



Saturday 3rd September 2011

BISHOP'S STORTFORD 0, BOSTON UNITED 1
(BLUE SQUARE BET NORTH)

The Blues suffered a massive kick in the teeth at Woodside Park when the Pilgrims snatched a winner following a free-kick in the sixth minute of injury time. It was a difficult result for the Stortford fans to take as their side had been more than a match for the Lincolnshire visitors – especially in the first half when veteran keeper Paul Bastock had made several fine stops. Also, in the final 18 minutes plus time added on, the Blues were reduced to ten men after Phil Anderson was sent off but had still given a calm resolute performance and looked odds on to hold out until conceding the very late free-kick.

Ian Walker kept the same starting eleven for the fourth successive match and his side started well. In the first minute of the game Blues went close following a raid up the left. Michael Bakare slipped the ball inside to Scott Shulton whose shot was blocked. The ball ran loose to Dwight Gayle and the striker's rising shot was tipped over by Bastock. In the 6th minute, Junior Dadson, on the left flank, played the ball inside to Gayle who struck a low drive just wide of the far upright.

Although the visitors were having as much of the possession as Stortford at this stage it was the host's front runners that looked more dangerous and when Gayle sent a through ball down the middle in the 12th minute Bastock only just got to the edge of the box to collect before Bakare could gain control.

A Tom Ward far post header from Ryan Semple's corner wasn't far off target for United but shortly afterwards, in the 16th minute, Ade Cole released Dwight Gayle down the right and he laid the ball across goal but the former St Albans City stopper saved Junior Dadson's shot low down at the expense of a corner.

Two minutes later a good run and cross by Semple saw Chris Hall's near post effort safely gathered by Nicky Eyre. The Blues then stretched the Pilgrims by forcing a number of corners, one of which from Scott Shulton had Bastock fully extended to keep out.

Stortford's early drive seemed to be receding a little but they had another chance in the 38th minute to have taken the lead. Michael Bakare robbed Alan White some ten yards inside the Boston half and sent Dwight Gayle clear but Bastock, again, saved well to deny the young striker. From the resultant flag kick taken by Michael Bakare the ball ran loose to Ade Cole whose shot was blocked near the six yard line.

The visitor's best move of the first half came in the 45th minute as a good crossfield attack in which Kevin Holsgrove and Danny Sleath combined finished with Ryan Semple's low drive going narrowly wide.

Half time: 0-0

The Pilgrims made the early running on the restart with Tom Ward heading a Ryan Semple corner wide at the far post and then when Semple's crossfield pass in the 53rd minute found Kevin Holsgrove coming in from the left wing Nicky Eyre made a fine overhead save on the edge of the area to keep out the Boston man's chip.

In the 59th minute Dwight Gayle was fouled 25 yards from goal but Scott Shulton's free-kick was just too high and wide of the far angle. Connor Essam, having another fine match with Mo Habu in the centre of the Blues defence, did well in the 62nd minute hooking the ball away from danger following a Semple cross to the far post where Marc Newsham headed back across the face of the goal.

A lot of the action was now end to end with Alan White's header from substitute Ben Milnes' free-kick not far over the target and in the 69th minute a good Stortford move ended with the ball running loose to Mitch Hahn and the substitute's 20 yard drive was held by Bastock.

Then came a key moment in the match which resulted in the Blues being reduced to ten men. Tempers had been becoming a little tetchy when, in the 72nd minute, a scuffle broke out between Phil Anderson and Ryan Semple some 20 yards inside the Stortford half near the Blues' left touchline. The result was that Referee Ian Crouch gave a straight red card to Phil Anderson whilst Semple was shown a yellow card. Blues' skipper Reece Prestedge was also booked during the same incident after words with the Match Official.

The loss of a player didn't seem to faze the hosts as Hahn was not far over with a long distance effort soon after and although Marc Newsham hit a volley in the 86th minute that shaved Nicky Eyre's left hand upright the Blues almost clinched a winner in the 88th minute. Good work between the two substitutes Dean Rance and Mitch Hahn on the left resulted in the latter player wriggling his way at an angle towards the near post. However, that man Paul Bastock was at it again blocking the shot away and deflecting the ball away out of danger.

Stortford's third substitute, Alex Read, almost found his way through on to a flick on from Dwight Gayle seconds later and then the same player volleyed just wide from distance at the start of the minimum five minutes added time at the end of the match.

It was actually inside the 6th minute of time added on that the visitors netted their winner. Connor Essam went into the tackle for a 50-50 ball with Boston substitute Mikel Suarez 20 yards inside the Stortford half. Both players had to receive treatment but Referee Crouch booked the on loan Blues defender and awarded United a free-kick. This was taken by Ben Milnes and flighted to the far post where Mickey Stones nodded on and Alan White helped the ball on to MARC NEWSHAM, who, with his back to goal, flicked over the line from three yards (0-1).

The Blues were therefore made to pay for several missed opportunities in the match and were also stopped from getting something from the game by a 41 year-old goalkeeper.

As well as the red card and yellows already mentioned Stortford's Scott Shulton and Dean Rance were booked as were United's Alan White and Mickey Stones – all in the second half.

Full time: 0-1

BISHOP'S STORTFORD: Nicky Eyre; Ritchie Jones; Phil Anderson; Scott Shulton; Mo Habu; Connor Essam; Ade Cole (sub – Mitch Hahn 56 mins); Reece Prestedge; Dwight Gayle; Michael Bakare (sub – Alex Read 79 mins); Junior Dadson (sub – Dean Rance 64 mins).
Unused substitutes: Alli Abdullahi and Ben Davison.

BOSTON UNITED: Paul Bastock; Justin Fairclough; Gareth Jolleyman; Chris Hall (sub – Ben Milnes 63 mins); Tom Ward; Alan White; Ryan Semple; Danny Sleath (sub – Ben Wilkinson 81 mins)); Mickey Stones; Marc Newsham; Kevin Holsgrove (sub – Mikel Suarez 56 mins).
Unused substitutes: Kevin Austin and Jason Field.

Attendance: 661