Pitchford rooted to the spot.

Eagles came back strongly in the second half but had only a goal by Scott in the 62nd minute to show for it. Scott had had a fine effort deflected for a corner, but made amends seconds later when he got onto the end of a long ball into the penalty area from David Cox and beat keeper Andrew Duncan to nod home and make it 2-1.

Josh Quan then had the ball in the net, but the effort was off-side and Lions breathed a huge sigh of relief. Eagles were winning free-kicks and corners as the Lions teetered on the edge, but their set-pieces proved ineffective. The Lions were still dangerous on the counter-attack and David Cooper missed a relatively easy chance in the 85th minute from substitute Martin Farquhar's square pass into the penalty area.

In the final minute, Adam McKeown might have equalised for the visitors, but his first touch let him down and Duncan blocked his second attempt. Kingborough's strict man-marking paid dividends as Marc Iseli did an excellent job on Leszczynski and Danny Cowen kept McKeown goalless. Kingborough's new signing from South Hobart, Nick Di Falco, would have been pleased at being part of a winning side on his debut, as well as finally putting in 90 minutes.



Kingborough Lions United coach, Matthew Rhodes, said:

A great win. We're as good as any team in the league, and today proves it.

A lot of people don't think we are, but they've underestimated us and today proves that we're as good as anyone in the league.

New Town Eagles coach, Stephen Pitchford, said:

I think we played very, very well in patches and knocked the ball around and created an enormous amount of chances, but again, we didn't convert. When you don't convert, you don't win games. We gave away a couple of goals in the first half, possibly due to some wind, but possibly due to our play as well. I think the second 45 was ours. It was there for us

to take, but we just couldn't get the ball in the net. A couple of good saves from their keeper, probably a couple of bad shots on our part, but we're playing well enough and creating enough chances and that's positive going forward.



Eagles' David Cox challenges the Lions' Nick Cuthbertson to a header [PlessPix]



The Lions' David Cooper (No.14) gets a header on goal [PlessPix]

Eagles down Clarence for second week in a row

Walter Pless | Sunday, 13 May 2012

(Southern Premier League, Wentworth Park, Saturday, 12 May 2012)

Clarence United 0

New Town Eagles 2 (A Leszczynski 81, McKeown 85)

HT: 0-0 Attendance - 90 Referee - C Phillips

Clarence United: Ortiz - Toghill, Lewis, Malcolm, Price - Cannamela, Rees (Aldridge 76), Cairns, Karas - E Tsakiris Hoppitt (S Reibel 69) (Subs not used: Aitken, Cornish)

New Town Eagles: N Pitchford - Clark, Cox, Page, Anderson - Whitehall, Hudson, Scott, Quan (Collins 60) - Leszczynski (J Clamp 88), McKeown (Subs not used: Marshall, Ayres, T Clamp)



Clarence United's Colombian import, goalkeeper Carlos Ortiz, had an inauspicious debut in this match, conceding two goals as his side went down to the visiting New Town Eagles.

Clarence missed a penalty and a couple of other chances, which cost them the match. Both sides were keen to attack from the start and Clarence's Emmanuel Tsakiris headed over the bar early on, while Ortiz did well to block at the feet of Alex Leszczynski.

On the quarter-hour, a handball by an Eagles defender earned Clarence a penalty, but Aaron Cairns hit the left-hand post with his spot-kick to let the visitors off the hook. Pitchford produced an excellent save shortly after from Sam Cannamela, while at the other end, Ortiz did well to keep out a Ben Whitehall free-kick.

Just before the break, Adam McKeown fired straight at Ortiz, while Clarence were also fortunate when Nathan Rees cleared a Liam Scott shot off the line and Blayne Hudson lifted the rebound over the bar. On the hour mark, McKeown shot narrowly wide as Eagles sought to settle the match with plenty of attacking play. Clarence lost Rees to a leg injury with 15 minutes to go. He was stretchered off and it was later revealed to be a calf injury.

Nine minutes from the end, Leszczynski broke the deadlock with an amazing strike. He was put down the right by a throw-in from Whitehall and surprised Ortiz with a shot from an acute angle that went inside the far post.

Leszczynski and some of his team-mates were delirious with delight and raced on to the adjoining pitch as they celebrated. With five minutes remaining, Scott beat a couple of defenders on the right and crossed to the far post, where McKeown nodded home, again past a static Ortiz, to make it 2-0.

The win lifted second-placed Eagles back to within a point of leaders South Hobart, while Clarence United dropped from third to fourth spot because of an inferior goal-difference to Tilford Zebras.



Clarence United coach, Ronnie Bolton, said:

I think we were hard done by, really. It's our own fault. We switched off for a couple of minutes and they scored a freak goal. Then we switched off again and they get another goal. We lost the game. We should have had two or three ourselves by half-time. It makes it difficult when we don't take our chances. To be fair to Eagles, they get the job done. To play the way we did tonight and to come away with nothing is disappointing. It's something we'll have to address at training this week.

New Town Eagles coach, Stephen Pitchford, said:

As we expected, it was a really tight contest. It usually is between these two teams. We simply looked to play out the 90 minutes. I thought the second half, we gradually got on top as the half went on. Having said that, they had a couple of chances and our keeper needed to pull off a couple of saves. I think at the end of the day, 'Albie' [Alex Leszczynski] pulling one out from the by-line there was pretty good. And, obviously, we finished off at the end to make it two nil. I was very pleased with the performance by the boys.

SOUTHERN PREMIER LEAGUE (As at 12 May 2012)

TEAM	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
South Hobart	8	6	1	1	18	6	19
New Town Eagles	8	6	0	2	21	13	18
Tilford Zebras	8	4	1	3	29	23	13
Clarence United	8	4	1	3	20	15	13
Kingborough Lions United	7	3	3	1	19	12	12
Glenorchy Knights	8	1	2	5	12	19	5
Olympia Warriors	8	1	1	6	13	23	4
University	7	0	3	4	8	29	3

Olympia beat Eagles under new coach McNeill

Walter Pless | Sunday, 20 May 2012

(Forestry Tasmania Southern Premier League, Warrior Park, Friday, 18 May 2012)

Olympia Warriors 1 (C Kumpulainen 8)

New Town Eagles 0

HT: 1-0 Attendance - 150 Referee - S Natoli

Olympia Warriors: Kay - P Tsakiris, Taylor, Begovic, Phillips - Wadawau (Grillas 57), Mason, Kumpulainen, Meredith - Fielding, Woolley (Subs not used: Maxwell, Y Mohamad, Fry)

New Town Eagles: N Pitchford - Clark, Cox, Page, Anderson - Whitehall (Marshall 75), Hudson, Scott (Ayres 90), Collins - Leszczynski (J Clamp 87), McKeown (Subs not used: Bates, Bunt)



A new strip, a new coach, and a ground with new safety features. That is what Friday night was for Olympia Warriors. They made the most of it by beating second-placed New Town Eagles 1-0 to move up a place into sixth spot on the Forestry Tasmania Southern Premier League standings. The result was a rude awakening for Eagles, who were just a point behind leaders South Hobart as the match kicked off. They had at least three early chances that were missed by Alex Leszczynski, Adam McKeown and Liam Scott.

But, Olympia had already shown attacking prowess in the opening minutes, with Warren Wadawau's pace causing concern down the flanks and young Harry Woolley's speed and enthusiasm in the middle of the attack threatening the Eagles' rear-guard. In the 8th minute, Olympia took the lead and settled their nerves. Wadawau's corner from the right was nodded home by Chris Kumpulainen as Eagles keeper Nathan Pitchford got tangled up with team-mate Ben Whitehall, preventing him from reaching the ball. In the 19th minute, Woolley was just wide with a fine low shot as Olympia went all out for a second goal.

The home side almost got a second on the half-hour following Ben Phillips's deep cross from the left. Pitchford punched clear but was left stranded out of his goal, while Wadawau's tame effort at an open goal was cleared off the line. Kumpulainen missed a sitter in the 33rd minute when Pitchford missed Nick Meredith's left-wing cross, his header looping over the bar and landing on the roof of the net.

Olympia surprisingly replaced Wadawau with Kosta Grillas in the 57th minute. Wadawau still posed a threat, while Grillas was an unknown quantity after some disappointing recent performances. In the 70th minute, Scott squandered a clear chance by heading Whitehall's corner harmlessly over the bar. Ten minutes from the end, Peter Tsakiris tripped McKeown

as he broke into the left of the box and an equaliser appeared a formality as Mr Natoli pointed to the penalty spot. But, Leszczynski's spot kick came back off the base of the left-hand post and Eagles were still a goal down. In the 84th minute, Josh Fielding missed a marvellous opportunity to make sure of victory when he somehow miscued his shot from a Grillas cut-back.

Pitchford kept Eagles in with a chance when he brilliantly denied Woolley in a one-on-one situation after Fielding's astute pass had put the youngster clean through on goal. In stoppage time, Robert Kay ensured Olympia of the points when he expertly turned Bradley Ayres's shot wide for a corner. The match ended to the cheers of the Olympia fans, who sensed the beginning of a revival for their team under new coach Glen McNeill. They were also gracious victors, remaining respectful and silent as the Eagles players filed past them on their way to the dressing rooms.



Olympia Warriors coach, Glen McNeill, said:

So far, so good. We went in with a plan today and [we've only had the one session] the boys were just fabulous. They gave one hundred per cent effort and that's all I can ask.

[I was absolutely worried when they won the penalty], but sometimes it goes your way and sometimes it doesn't. We've all got those sorts of games where that's happened, and luckily, it was our night. It was great. I think we had probably the lion's share of opportunities and that's something we're going to continue to work on, our finishing, and that type of thing. It's fantastic that we're getting into the right spaces. It's early days. We're in the honeymoon period at the moment. We're a good team but we're in a transition time. There's going to be ups and downs, but we're going to enjoy tonight for what it is, and we'll look forward to next week.

