

**M.A. Hart Hayward Cup Final
Thursday 14th March 2019**

**GOTHAM RESERVES 2
NEW MILTON EAGLES 1
a.e.t.**

Connor Picken's strike in the second period of extra time gave Gotham Reserves the verdict 2-1 against Hayward Saturday League Division Two rivals New Milton Eagles in Thursday night's M.A. Hart Hayward Cup Final at Hurn Bridge.

Eagles came into the game with a number of players missing through injury, including their ace marksman Justin Keeler. They managed to take an excellent Gotham side to extra time though, thanks mainly to a heroic performance from goalkeeper **Dale Wakefield** who was a popular choice for "**Man of the Match**" by BHFL President Mike Fowler.

Wakefield denied Gotham time and time again with a series of excellent saves and his opposite number Steve Cannings also looked very assured when called upon to deal with headers from Lee Gilbert and Julian Smith in the early stages.



Most of the chances fell to Gotham though and Alex Hawey met Mark Jimmy's cross with a diving header from close range which Wakefield dived to keep out.

The Eagles' 'keeper was then diving to parry Hawey's header from Kieron Goldrick's cross in the 27th minute. Hawey looked certain to score as he pounced on the loose ball but his effort struck the post and rebounded into Wakefield's arms.



The impressive Mark Claremont went on a brilliant solo run after 30 minutes and his cross from the left found Hawey but the Gotham front man fired inches wide with Eagles defenders desperately trying to cover on the line.

Cannings came a long way off his line in the 37th minute to challenge for Spooner's high ball into the Gotham penalty area with defender Aaron Bailie and Eagles' Jim Vibert. The 'keeper was stranded when the clearance went straight to Shaun Waterman 25 yards out whose blistering volley only just cleared the crossbar.

Picken was twice denied by Wakefield and when he did manage to steer Mark Jimmy's through ball past the Eagles' 'keeper in the 60th minute, defender Lee Borley read the situation perfectly and chased back to clear the ball off the line.

The introduction of substitute Alex Rossi in the 72nd minute was to pay dividends for Gotham. The breakthrough came in the 82nd minute when Goldrick put Claremont away down the left. When the

cross came over, **Alex Rossi** was on hand to side foot the ball home from close range with Wakefield not quite able to get enough on the ball to keep it out .

Eagles weren't done yet though and they equalised three minute later when Shahed Miah delivered a corner kick to the far post and **Shaun Miller** met it with a header into the top corner of the net to take the tie to extra time.

Rossi, Hawey and Claremont all had shots turned behind by Wakefield in the first period of extra time before Hawey hit the post in the 108th minute and Rossi's follow up effort was saved by the Eagles' keeper.

The decisive goal came a minute later when Rossi played a high ball into the Eagles penalty area and, with Sam Quinn going down injured trying to clear it, **Connor Picken** was able to restore Gotham's lead with an overhead kick that gave Wakefield no chance

Gotham were straight on the attack again with Bailey and Hawey combining well to set up Picken but his shot was brilliantly saved by Wakefield.



Then, five minutes from the end with Eagles committed to all out attack, Bailey broke away unopposed from inside his own half to run through and whack a 20 yard effort against the Eagles crossbar.



Gotham Reserves : Steven Cannings, Ryan Malcolm (David Niven 100 mins), Kris Wilkins, Aaron Bailie, Warren Riley, Mark Jimmy (Alex Rossi 72 mins), Adam Louka (Carl Charman 80 mins), Connor Picken, Alex Hawey, Mark Claremont (Matty Davitt 110 mins), Keiron Goldrick (John Bailey 60 mins)



New Milton Eagles : Dale Wakefield, Lee Borley (Lloyd Rixon 65 mins), Lee Gilbert, Tom Prior, SamQuinn (Liam Miller 109 mins), Shaun Waterman, Shahed Miah (Richard Parsons 110 mins), Jim Vibert, Aaron Hurdle, Jon Spooner, Julian Smith (Shaun Miller 65 mins).

