

# Geordies blitz title hopes

HYDE'S title ambitions were virtually destroyed on Monday evening, but they were by no means subdued after their exit from the FA Trophy.

Not only did the Tigers take the lead with the fastest goal of the season at Croft Park, they continued to battle until the game was beyond them.

There were only 17 seconds on the clock when Hyde took the lead. Raffel tried to clear, but the ball hit Keith Evans, who went on to beat the keeper.

The game's explosive start continued when Blyth equalised within a minute. Nicholls put a corner to the far post, it was headed back into the area - first by Gamble and then by Cole - and Raffel stole in at the near post to head home.

Spartans dominated after that, but

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<i>Blyth Spartans</i> .....	<b>5</b>
<i>Hyde United</i> .....	<b>1</b>

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the Tigers held their own at the back, and caused problems with some good attacking play by Evans and Carroll.

There were only five minutes of the first half remaining when Blyth took the lead. Raffel scored with another near-post header from another Nicholls corner.

After the break, there were some fierce challenges from both sides, but there were only three men booked - Dale Hawtin and Dave Esdaille of Hyde, and Blyth player Walker. Hawtin, in particular, was fortunate to stay on the field after a particularly bad tackle on Moat.

Hyde continued to make a game of

it, but the turning point came on 55 minutes, when Boyd made a tremendous save to tip Evans' header on to the bar.

Without that save, the Tigers would have been on level terms and the match could have gone either way.

As it was, Spartans went further ahead on 62 minutes, when Young's shot was parried by Williams, and Bond was on hand to lash in the rebound.

Young made it 4-1 on 81 minutes, when he cut in from the left to score with an angled shot; and, with a minute to go, Gray crossed for Adams to sidefoot home.

Hyde: Williams 6, Gallagher, 6, Cox 7, Wilson 7, Horton 6, Henshaw 6, Evans 7, Esdaille, Varden 6, Carroll 7, Nolan 6. Subs: Mulholland 6, Donnelly 6, Dow 6.

Ref: Garry Reynolds (Middlesbrough).