New Town Eagles coach, Stephen Pitchford, said:

I think Olympia were always going to want this game [so it was more than just a missed penalty that cost us]. We spoke about it beforehand that they were going to be up tonight, and they certainly were. They were first to the ball most of the night. Having said that, we created enough chances in the first half to have been well in the game at half-time. I mean, at 1-0 down, we still thought we could take it. In the second half, I don't think we performed as well as we should have, and I think there was a bit of frustration there near the end.

It [the penalty] could have cost us, but again, if you don't take your penalties, then you're going to struggle to pick up points. [Our two front-runners] both had chances to score tonight, so, from that point of view, they seemed to work okay. I mean, obviously they were targeted with man-to-man marking and that worked well for Olympia to an extent. But, having said that, we still created chances. I'm not too concerned about the front pairing at this stage. We'll just continue to play in that fashion again but hopefully with that little bit more bite. We've got a cup game next week that's pretty important [a semi-final] down at Tarooma and we'll play on another tight field and we'll, hopefully, change some things just a little bit.

Eagles end Tarooma's fairy tale and qualify for Milan Lakoseljac Memorial Trophy final

Walter Pless | Saturday, 26 May 2012

(Semi-Final, Milan Lakoseljac Memorial Trophy, Kelvedon Park, Saturday, 26 May 2012)

Tarooma 1 (E Luttmer 67)

New Town Eagles 5 (A Leszczynski 7, 53, J Clamp 69, C Collins 73, J Marshall 85)

HT: 0-1 Attendance - 200 Referee - B Kopra

Tarooma: Burridge - Tubb, Wright, Cherry, Darragh Carey - James (R Carey 53), Burgess (Atkinson 46), E Luttmer, Dove - Hamilton, Young (Haslewood 80) (Sub not used: Hortle)

New Town Eagles: N Pitchford - Clark, Cox, Anderson, Page - Whitehall (Bunt 84), Hudson, J Clamp, Collins - Leszczynski (Marshall 74), McKeown (Ayres 80) (Sub not used: McCormack)



Tarooma were the sole survivors from the second tier of Tasmanian football going into this semi-final of the Milan Lakoseljac Memorial Trophy competition. They had produced two giant-killing feats to reach this stage by disposing of Premier League opponents, but even home-ground advantage was of no use in this contest.

Football Federation Tasmania had cleared the ground for play after an inspection in the morning, while the referee, Mr Kopra, gave his okay following an afternoon pitch inspection. New Town Eagles kicked off and immediately put the home side under pressure. It took just over six minutes for the visitors to take the lead following a fine attacking move started on the left and finished when David Cox sent over a deep cross from the right for Alex Leszczynski to bravely beat keeper John Burridge in the air and head home.

Eagles continued to attack, with Adam McKeown missing a couple of chances to increase their lead, but his shots always flew just wide. Leszczynski was also foiled by a good save from Burridge.

Tarooma found it difficult to mount attacks and, when they did, they broke down in the final third as they gave the ball away. Eight minutes after the interval, Leszczynski made it 2-0. A throw-in on the left saw the ball worked over to the right and a poor header by a Tarooma defender went straight to Leszczynski, who held off a challenge from Llewyn Tubb to shoot home. There were claims of off-side and Mr Kopra had to consult his assistant, Mr Natoli, but he then awarded the goal.

Eli Luttmer pulled a goal back for the home side when he nipped in ahead of Jacob Clamp and headed home Darragh Carey's excellent corner from the left. In the 69th minute, Eagles restored their two-goal buffer. Ben Whitehall's throw-in

from the right found Leszczynski, who outwitted a defender and crossed. Burrridge could only help the ball on, and Clamp struck it into the roof of the net from point-blank range.

Cormac Collins made it 4-1 with a far-post header from Whitehall's free-kick from wide on the left. McKeown should have added a fifth in the 79th minute, but his half-volley was directed straight at Burrridge. Five minutes from the end, substitute Jeremy Marshall made it 5-1 when Clamp lost control of the ball and it fell to Marshall, who drilled it past Burrridge.

Marshall almost had a second in stoppage time, but his shot came back off the crossbar. The match ended with an attacking run by Taroona substitute Marcus Atkinson, who forced a fruitless corner. Eagles will meet the winner of the other semi-final between Glenorchy Knights and South Hobart, who play at 1pm at KGV Park tomorrow [Sunday] after their scheduled match on Friday night was postponed because of ground conditions.



Taroona coach, Andrew Tye, said:

No fairy tale finish today. I think the boys needed to be at their very best today to beat Eagles. I don't think they were at their best. They tried hard. One-nil at half-time and I think we were definitely in the contest. We made a few changes. Second goal knocked the wind out of our sails a bit, I think. Got it back to 2-1 and I thought we were there and then they took it away from us. Congratulations to Eagles.

New Town Eagles coach, Stephen Pitchford, said:

I thought it was a very good effort by our boys. First half, I thought we dominated play and created plenty of chances but just didn't put them away. Second half, we continued in the same vein but put some of our chances away. A couple of really good goals and a couple of other really good moves went close. Very happy. To be honest, [I'd like to meet South] in the final. I think if the Knights got up over South in the semi, they'd be really, really buoyed by that and dangerous. I'd be happy to play either, to be truthful.



Alex Leszczynski heads Eagles' opening goal [PlessPix]

Eagles beat Knights comfortably in dress rehearsal for Milan Lakoseljac Memorial Trophy final

Walter Pless | Sunday, 03 June 2012

(Forestry Tasmania Southern Premier League, Clare Street, Saturday, 2 June 2012)

New Town Eagles 4 (L Scott 21, A Leszczynski 61 pen, C Collins 65, B Hudson 86)

Glenorchy Knights 0

HT: 1-0 Attendance - 100 Referee - K Barker

New Town Eagles: N Pitchford - Anderson (Marshall 89), Page, Cox, Clark - Whitehall (Bunt 84), Hudson, Scott, Collins - Leszczynski (J Clamp 79), McKeown (Sub not used: Ayres)

Glenorchy Knights: Le Rossignol - Nowicki, Holmes, Johnson, Clay - Hey, Huigsloot, Griffin (Dawes 60) - Robb (Roberts 75), Strang (Stanton 77), Letiko (Subs not used: Kamano, Peter)



New Town Eagles moved to within 2 points of leaders South Hobart with this comfortable 4-0 win over Glenorchy Knights at home at Clare Street. The result leaves Knights in second-last place and they will be hoping that University don't get home against Clarence United this evening.

Blayne Hudson had the first chance of the match for Eagles after a mere 5 minutes, but his powerful shot cleared the bar. Knights responded with an effort by Simon Strang, but Eagles defender Mark Page headed off the line.

Eagles hit the front in the 21st minute in a move that was started and finished by Liam Scott. He played the ball wide to the right to Ben Whitehall, who knocked the ball inside to Adam McKeown, who was bundled over in what appeared to be a foul. Mr Barker played the advantage and the ball fell for Cormac Collins to set up Scott, who hammered it home inside Trent Le Rossignol's left-hand upright.

The first half ended with Collins shooting wide, but there was not much to separate the two sides other than Scott's goal. Jacob Huigsloot, one of the Knights' better performers on the day, went close in the 56th minute with a drive that flew just wide of Nathan Pitchford's right-hand post.

Eagles won a penalty in the 61st minute, but it was controversial. Matthew Nowicki's tackle on McKeown seemed fair, but he may just have tripped McKeown a split second later as the ball rolled free. Alex Leszczynski ended the controversy by tucking away the spot-kick to make it 2-0 for the home side.

Four minutes later, Eagles killed off the match when Collins netted their third with a low drive from an angle on the right of the box, the ball flashing across Le Rossignol and inside the far post. Huigsloot went off injured with 10 minutes remaining and the Knights were a man down because they had used their quota of three substitutes.

Four minutes from the end, Hudson was rewarded for a strong display when he rifled home Eagles' fourth from just inside the box after a corner from the right. This was a very disappointing display by the Knights, who had played so well last weekend against South Hobart in the semi-finals of the Milan Lakoseljac Memorial Trophy. One just never knows which Knights team is going to turn up on any given day for a match. This one seemed more like their reserve side. But, then again, Knights' reserves beat Eagles 7-2 in the curtain-raiser.



New Town Eagles coach, Stephen Pitchford, said:

Yeah, yeah, very pleasing, especially the second half when we actually converted three goals. I think, at half time, it was probably there for either side to take, and our boys stepped up and took it. We converted the penalty and got a few different scorers on the board as well. We're now only two points behind them [South Hobart] and I think they'll know we're there and possibly the next few weeks will be very interesting in the season.

Glenorchy Knights coach, Chris Hey, said:

I think we'll turn out tomorrow, to be honest with you. Look, to start off, credit to Eagles. They played some good football given the conditions. They knocked it around well, they played the simple ball. You know, the first goal was, you know, perfectly set up for the conditions - in to feet, lay it back and a good strike by young Liam [Scott]. And, they continued to play that way all game.

Our passing game wasn't there. We tried to knock it around a little more, but we were chasing shadows, and just our general execution around the park, with people not willing to take responsibility. It's very, very disappointing. I think some of them left their minds in their car or at home today.

