

Positives for Kevin

04 November 2011

Kevin Bond took positives out of Thursday night's 1-0 defeat at Rubin Kazan in the Europa League.

Bebras Natcho struck the only goal of the game 10 minutes into the second half to condemn us to our first defeat in the competition this season.

William Gallas and Steven Pienaar made their first starts of the season after injury and played 72 and 90 minutes respectively.

It was also another night of European experience for a host of younger players. Indeed, we ended with six Academy graduates on the pitch – Jake Livermore, Ryan Fredericks, Andros Townsend, Tom Carroll, Dean Parrett and Harry Kane.

We're also still well-placed to qualify for the knockout stages.

PAOK jumped to the top of Group A after their 3-1 win against Shamrock Rovers and Rubin edged ahead of us on goal difference. There is only one point between the three teams as we go into the final two matches of the group stages – home to PAOK and away to Shamrock.

Rubin showed on the night the quality that won back-to-back Russian titles in 2008 and 2009 and did so well in the Champions League.

In the end, we were indebted to Carlo Cudicini, who made a string of saves right out of the top drawer to keep the home side at bay.

Chances were few and far between at the other end although it might have been different if Roman Pavlyuchenko had managed to slide home Jermain Defoe's cross towards the end of the first half – 'Pav' inches away from opening the scoring.

"A lot of the time it's down to key moments like that," said assistant boss Kevin.

"Carlo was fantastic but we did have a couple of chances. Pav only needed the slightest touch and Yago Falque had a chance to equalise late in the game.

"We were under no illusions that this had the makings of a really difficult night for us and it turned out that way.

"To be fair, I thought we did well. A couple of senior players made their first starts and got their first minutes on the pitch this season.

"William came off late in the game but he was getting tired and he's just come back, so we wanted to protect him.

"Steven played 90 minutes and did well. I thought there were a lot of good performances from the younger lads. Tom and Jake in the middle of the park were excellent.

“Make no mistake, Rubin are a good side with good players and we did need to hang in there at times. They had chances and Carlo was there for us when we needed him.

“We were disappointed with the goal because we could have dealt with the initial danger better than we did.

“Overall, I thought we acquitted ourselves well and we were always in the game.

“We’re still right in there in the group, it’s in our hands and I would expect us to go through.”