Glenorchy Knights claim their third Milan Lakoseljac Memorial Trophy with win over Eagles

Walter Pless | Tuesday, 12 June 2012

(Milan Lakoseljac Memorial Trophy Final, KGV Park, Monday, 11 June 2012)

Glenorchy Knights 3 (Dawes 3, Marney 16, Strang 52)

New Town Eagles 2 (Leszczynski 31 pen, Scott 70)

HT: 2-1 Attendance - 750 Referee - K Barker (I Jozeljic 90)

Glenorchy Knights: Le Rossignol - J Hey, Johnson (Robb 82), Holmes, Clay - Griffin, Huigsloot, Dawes (Nowicki 72), Marney - Strang, Letiko (Subs not used: Peter, Roberts, Sherman)

New Town Eagles: N Pitchford - Clark, Cox, Page, Anderson - Whitehall (Quan 90+2), Scott, Hudson, Collins (Marshall 62) - McKeown, Leszczynski (Subs not used: Bunt, Bates, J Clamp)



The Glenorchy Knights squad before the match [PlessPix]

Glenorchy Knights collected the Milan Lakoseljac Memorial Trophy for the third time since its inception in 2000 by beating New Town Eagles 3-2 in an exciting final before an excellent crowd at KGV Park on Monday night. The Knights had last won this trophy, named after one of their former players, in 2005, while Eagles have yet to get their talons on it. It was appropriate, therefore, that Neridene Lakoseljac, Milan's widow, and his son Brendan and grandson Bradley, were in attendance. Neridene presented the trophy, while Bradley took the toss before the match. Brendon made a large banner containing photos of his father and the Knights' history and this was displayed prominently in the Knights' dressing room.



The New Town Eagles squad before the match [PlessPix]

A minute's silence was observed before the game in memory of the late Marko Begovic, father of former Knights players Janko, Marijan and Elena Begovic, who passed away while on holiday in Croatia last week. The Knights were clearly hyped up for this one and they started at full throttle and took the lead after just three minutes when Jade Clay played the ball forward to the edge of the box on the left to Aaron Marney, who flicked it through for Jason Dawes to beat the advancing goalkeeper, Nathan Pitchford.

It was 2-0 in the 16th minute when Jacob Huigsloot chipped a high ball into the Eagles penalty area. When Michael Anderson made a hash of trying to clear, the ball fell to Marney, who slotted it past an unprotected Pitchford. Eagles seemed down and out, but they pulled a goal back in the 31st minute through an Alex Leszczynski penalty. Jayden Hey lost possession in midfield and the ball was passed forward to Adam McKeown, who raced for goal. He was brought down inside the box by Simon Strang for what was a clear penalty. But, Mr Barker waved play on for some reason as McKeown got up and made another run. This time he was brought down by Sam Johnson and Mr Barker awarded a penalty, which he should really have done after Strang's tackle. Leszczynski netted easily, placing his spot-kick to the right of Trent Le Rossignol, who dived to his left.

Knights appeared to be suffering some self-doubt at this point and must have been relieved when half-time arrived, enabling them to regroup. The Knights restored their two-goal buffer 7 minutes after the resumption. A poor clearance by Nathan Pitchford went straight to Dawes, who knocked the ball wide to the right to Strang. The former Eagles player raced forward and then unleashed a magnificent low right-footed drive that zipped into the bottom far left-hand corner of the net to give Knights a 3-1 lead.

Dawes should have added a fourth in the 58th minute after good work by Hey on the right, but he looped his header over the bar. Le Rossignol made a mess of a Ben Whitehall free-kick in the 66th minute, but McKeown struggled to get in a shot from close range and the chance went begging. A minute later, Pitchford did well to save Marney's dangerous shot, while seconds after that, Liam Scott fired wide from range for Eagles.

With 20 minutes remaining, Eagles got back into contention again when they scored to make it one goal the difference. Scott released Whitehall on the right and he crossed towards the far side of the box, where Hey's clearing header went straight to Scott, who side-footed a perfect lob into the far right-hand corner of Le Rossignol's net.

With a quarter of an hour remaining, Scott almost found an equaliser, but Clay and Le Rossignol combined to deny the Eagles midfielder with some desperate defending. Both sides made substitutions in an effort to find another goal, while tempers flared and Huigsloot and Whitehall both received yellow cards. Mr Barker tweaked a hamstring before the end and fourth official Mr Jozeljic had to take over for the 6 minutes of stoppage time. This did not change the fortunes of either side and the Knights hung on to win 3-2 in what had been a pulsating match.



Alex Leszczynski scores from the penalty spot [PlessPix]

Glenorchy Knights coach, Chris Hey, said:

Extremely relieved, I must admit. That second half seemed to go on for a long time. I honestly believed we could win it. I said all along it was going to take a very good performance to stop us with the attitude of the players that continued all the way through the games in this competition. I personally think a very deserved win for us tonight. That third goal from Strang in the second half was a beautiful goal and I thought it was ours from there.

New Town Eagles coach, Stephen Pitchford, said:

I feel pretty deflated, I suppose. I think tonight we were a bit flat when we went out and they were up for it. They punished us for our mistakes and then, when we worked hard enough to create the chances, had the ball in the right positions, we didn't punish them for their mistakes. I think we could have had three or four more goals. Obviously, at the end, we were pushing forward and pushing forward. We were in the game for long periods and only that one goal behind, but we just couldn't get back on level terms.

Eagles down South to make Southern Premier League more interesting

Walter Pless | Monday, 18 June 2012

(Forestry Tasmania Southern Premier League, Clare Street, Sunday, 17 June 2012)

New Town Eagles 2 (A McKeown 13, A Leszczynski 18)

South Hobart 1 (A Brennan 5)

HT: 2-1 Attendance - 120 Referee - S Natoli

New Town Eagles: N Pitchford - D Cox - A Clark, M Page - M Anderson - B Whitehall, B Hudson, L Scott, C Collins (Marshall 77) - A McKeown, A Leszczynski (Subs not used: Quan, J Clamp)

South Hobart: Ferguson - Duffy, Ludford, N Clarke (Rogers 69), Williams - Hickey, Feral, Eaves (Bladel 36) - Postma (Ince 67), Brennan, N Morton (Sub not used: Moncur)



Second-placed New Town Eagles kept the interest in the Forestry Tasmania Southern Premier League alive by beating leaders South Hobart 2-1 at home at Clare Street to move to within a point of the reigning champions.

A minute's silence was observed before kick-off in memory of Tracey Ross, whose sons Will and Sam play for South Hobart. Tracey was the wife of Brett Ross and the daughter of noted former coach Duncan Summers and his wife Judy.

An error by Andrew Clark and goalkeeper Nathan Pitchford enabled South Hobart to take the lead after just five minutes. Clark slipped as he attempted to stay with Andy Brennan, while Pitchford allowed the striker's shot from just outside the box to slither under him and roll over the line and into the net. Eagles picked themselves up, however, and two goals in five minutes shortly afterwards put them in front. They held the lead until the end to earn three valuable points.

In the 13th minute, South Hobart failed to clear a corner won by Cormac Collins. Ben Whitehall floated the ball in and two of South Hobart's defenders headed the ball straight up in the air inside the penalty area. The third touch was also a header, but by Eagles' Michael Anderson, who served the ball up for Adam McKeown to volley home and make it 1-1. It was a marvellous strike by McKeown and he and Brennan had thus ended their goal droughts.

Five minutes later, Eagles produced a brilliant attack, beginning with Nathan Pitchford's goal-kick. Not one South Hobart player touched the ball before the goal. The move reached its climax when Collins centred from the left and, although Matthew Ferguson produced a fine save from Alex Leszczynski's header, Leszczynski was on hand to hit the ball against the under-side of the crossbar and over the line. The ball bounced back out and so Leszczynski headed it into the net just to be sure and gave Eagles a 2-1 lead.

Nick Morton had a chance to level in the 33rd minute, but he missed when positioned at the far post after a left-wing cross. South Hobart replaced the injured Bobby Eaves with Hugo Bladel in the 36th minute and he played in midfield rather than at the heart of the defence, which has been his most recent position.

In the 38th minute, Loic Feral, back from France, played an excellent ball down the left for Brennan to run onto. He rounded keeper Pitchford but shot into the side-netting. In the closing seconds of the first half, Pitchford did well to save a shot from the marauding Hugh Ludford, who had gone into the attack for a few minutes.

Liam Scott fired over the bar shortly after the start of the second half, while Leszczynski was also wide with a low shot as Eagles kept up their momentum.

In the 57th minute, Eagles were fortunate not to concede when South Hobart fullback Cameron Williams, venturing forward for a corner, fired low but narrowly wide. With five minutes remaining, Scott found himself in a one-on-one with Ferguson but somehow placed his shot straight at the goalkeeper. Three minutes from the end, a glancing header by Morton was fielded by Pitchford just under the bar.

South Hobart had plenty of possession and their team-work was good, but they lacked penetration and that telling shot that could have turned the game.

Eagles were resolute and stuck to their task throughout the match. They refused to be overawed by their opponents. David Cox played well at the back, while McKeown produced a vintage performance. His back-heel to Collins in the build-up to Leszczynski's goal was all class.

**New Town Eagles coach, Stephen Pitchford, said:**

I think you're always nervous when you're only a goal in front. It only takes a slip and the ball is in the back of the net. But we continued to push and create chances when they were pushing at us. There's only four or five points between the top four teams now, so the second half of the season will be really, really important.

To me, it was a team effort and right across the park I think they worked for 90 minutes and I just think it's a magnificent performance by a team that could quite easily have been demoralised by a grand final loss.

To come out here against the top team and play as well as they did, I just think it's fantastic.

South Hobart coach, Ken Morton, said:

They were the better team. They played with more life than us, played with more energy. Their game was very predictable, but they play it, and they play it well, so credit to White Eagles today. We were second best.

Hugo [Bladel] has obviously been away so for him to come back into midfield and pick up the pace was difficult. That's where he wants to play. He thinks he's a midfield player, so we put him in there to do a job and that didn't happen today. We were second best in midfield.

I think the depth on the bench is all right. When Ince came on he gave them a few problems with his pace. Everybody's in the same boat. White Eagles are the same as we are. If we get injuries, suspension or whatever, your first team is depleted, and you rely on your back-up and that's what we've done today and today we weren't good enough.

We didn't have any penetration today. The pitch wasn't made for good football. I mean, some of the first touches from all the players was bad today. If your first touch is bad, it gives them a chance of the ball and McKeown is quick, Leszczynski is a good target man to bounce the ball off and young McKeown works hard to get into goal-scoring positions, so it was maybe too much possession today could hurt us and a couple of times they did. They had really good breakaways. Liam [Scott] maybe should have done better when one on one with the keeper, but we'll learn from it.

Andy [Brennan] missed one and Nick [Morton] missed one at the back post. There were a couple of chances where we maybe could have gone in at half-time 2-2 or maybe with our noses in front and it's a different game.

We thought we were doing okay because we fancied coming uphill in the second half. The pitch is a bit longer this end, but this side of the field is very heavy going and the touches were difficult for the players to get it down and play.

SOUTHERN PREMIER LEAGUE (As at 17 June 2012)

TEAM	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
South Hobart	12	8	2	2	31	8	26
New Town Eagles	12	8	1	3	28	16	25
Kingborough Lions Utd	12	5	6	1	31	21	21
Clarence United	12	6	2	4	27	22	20
Tilford Zebras	12	4	4	4	34	30	16
Olympia Warriors	12	3	2	7	25	31	11
Glenorchy Knights	12	2	3	7	17	27	9
University	12	0	4	8	10	48	4

Eagles score six without reply for second week in row

Walter Pless | Sunday, 01 July 2012

(Forestry Tasmania Southern Premier League, Clare Street, Saturday, 30 June 2012)

New Town Eagles 6 (McKeown 1, 83, Clamp 3, Leszczynski 12 pen, Scott 62, Page 65)

Kingborough Lions United 0

HT: 3-0 Attendance - 120 Referee - I Jozeljic

New Town Eagles: N Pitchford - Clark, Cox, Page (Bunt 77), Anderson - Whitehall (Quan 67), Hudson, Scott, Leszczynski - Clamp (Marshall 67), McKeown (Sub not used: Graham)

Kingborough Lions United: Leamey - Hawkins, Cowen, Iseli (T Pearce 72), Cooper - Di Falco, Bevan (Herweynen 66), Cuthbertson, D Pearce - Schuth, Farquhar (F Kang 66) (Subs not used: Duncan, Hartog)

New Town Eagles knocked in six goals without reply against the visiting Kingborough Lions United to go 2 points clear at the top of the Forestry Tasmania Southern Premier League. It was Kingborough's heaviest defeat in the league this season.

South Hobart coach Ken Morton was watching. His side can regain the lead on Sunday with a win over Olympia Warriors at South Hobart. It took Eagles just 18 seconds to take the lead and the Lions did not touch the ball until keeper David Leamey had to pick it out of the net. A series of passes in an attack down the right ended with Alex Leszczynski back-heeling the ball for Adam McKeown to fire home from close range.

It was 2-0 in the 3rd minute when Whitehall played the ball across the face of goal for Jacob Clamp to score easily. Kingborough recovered their composure by the 8th minute and Ryan Bevan's low drive clipped the outside of Nathan Pitchford's right-hand post, while seconds later, Pitchford did well to get down to a powerful shot from Joel Schuth.

A minute later, Schuth failed to connect with a high ball that should have provided him with a headed goal. Marc Iseli brought down McKeown for a penalty in the 12th minute and Leszczynski converted the spot-kick to make it 3-0 against a now shell-shocked Kingborough outfit that had no answer to Eagles' speed and tenacity. The home side could smell blood and were in the mood for a slaughter.

On the half-hour, McKeown almost had a second when Andrew Clark drove the ball forward. The ball took a slight deflection and floated to McKeown, stationed at the far left-hand post. His header was turned against the underside of the bar by Leamey before the ball was cleared.

Two goals in four minutes just after the hour-mark continued the Eagles rampage. Liam Scott netted in the 62nd minute after a well-executed attack, while Mark Page made it 5-0 in the 65th minute as the Lions capitulated.

The visitors and the home side made several substitutions at this stage. For Eagles, it was to give their substitutes a run. For Kingborough, it was a desperate ploy to attempt to salvage something from the game and limit further damage. It didn't work for the Lions. With 7 minutes remaining, McKeown rounded the advancing Leamey on the right and stroked the ball home for goal number six.

Just before that, McKeown had two good chances. His low shot was well stopped by Leamey, while he headed an inviting cross over the bar shortly after.

Schuth was unlucky not to pull a goal back for the visitors with 10 minutes left, his powerful shot coming back off the crossbar. It was the second week in a row that Eagles had scored six goals and kept a clean sheet. That is an ominous sign for the other teams in the competition as we reach the business end of the campaign.



New Town Eagles coach, Stephen Pitchford, said:

A very good performance backing up from last week. A really good start for us, simple passing moves resulting in goals.

We probably should have finished off a bit better in the second half, but the fact we kept going for 90 minutes on a pretty heavy field - although not as heavy as it might have been - was really good to see.

We brought three boys off the bench who continued to put in as well and the pressure kept going. "Very good to have a clean sheet again and, hopefully, we'll be able to continue in the weeks ahead.

It should have been double figures, probably, looking at some of the shots. Sometimes we held onto it and probably didn't finish as clinically as we'd like, but if you're knocking in six in a game, then you can't complain.

Kingborough Lions United coach, Matthew Rhodes, said:

It was terrible. When you give away a goal in the first 15 seconds, you're always in trouble. The truth of the matter is, and people can say what they like, we've been struggling in midfield all year.

We've put stopgaps in there and, at the moment, we haven't got a genuine midfielder that can control the game. We're losing in there every week. How we are where we are, sometimes, I wonder.

Until we can get that midfield right - and we keep trying people in there - we're going to struggle. At the moment, we're just filling gaps in there, and some of our better players haven't had a great year either. It's always hard.



Kingborough keeper David Leamey can't keep out Alex Leszczynski' s penalty [PlessPix]



Eagles' Mark Page celebrates his goal. He was shown a yellow card for his troubles [PlessPix]

Top two fight to the death

July 2, 2012 by The Back Post – Alex Luttrell

The Back Post brings you a special feature from our newest contributor, Alex Luttrell, who explores the 2012 southern Premier League title race. After the fourteenth week of games, just one round remains in the Forestry Tasmania Southern Premier League and it is shaping up to be the closest two-horse title race since the start of South Hobart's tenure in 2008.

Both South Hobart and New Town Eagles, who sit in first and second place, respectively, are currently engaged in a fierce duel, with South currently holding a slight edge atop the table despite the Eagles defeating the defending champions three weeks ago.

After 14 games, South have managed 10 wins, two draws and two losses and are on 32 points after they held off a determined Olympia Warriors 4-2 at Darcy Street.

Eagles sit on 10 wins, one draw and three losses on 31 points after they brushed aside any hopes Kingborough had of winning the league with a 6-0 demolition at Clare Street.

The Eagles have not won a premiership in the Southern League since 1986, but won the Tasmanian State League Minor Premiership and Finals Series in 1997. The Polish-orientated club has not merely obtained a total of two Southern titles since their inception in 1961, but have eight State League trophies under their belt and they do know about success.

However, South Hobart have a much more prominent history, having collected 21 Southern trophies since the club's formation in 1910, over 101 seasons up till 2011. Statistics point to South Hobart success again this year, having won the last four Southern Premier League titles as well as a number of other trophies under the guidance of Ken Morton.

The closest the Eagles have come to the premiership recently was in 2000 under George Krambousanos, where they finished runners-up to Glenorchy Knights.

So far two out of three head to head encounters having been played between the two, with South winning 1-0 on the 14th of April and the Eagles getting the best of South on the 17th of June. This recent 2-1 win for the Eagles over their nearest title rivals has strengthened the squad and the belief within themselves to topple South's phenomenal four-year Southern Premier League run.

Eagles' coach Stephen Pitchford commented on the impact of the game for the remainder of the season.

It's a psychological advantage in terms of having the confidence to go out and beat whoever you play and the fact we've been able to do it more than once over the top side [South Hobart] gives them confidence going into other games.

We've certainly got the ability to win all of the remaining games and I think we're getting better in terms of creating chances and it will be how we convert those chances in the big games.

South coach Ken Morton also commented on his sides recent loss to its nearest rivals and its implications for their fifth championship running I think the loss to Eagles has had a positive effect on us. You have to learn from your defeats and push on, and while we truly respect the Eagles our aim is to keep going forward.

It had a big impact on the season because if we had won that we would have gone seven points clear. Now it will make us put in good efforts every week. I think we all need to stay injury free, avoid red cards and avoid any silly results.

Morton was also aware that the situation atop the table is every close and could come down to the very end. Obviously, we've got our noses in front now and that's where we want to stay but at this time of the year when in this situation at the top you can't afford to lose silly points.

You've got to grind results out now and I think we've got the experience to do that. There's still a backbone of experienced players in Hugh Ludford, Shae Hickey, Loic Feral and Matthew Ferguson to give us stability.

The title may very well be decided in their final meeting in week 19 on the fifth of August at South's Darcy Street fortress, depending on each sides' consistency in their run home and Morton was cautiously optimistic on South's chances.

I think that the clash with the Eagles will be an important one and that might have some bearing on who wins the league. I think it was in 2008 when it was pretty tight at the top of the table, so we've been there before, and we just have got through this next round of matches undefeated. We need to play our own game and focus on sharp passing and movement off the ball. The last game at Clare Street, they played their own football and we got sucked in and played a bit longer than we wanted.

He also believed that the players' and training situations will combine for the club's endeavour to take out the league, or at least make a good fight to the death, which was exciting.

Fitness wise we're not doing any extra, so we're just working on some sharper stuff. We still have 14 to 15 players to pick from in the squad, so injuries are not a problem. We just have to go over tuning up basic skills as a collective unit with the young lads coming through too.

In the Eagles camp, Pitchford also suggested that the recent loss in the Milan Lakoseljic final to the Knights has helped his players bounce back and play better by learning from mistakes.

He was also well aware that the season could come down to week 19 but nothing would change their playing style regardless of the stakes. Only having players missing due to suspensions, injuries or work commitments would alter game plans.

He suggested they will go about beating the champions in the same way they did three weeks ago by not holding back on the attacking pace.

We're confident [for the South game] but not over-confident. We have a fairly good squad of fifteen to sixteen players, and we get full performances in fast, small-sided games at training, and I think that's part of what enables you to play well each week.

I'm confident that they have the ability to do it as a squad. The points we've dropped this year have been in games where we've certainly had more chances than the opposition but haven't put them away. We can't be frightened to keep playing attacking football.

He also believed that his squad played well enough to beat South Hobart at Darcy Street in the first game but couldn't convert their chances in their 1-0 loss.

FORESTRY TASMANIA SOUTHERN PREMIER LEAGUE (As at 30 June 2012)

TEAM	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
New Town Eagles	14	10	1	3	40	16	31
South Hobart	13	9	2	2	33	9	29
Clarence United	14	7	2	5	30	25	23
Tilford Zebras	14	6	4	4	38	31	22
Kingborough Lions Utd	14	5	6	3	32	29	21
Olympia Warriors	13	4	2	7	27	32	14
Glenorchy Knights	14	2	3	9	18	31	9
University	14	0	4	10	10	55	4

Eagles lucky to earn three points against Clarence

Walter Pless | Sunday, 08 July 2012

(Forestry Tasmania Southern Premier League, Clare Street, Saturday, 7 July 2012)

New Town Eagles 1 (L Scott 1)

Clarence United 0

HT: 1-0 Attendance - 100 Referee - S Natoli

New Town Eagles: N Pitchford - Clark (Collins 37), Cox, Anderson, - Whitehall, Marshall, Hudson, Scott, Quan - Clamp, McKeown (Subs not used: Bunt, Ayres, Graham)

Clarence United: Ortiz - Cannamela, Hedge, Rees, Price - Aldridge, Stevens (Mizuno 80), Malcolm, S McIntyre (L Brown 75), Cairns - E Tsakiris (Subs not used: Cornish, Thurley)



Teams that win titles almost always need a little bit of luck along the way. New Town Eagles had that luck today. But you also need to play good football, and Eagles showed enough of that side of their game today to ensure that the watching South Hobart coach, Ken Morton, will not be able to relax just yet. They took the lead against Clarence United after just 56 seconds, but even scorer Liam Scott admitted he had been fortunate to get away with it because he had handled the ball.

Referee Simon Natoli was probably unsighted, while the closest assistant may have had the sun in his eyes. Eagles coach Stephen Pitchford agreed that it was fortunate that the goal was allowed to stand, while Clarence coach Ronnie Bolton was incredulous. Clarence keeper Carlos Ortiz said it was clearly a handball and was perplexed at the fact the goal was given.

Eagles were missing two key players in Alex Leszczynski (unavailable) and Mark Page (suspended), while defender Andrew Clark was taken off because of injury after just 37 minutes. On top of that, they survived near the end of the first half through sheer luck when Clarence's Adam Hedge headed Aaron Cairns's corner against the underside of the bar, only to see Jeremy Marshall clear the ball off the line as it threatened to go in. Seconds later, a suicidal free-kick by Eagles goalkeeper Nathan Pitchford went straight to Emmanuel Tsakiris, whose shot at an empty net was blocked by a last-ditch effort by Michael Anderson.

And, Eagles were faced by only ten men for the last 25 minutes after Sam Cannamela was shown a second yellow card for a cynical tackle on Adam McKeown. In such ways are three points won. The result keeps Eagles in second place, a point adrift of leaders South Hobart. Apart from Scott's goal, which came after Ben Whitehall's cross had caused confusion in

the Clarence defence, Eagles also had first-half chances through Anderson, McKeown and Marshall, the latter's effort being superbly saved by Ortiz.

In the second half, Clarence tried desperately to find an equaliser. Pitchford denied Grant Malcolm early on, but the home side still threatened as Anderson shot high and Ortiz was forced to save a header from McKeown. Phineas Aldridge brought the best out of Pitchford midway through the half, but Clarence were struck a huge blow when Cannamela was given his marching orders seconds later.

Clarence, who were already without the injured David Hoppitt, were struck another blow when Joseph Stephens was stretchered off with 10 minutes remaining after falling heavily. It seemed to be a recurrence of a hip injury he sustained in the Summer Cup tournament and which kept him sidelined for almost an entire round of matches. With time running out, Aldridge forced another save from Pitchford, while in stoppage time, Malcolm's powerful rising shot just cleared the bar.



New Town Eagles coach, Stephen Pitchford, said:

It was a tough 90 minutes out there for the boys. A good start, an early goal and I thought we'd take the game to them pretty well early on. But, they just kept coming back at us and, pretty fortunate I think, it might have been a handball in the goal we got and they failed to capitalise on the error at the end of the first half from us.

Coming in 1-0 at half-time was probably good for us, and then, second half, I thought we played the ball around reasonably well but probably not as accurately as we needed to and we just couldn't break them down. The longer the game went, the more confidence they got of being able to come back, and again, when they had the send-off, even though for five minutes or so they looked a bit unsettled, they still kept coming.

They had nothing to lose so they threw people forward and the keeper at a corner and those sorts of things, and they could always pinch a goal. They had a couple of chances near the end, but obviously three points is what we wanted, and we've come away with. Our blokes kept going for 90 minutes. We had a couple out today and we lost Clark early with a knee and shuffled around a bit and still managed to come pretty well.

Clarence United coach, Ronnie Bolton, said:

It was a hard battle with Eagles. I think the ten men that we had in the second half really, really showed lots of heart and we were unlucky not to come away with anything. Unlucky. When the game is separated by a goal and the circumstances in which the goal was scored - I don't know why that wasn't picked up - it cost us the game.

Eagles have easier run-in to title, but South Hobart remain favourites

Walter Pless | Tuesday, 24 July 2012

With just four rounds of games to go, South Hobart and New Town Eagles are, realistically, the only two sides capable of winning the Forestry Tasmania Southern Premier League title. And, the two sides meet at South Hobart on Sunday, 5 August 2012, in a crucial showdown. If New Town Eagles win this encounter, they could find themselves level on points with the reigning champions.

But South Hobart have a vastly superior goal-difference, which could, in the end, decide the title. It's worth a point, in fact. South Hobart currently lead with 41 points, three more than Eagles. South's goal-difference is plus 43, while Eagles' is plus 31.

New Town Eagles could be considered to have a slightly easier run-in to the title because they must still play bottom-side University, whom they have already beaten 6-2 and 6-0 this season. They may have to make it a baker's dozen next time. They play Tilford Zebras at home at Clare Street, South Hobart away at South Hobart, University at home at Clare Street, and Kingborough Lions United away at Lightwood Park.

Eagles have beaten Zebras 4-3 and drawn 1-1 with Zebras in their two meetings so far. They lost to South 1-0 away from home and beat South 2-1 at Clare Street. Eagles have lost 2-1 to the Lions at Lightwood and beaten them 6-0 at Clare Street.

South Hobart, who are going for their fifth consecutive Premier League title, must travel to Wentworth Park to face Clarence, where they have already lost 3-2 this season. But South did win the return at South Hobart 3-0. They then entertain New Town Eagles at home, where they won 1-0 earlier in the season, before completing their season with a home game against Kingborough Lions United and an away fixture against Olympia Warriors at Warrior Park.

In their two previous meetings with the Lions, the first was a 1-1 draw and the second was won 2-1 by South. South beat Olympia 3-0 at Warrior Park and 4-2 at South Hobart in the two meetings to date. The forthcoming possibilities are endless, therefore, and there could be many a slip between the cup and the lip.

Eagles may need the help of another team to take at least a couple of points off South Hobart while Eagles still need to win all their matches. But South Hobart must remain slight favourites, if only because of their superiority in terms of goal-difference. And, because with all other things remaining equal, Eagles must beat South away from home on 5 August.

Even if they do, they will have to annihilate University at Clare Street the following week to try and improve their goal-difference.

I'll stick my neck out here and say that I think South Hobart will collect a fifth consecutive Southern Premier League title. They have recently recruited Konstantinos Lantouris from Melbourne Victory and his two goals on the weekend against Tilford Zebras show why he was signed. South coach Ken Morton always pulls a rabbit out of the hat when needed, and this is one such conjuring act. But he must also be given credit for his coaching. While many coaches 'train' their teams, Morton coaches his sides.

How else does one explain South Hobart's position at the top of the ladder at this late stage of the season? This is a side that has just four players in the starting line-up from last season's team. This represents a massive but successful rebuilding process. Neither South nor Eagles can afford to slip up in any of their remaining games, so it all makes for the most exciting finish to the league in years.

FORESTRY TASMANIA SOUTHERN PREMIER LEAGUE (As at 22 July 2012)

TEAM	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
South Hobart	17	13	2	2	55	12	41
New Town Eagles	17	12	2	3	48	17	38
Clarence United	17	9	2	6	35	26	29
Kingborough Lions Utd	17	6	6	5	38	36	24
Tilford Zebras	17	6	5	6	42	40	23
Olympia Warriors	17	6	3	8	36	41	21
Glenorchy Knights	17	2	4	11	19	41	10
University	17	0	4	13	11	71	4

Eagles wipe the floor with Knights

Walter Pless | Monday, 23 July 2012

(Forestry Tasmania Southern Premier League, KGV Park, Sunday, 22 July 2012)

Glenorchy Knights 0

New Town Eagles 6 (A McKeown 4, 56, 62, A Leszczynski 55, A Holmes 81 og, C Collins 85)

HT: 0-1 Attendance - 100 Referee - P Galloway

Glenorchy Knights: Peter - J Hey, Johnson (Kabangu 65), Holmes, Roberts (Robinson 65) - Marney (Letiko 58), Nowicki, Clay, Robb - Dawes, Kamano (Subs not used: Sherman, Strang)

New Town Eagles: N Pitchford - Page, Cox, Marshall, Anderson (Collins 77) - Whitehall (Stingle 79), Hudson, Scott, Clamp - Leszczynski (Moore 86), McKeown (Subs not used: Quan, Graham)



New Town Eagles controlled this match from start to finish and, although they only led 1-0 at the break, they finished the job in the second half against a Glenorchy Knights outfit that was lacking in ideas and technically deficient. If you cannot pass, you cannot play football, and that summed up the hosts' performance.

Knights coach Chris Hey said his side had lost possession 52 times in the first half alone. He praised some of the young substitutes he brought on, but was bitterly disappointed by the lack of fight and endeavour of his older players. He gave credit to Eagles and said they played good and precise football and that they worked for each other from the outset and they 'wanted it more'.

Knights were not helped by the absence of midfielder Jacob Huigsloot (suspended), striker Simon Strang (injured) and goalkeeper Trent Le Rossignol (injured). They found themselves behind after only 4 minutes when Adam McKeown glanced home Ben Whitehall's right-wing cross. The ball seemed to nestle inside the far left-hand post in slow motion as the Knights defenders could only look on. McKeown almost added a second in the 8th minute, but his shot hit the side-netting.

In the 11th minute, Knights keeper Ben Peter showed he still has it when he brilliantly tipped Jacob Clamp's header over the bar for a corner. In the 28th minute, Peter was at full stretch to his right to turn McKeown's effort wide for a corner. There was a brief glimmer of hope for the Knights 4 minutes after the break when Aaron Marney should have scored, but he fired over the bar.

That was it for the home side. In the 55th minute, a long throw-in from the right by Whitehall found Leszczynski in front of goal and he was given time to control the ball, turn and pick his spot and make it 2-0. With the Knights still reeling, McKeown made it 3-0 a minute later, tapping home Leszczynski's cross from the right. Jason Dawes had given the ball away in midfield and Mark Page had released Leszczynski down the right to create the chance.

In the 59th minute, the situation almost got worse for the Knights as Liam Scott smacked a marvellous shot against the crossbar after Leszczynski, with his back to goal, had done a tap dance on the edge of the box and mesmerised the

defenders before setting up his team-mate with a short pass. Three minutes later, McKeown completed his hat-trick when he hammered home a Leszczynski cross from the right to make it 4-0.

With 9 minutes remaining, McKeown challenged Alex Holmes in the air for a free-kick from midfield and Holmes could only nod it past his own goalkeeper for Eagles' fifth goal. The visitors' sixth came 5 minutes from the end through substitute Cormac Collins's header.

Eagles pulled back to within 3 points of leaders South Hobart with this victory, but their goal-difference is vastly inferior to that of South Hobart, which could cost them in the end.



Glenorchy Knights coach, Chris Hey, said:

In the first half, we were lucky to go in 1-0 to be honest with you. They were dominating play.

We talk week in and week out about not running with the ball. We ran with the ball today. We turned the ball over trying to play 20- and 30-yard penetrating balls which were cut out and which is not what I want us to do.

We were still in the game at half-time. We changed a few things about. I thought they were getting down the right side, so I tried to pull Jayden [Hey] over to combat that and get forward. Two early goals and, yeah, I don't know really why I coach, to be honest with you, with that performance.

People just don't care and then play their own games. We spoke about the importance of this game today and the potential for the T-League and, you know, I'll be honest with you, for those games you'd be lucky if there were four players that I'd maintain for next year. It's a disgrace that players can drop their head and play like that and not care. It's as simple as that.

New Town Eagles coach, Stephen Pitchford, said:

I think the second half was really good. We actually converted a few chances. In the first half, we had enough of the play but didn't put enough away. In the second half, we simply converted and played simple football at the end.

We needed to not get too far behind South in the goal-difference as well as stay within the three points. When we play them in a couple of weeks it's a really big game for us. We were worried that today could be a danger game with Knights. They've managed to cause us problems in the past.

I think at half-time there was that hope for them, and the boys came out at the beginning of the second half and put it to bed, really, so it was very pleasing. All our subs got onto the park and had a run, and it was a very convincing performance.

Eagles send out powerful message with thrashing of Zebras

Walter Pless | Monday, 30 July 2012

(Forestry Tasmania Southern Premier League, Clare Street, Sunday, 29 July 2012)

New Town Eagles 6 (A Leszczynski 1, 4, A McKeown 15, 45, 79, J Clamp 51)

Tilford Zebras 0

HT: 4-0 Attendance - 120 Referee - S Natoli

New Town Eagles: N Pitchford - Marshall, Cox, Anderson, Page - Whitehall (McCormack 85), J Clamp, Scott (Quan 81), Collins - McKeown, Leszczynski (Stingle 66) (Sub not used: Bates)

Tilford Zebras: McKenna - Otte, Telega, Smith, Muller (M Luttrell 60) - David, Fagg, J Foley-Donoghue, Self - MacDonald (Barabara 79), Walsh (Subs not used: Siedler, L Frarracio)



New Town Eagles had a point to prove to everyone and they did it by smashing Tilford Zebras 6-0 at Clare Street on Sunday. They may have missed the cut in terms of membership of next season's Victory League, but they showed they are still in contention for the Forestry Tasmania Southern Premier League title. The result still leaves them 3 points adrift of leaders South Hobart, whom they meet next week, but they did improve their goal-difference somewhat with this result.

Zebras were on the ropes early and down for the count by half-time, having Jon Foley-Donoghue sent off for two yellow cards in quick succession just before the break. The visitors did revive somewhat in the latter stages of the second period despite being down to 10 men, but it was far too late, and Eagles keeper Nathan Pitchford thwarted them on every occasion.

Eagles opened the scoring in just 20 seconds when Adam McKeown sent over a pin-point cross from the right and Alex

Leszczynski was given time to control the ball and pick his spot from point-blank range. Leszczynski made it 2-0 in the 4th minute after Liam Scott played McKeown through and he set up his team-mate to beat Michael McKenna.

McKeown then took on the role of executioner, scoring a simple third for Eagles on the quarter-hour and hitting a fourth from Ben Whitehall's free-kick seconds before the break. The free-kick was awarded for Foley-Donoghue's foul on Scott, which earned the Zebras player a second yellow card. Moments earlier, he had been cautioned for a foul on the same player.

Zebras had had a few half-chances in that first period, mainly through the endeavour of Nicholas MacDonald, who is certainly holding his own in the top-flight since being promoted from the reserves. Ricky Self and Foley-Donoghue had token efforts that did not pose any problems for the home side.

But Eagles had also squandered some chances in the opening 45 minutes as McKeown, Leszczynski and Michael Anderson let Zebras off the hook. Six minutes after the resumption, Jacob Clamp made it 5-0 when the ball ricocheted to him after McKenna had blocked Scott's shot.

Eagles had a lucky break in the 70th minute when Anderson's attempted clearance, while under pressure from Fagg, rebounded off a team-mate and struck the woodwork. Fagg got to the rebound but Pitchford produced an excellent save.

Substitute Chris Stingle missed an absolute sitter in the 76th minute for Eagles. McKeown did the hard work by picking his way along the by-line on the right before presenting his team-mate with an open goal, but Stingle mis-kicked and the chance went begging.

In the 78th minute, MacDonald missed from close range for Zebras, who were somehow managing to stay in with a chance of scoring. A minute later, the visitors conceded a sixth goal when McKeown was put clear on the left and he easily rounded McKenna before slipping the ball into an unguarded net. The Zebras still had something left, however, and Pitchford did well to turn Jal David's shot over the bar for a corner in the 81st minute.

A minute later, Mark Page had to clear off the line after Eagles failed to deal with a corner as Pitchford was unable to catch the ball cleanly in the air. Pitchford regained his composure and, in the next minute, did well to tip Ricky Self's shot over the bar for another corner. The home side saw out the match with a second clean sheet and a second 6-0 score-line in consecutive matches.

Football Federation Tasmanian may not have had current on-field performance as a criterion for selection in the Victory League, but this Eagles performance made one wonder why not. Have FFT possibly thrown the baby out with the bath water?



New Town Eagles coach, Stephen Pitchford, said:

I think [this sent out] that we're one of the best teams in the competition, and probably the State, and those that say otherwise have obviously got it wrong. The boys were pretty keen to turn it on today, obviously, and the message in the sheds before the game was to go out today and play our football and not to worry about external factors that we can't do anything about. All we can do is play our football. And, today, I think they did really well.

The 10-man factor is always an interesting thing. We scored early in the second half and we hoped to score a couple more. I mean, we had the chances, but with 10 men, they certainly had a few chances as well. I think probably our keeper helped us keep a clean sheet today. If you score six goals in a game, you've got to be happy with that.

Tilford Zebras coach, Eamonn Kelly, said:

Bitterly disappointed. Bitterly. A really woeful performance, and no reason for it. No reason for it. First 10 minutes, we were out of the game. End of story. Pitchy [Nathan Pitchford] had a great second half. We lost count of how many shots we had on target and we hit the crossbar twice, we hit the post twice. That's what he's there for. That's what a goalkeeper is there for, to stop balls going in. Pitchy did a great job today. We conceded six, but you can't blame McKenna for too many of them.

'A couple of boys played well in the second half. Jal David had a good second half, and Ricky Self came out, Ryan Smith had a better second half. It's just unpredictable.



Eagles' Alex Leszczynski on the attack as Zebras' Jal David tries to recover ground [PlessPix]

Eagles win vital 3 points against South but destination of the title still in South's hands

Walter Pless | Sunday, 05 August 201

(Forestry Tasmania Southern Premier League, South Hobart, Sunday, 5 August 2012)

South Hobart 0

New Town Eagles 1 (A McKeown 84)

HT: 0-0 Attendance - 300 Referee - K Barker

South Hobart: Moncur - Duffy, Bladel, Ludford, Williams - Feral, Eaves (Ince 46), Hickey - Brennan, N Morton, Lantouris (M Clarke 88) (Subs not used: McGoldrick, N Clarke, Merkuzic)

New Town Eagles: N Pitchford - Cox - Anderson, Page, Hudson - Whitehall, Clamp (Marshall 77), Scott, Collins (Quan 77) - McKeown, Leszczynski (Subs not used: McCormack, Bates, Graham)



New Town Eagles kept their championship hopes alive with this 1-0 win over leaders South Hobart on a heavy and slippery South Hobart pitch. Both sides have two games remaining and the title may well be decided on goal-difference. South Hobart now have a goal-difference of +43 and Eagles one of +38. South Hobart still have to play fourth-placed Kingborough Lions United at home and fifth-ranked Olympia Warriors away, while New Town Eagles must entertain wooden-spooners University at Clare Street and then travel to Lightwood Park to face the Lions.

Today's match was an excellent advertisement for Tasmanian football and featured the two best sides in the State. The sad thing is that this New Town Eagles side will not be in the top-flight Victory League next season. Judging from their on-field performance today, they certainly deserve to be there.

There were some outstanding examples of individual skill from players on both sides. Inconsistency is a problem, though. Too many times, players demonstrated superb ball control and technique, only to then give the ball away with a bad pass or poor shot. Having said that, both sets of players gave 100 per cent to the cause and displayed some marvellous teamwork, making this the best game I have seen this season. This was despite the treacherous conditions which saw players slipping and falling over at times in awkward situations.

Liam Scott and Ben Whitehall showed marvellous ball control for Eagles, while Michael Anderson did what was required to keep Andy Brennan scoreless. He even took time out to send long and mostly accurate passes forward to his team-mates.

David Cox was very good as sweeper and Mark Page and Blayne Hudson played with gusto and confidence in a solid Eagles defensive arrangement in front of goalkeeper Nathan Pitchford, whose distribution was sometimes haphazard but who handled every shot or cross - except one near the end - flawlessly.

Jacob Clamp and Cormac Collins did what was required in midfield and won their fair share of possession to send their team into attack. Both had scoring chances, but Clamp was off target with his header, while Collins had a stinging shot well saved by Mark Moncur.

Up front, Alex Leszczynski had a powerful match in the conditions. Every time he was in possession, it spelled danger for South, and it was his tremendous shot against the woodwork that provided the alert Adam McKeown with the decisive goal. Leszczynski should, in fact, have scored in the 4th minute when he was given time and space to pick his spot, but he dragged his low shot wide.

McKeown had a poor game given his high standards. His first touch was often lacking, and his passes were often misdirected. One could see he was annoyed with himself. But it was his quick thinking and clinical finishing that won the game, and it showed he is not the league's leading marksman without reason. He typified a characteristic of all good strikers - they may do nothing for most of the match and then pop up with the winner. The conditions probably did not suit him, but if Eagles win the title, he will deserve much of the credit as he now has a tally of 24 goals in 19 games.

South Hobart produced their normal disciplined, measured and highly skilled performance in tricky conditions and on an uncertain pitch. Indeed, they might have salvaged a draw on a dry day. Midway through the second half, Nick Morton's shot was goal-bound but stuck in the mud just short of the line.

Goalkeeper Mark Moncur, who replaced the injured Matthew Ferguson, was as reliable as ever and could not be blamed for the goal. Skipper Hugh Ludford was excellent at the back and frequently ventured forward as a 'libero', always threatening, and always passing accurately and thoughtfully to team-mates. Why Eagles gave him the liberty to do this was perplexing.

Greg Duffy and Cameron Williams were very good as the fullbacks but were forced to carry out their defensive duties more than usual because Eagles were aware of their attacking qualities and negated these to a large extent. Duffy did have a good chance near the end, but Williams was well marked at set-pieces.

Hugo Bladel partnered Ludford in the centre of defence. He slipped and fell a couple of times early on in the slippery conditions but recovered to have a solid game. He seems to have regained his confidence, but Eagles did not pressure him as much as they might have done.

South Hobart's midfield of Shae Hickey, Loic Feral and Bobby Eaves played well, but Eagles' pressure ensured that none of the trio was able to determine the outcome. The power of Feral and Eaves in the conditions was complemented by the fine skills of Hickey, but credit must go to the Eagles midfield for sticking to their tasks and making life difficult for an engine room that has often been at the heart of South's success.

The loss of Eaves just before the break with a suspected fractured cheek bone was a blow to South and led to then changing their formation slightly for the second half, with Morton dropping deeper into midfield and substitute James Ince playing wide on the right flank.

It was not until the second half that South got on top in terms of chances and shots and Morton and Brennan began to look dangerous. Konstantinos Lantouris had a quiet game and Page only rarely gave him a look in.

Eagles started on the offensive and Hudson, Leszczynski, twice, and Whitehall all squandered chances in the opening 9 minutes as South were forced on the back foot. Scott was outstanding in the middle against his former club. His ball control was first class and his anticipation and intelligent play were exemplary.

South's first chance came after 21 minutes following Duffy's deep cross from the right. Page hesitated and allowed the ball to come to earth, gifting possession to Lantouris, whose shot took a deflection and looped high into the air. It came down just under the crossbar, but Pitchford caught it before it could cross the line. In the 24th minute, Moncur did well to block at Collins's feet and concede a corner.

South survived a torrid situation two minutes later as confusion reigned inside the box following Moncur's blocking of a Collins shot from the left. The ball rolled loose and was eventually cleared off the line with no Eagles player able to get a decisive touch. In the 29th minute, a free-kick from deep on the right by Whitehall found Clamp, but his header was off target.

Eaves sent in a rare South Hobart shot on goal in the 39th minute, but Pitchford scrambled to his left and fielded the ball

comfortably. In the 41st minute, Bladel needlessly gave the ball away in a dangerous position but escaped punishment as Eagles failed to take advantage of the lapse.

Two minutes before the break, McKeown shot harmlessly over the bar after Leszczynski had expertly chested the ball down and into his path to create the chance. In the closing seconds of the first half, Eagles created an intelligent and precise attack involving McKeown and Leszczynski, but when the ball went to Whitehall wide on the right, he drove his shot wide of the far upright.

South came out for the second half in a positive frame of mind and soon imposed their style on the match. In the 50th minute, instead of clearing the ball, Eagles conceded an unnecessary corner. Hickey floated the ball into the box and Whitehall was thankful when the ball glanced off his head and at goal but was caught by Pitchford.

A minute short of the hour-mark, substitute Ince drove his shot straight at Pitchford as South started to accumulate shots at goal. In the 61st minute, Brennan sent an effort narrowly wide and it began to look as if Eagles were in real danger of going behind.

Morton's missed chance came in the 67th minute, but Eagles relieved the pressure somewhat 10 minutes later when Leszczynski chipped a good chance over the bar from range. Collins and Clamp were replaced by Josh Quan and Jeremy Marshall 13 minutes from the end and the fresh legs proved a boon for the visitors.

In the 82nd minute, Ludford was perfectly positioned at the near post to head a Whitehall corner off the line. Eagles regained possession and Whitehall managed to get to the byline on the left and cut the ball back for McKeown to shoot, but the ball flew straight into Moncur's arms. It was a great chance and McKeown was clearly disappointed with himself.

The breakthrough came in the 84th minute when Quan won the ball against Duffy near the left touchline and played a perfect diagonal ball to Leszczynski in the inside-right channel. The Eagles striker lined up the ball and hit a tremendous rising shot from 22 metres that hit the underside of the bar with Moncur helpless. The ball rebounded down and out and McKeown pounced instantly and before Bladel could react, heading the ball into the net for the only goal of the game.

South brought on Max Clarke in place of Lantouris for the final two minutes, but the youngster did not have time to have an influence on the game. Eagles were ecstatic at the final whistle, and rightly so, but the title is still South Hobart's to lose.



South Hobart coach, Ken Morton, said:

We're still in with a chance. It was a strong performance from us today and a great performance from Eagles as well. I think we're still there. We're still in with a shout.

I think it was strong performance from both teams. Both teams worked hard. I think it was 90 minutes of strong football. I think Eagles had the better of the first half and they put us under a lot of pressure. In the second half, I think we got on top and started to dominate. It was a good game of football.

New Town Eagles coach, Stephen Pitchford, said:

A very important win, obviously, and it means we're now in with a chance. We're still five goals in goal-difference behind and that's a big gap to make up over two games. We've got to go out and win first of all and then look at the goals. I thought in the first half today we were very good and could have easily been a couple of goals up.

South came at us and got a bit of dominance in the middle of the park. We were lucky enough to hold out. A set of fresh legs in the last 15 minutes probably helped us and a perfect strike by Alby [Alex Leszczynski] and a striker doing his job by following up. It's what McKeown and Leszczynski have been doing all season.

But, everybody contributed today. I mean, Ando [Michael Anderson] kept Brennan totally out of the game. Ben Whitehall kept working hard all day out on the wings and it was a real team effort where they did what they'd been asked to do for most of the 90 minutes. I think that's how we've tried to play all year and now we've got a chance to get some reward.

South Hobart claim fifth league title in row as Eagles fail to take off

Walter Pless | Saturday, 18 August 2012

South Hobart won their fifth Forestry Tasmania Southern Premier League title in a row on Saturday, the final day of the roster season.

South, who started the day in second place, beat fifth-placed Olympia Warriors 2-1 away at Warrior Park, while New Town Eagles, who just needed a win away to fourth-placed Kingborough Lions United to pip the reigning champions for the honours, went down 3-2 at Lightwood Park to hand the title to South. The win ensured the Lions of a fourth-place finish and a place in the State-wide finals series.

Clarence United finished third after beating seventh-ranked Glenorchy Knights 1-0 at home at Wentworth Park through a 17th-minute goal by Adam Hedge. Tilford Zebras completed a disappointing season with a 4-1 away win over bottom-side University. Other results went against Zebras, however, and they failed to qualify for the top-four finals series.

Zebras led 2-0 at the break, through strikes by Kurt Engels and Dwayne Walsh.

Walsh and Henry Fagg completed the Zebras tally, while Harry Booth scored a consolation goal for University, who failed to get a single win during the season. South Hobart, needing a big win to take out the title - providing Eagles beat Lions - looked to be in trouble when Chris Kumpulainen gave Olympia a 1-0 lead at the interval.

But, with 10 minutes remaining, South Hobart and Tasmania captain Hugh Ludford gave his side hope when he converted a penalty to make it 1-1. With only minutes remaining, Andy Brennan cut in from the right and fired home to give South a 2-1 win and the title as Eagles had succumbed 3-2 to the Lions.

Eagles began promisingly enough against the Lions, but they fell behind to a Marcello Marchioli goal after 17 minutes. Joel Schuth's corner from the right was flicked wide of the far post by Eagles keeper Nathan Pitchford, but Marchioli was first to the ball and hammered a superb shot into the net from an angle. The visitors were level within two minutes as Adam McKeown put Alex Leszczynski through on the right and he smashed a great shot home off the underside of the crossbar.

Eagles almost hit the front minutes later, but McKeown's shot took a slight deflection and glanced off the outside of the right-hand post. Eagles took a 2-1 lead in the 32nd minute when Mark Page's long ball out of defence found McKeown inside the box and his skilful back-header beat keeper Andrew Duncan. Pitchford proved reliable in the 41st minute when he stopped Marchioli's free-kick from just outside the box, but it was directed straight at him.

Eagles should have increased their lead within seconds of the resumption when Leszczynski flicked the ball on for McKeown, but he shot tamely at the keeper. The Lions equalised 8 minutes into the second half. Schuth's deep cross from the left was touched on by Nick Di Falco to Martin Farquhar, who slipped the ball wide to the advancing fullback Wade Hawkins. He evaded a couple of desperate tackles before firing a left-footed shot past Pitchford to make it 2-2.

Six minutes later, a long clearance by Kingborough keeper Duncan found Schuth in the so-called 'Schuth zone', just outside the left-hand corner of the penalty area. He barely changed stride and hammered a shot inside Pitchford's near post to put the home side 3-2 ahead.

Eagles appeared dispirited but still managed several good chances, all of which were either squandered or saved by Duncan. The Lions keeper did very well to turn one effort onto his left-hand post and out for a corner.

Eagles' keeper Pitchford showed great anticipation when he produced a fine save to deny Marchioli from inside the box and on the left midway through the second half, but the keeper was playing with fire at times when he delayed his clearances as Kingborough's strikers applied pressure and threatened to dispossess him.

Pitchford came into the opposing penalty area for corners near the end as Eagles threw everything into a last-ditch effort to salvage their title hopes, but it was to no avail. Several of their players were inconsolable and lay on the ground after the final whistle as they realised they had lost the title after being in the box seat going into the game.

SOUTHERN PREMIER LEAGUE (Final Standings as at 18 August 2012)

TEAM	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
South Hobart	21	16	2	3	62	15	50
New Town Eagles	21	15	2	4	69	20	47
Clarence United	21	10	2	9	37	33	32
Kingborough Lions Utd	21	8	6	7	47	45	30
Tilford Zebras	21	8	5	8	51	52	29
Olympia Warriors	21	8	3	10	42	44	27
Glenorchy Knights	21	5	4	12	23	43	19
University	21	0	4	17	12	91	4

Eagles lose title on last day

Walter Pless | Tuesday, 21 August 2012

(Forestry Tasmania Southern Premier League, Lightwood park, Saturday, 18 August 2012)
Kingborough Lions United 3 (M Marchioli 17, W Hawkins 53, J Schuth 59)
New Town Eagles 2 (A Leszczynski 19, A McKeown 32)
HT: 1-2 Attendance - 120 Referee - P Galloway

Kingborough Lions United: Duncan - Cooper - Hawkins, Cowen, Cuthbertson, D Pearce - Iseli, Marchioli, Di Falco - Farquhar (Kang 85), Schuth (D Abbott 90+2) (Subs not used: Herweynen, Leamey, Davis)

New Town Eagles: N Pitchford - Cox - Anderson, Page - Whitehall (Quan 74), Hudson, Clamp, Scott (Clark 85), Marshall - McKeown, Leszczynski (Subs not used: Collins, Graham, McCormack)



New Town Eagles, sitting on top of the ladder at the start of play, threw away the Forestry Tasmania Southern Premier League title with this 3-2 loss to fourth-placed Kingborough Lions United. Virtually all that Eagles had to do to collect the title was to win. The only way second-placed South Hobart could then have pipped them for the honours was to beat Olympia Warriors by five or six goals.

As it turned out, Eagles lost, while South scored a penalty and a goal in stoppage time to down the Warriors 2-1 and it was they who collected a record fifth title in row. Eagles started in promising fashion and Alex Leszczynski had two early chances, including one that rolled over the line but was ruled out because of a foul on the Kingborough keeper.

But, it was the Lions who took a shock lead after 17 minutes. Joel Schuth floated a corner in from the right and Eagles goalkeeper Nathan Pitchford flapped at the ball and succeeded only in placing it at the feet of Marcello Marchioli, who was in space beyond the far post. Marchioli volleyed a spectacular shot into the back of the net from an angle as Jeremy Marshall failed to cut out the chance.

Two minutes later, Eagles were level as Liam Scott played the ball forward and Adam McKeown flicked it wide for Leszczynski, whose cracker of a shot beat Andrew Duncan at his near post and ricocheted into the net off the underside of the bar. The visitors went ahead in the 32nd minute when Mark Page's long ball into the Kingborough box was skilfully flicked on and into the net by McKeown, who, moments earlier, had been unlucky when his shot took a slight deflection and hit the outside of the right-hand post.

Eight minutes after the interval. Kingborough levelled through Wade Hawkins. Joel Schuth crossed from the left and Nick Di Falco nudged the ball wide to Farquhar, who slipped it through for the onrushing fullback. Hawkins evaded a couple of tackles before slotting a left-footed shot past the diving Pitchford and into the net. Pitchford injured his left hand in the incident and it was later revealed that he had broken a bone in his hand. After treatment, he played on for the remainder of the match.

Joel Schuth hit Kingborough's winner in the 59th minute from the so-called 'Schuth zone', an area roughly five metres in circumference just outside the left-hand corner of the penalty area. Andrew Duncan punted the ball upfield to this zone and Schuth gained possession and, just as he has done on frequent occasions this season, hit an unstoppable left-footed shot inside the near post and past the vainly diving Pitchford.

In the 64th minute, Pitchford did very well to save a stinging shot from Marchioli. Eagles rallied as the half wore on and they went so close to equalising on a couple of occasions. Substitute Josh Quan, who had replaced the injured Ben Whitehall, had an effort deflected wide for a corner, while Duncan got down to hold a fierce shot by Leszczynski. In the dying seconds, Leszczynski miscued the ball after a corner kick and the chance went begging. Leszczynski and Marshall had shots before the end, but they were merely token salvos fired from a ship that was dead in the water. Eagles knew their title hopes were scuttled as the final whistle blew.



Kingborough Lions United coach, Matthew Rhodes, said:

A good win. A great win. I thought we were really good today. We changed our line-up a bit and put Coops [David Cooper] back to sweeper and I thought he was excellent today. It really worked for us.

Even at half-time when we were 2-1 down, I thought we were in the game. In the second half we just came out and controlled the game. They had a couple of half-chances, but I thought we were well in control and we deserved our win. We deserve to be in the top-four.

We did decide the title. I don't think that always sits well with people. I didn't mind who won, but it's not nice when a side comes down and loses. I really feel for Eagles. They've had a great year and my thoughts were all on us making the top-four. That's what it was all about today. We've been in the top-four for 20 out of the 21 weeks, so we deserved it. We beat Zebras every time this year and we've been great. It's great. Looking forward to next week.

New Town Eagles coach, Stephen Pitchford, said:

I think we had a bit of a slow start to the first half, although I think we probably had chances before they scored. We woke up and played pretty well first half.

Went out in the second half and just didn't seem to be prepared to put the faith in the system of playing the ball on the deck and hitting feet.

Having said that, when we had a really good chance 10 seconds into the second half, we didn't take it.

At the end, it was really just a comedy of errors that led to the two goals that we gave away. And the, once you've got the pressure on you, of course, you turn over the ball and you resort to long kicking and those of sorts of things, and it just wasn't to be.

I mean, right at the end we had chances to draw but we knew a draw wouldn't have been good enough anyway. Full credit to Kingborough. They kept plugging away, kept playing their game, and they took their chances when they had them.



The Kingborough Lions United squad before the game against New Town Eagles today [PlessPix]



The New Town Eagles side that lost to Kingborough Lions United today [PlessPix]