



Saturday 17th September 2011

BISHOP'S STORTFORD 0, STALYBRIDGE CELTIC 3
(BLUE SQUARE BET NORTH)

The Blues were outplayed by the visitors at Woodside Park as Celtic notched up their ninth successive unbeaten game of the season and their 16th unbeaten since their last reverse during the 2010/2011 campaign. The difference between the two sides was clear with Stortford second best for the majority of the game. Second in the table Stalybridge oozed confidence and ability whilst Stortford, not helped by enforced changes, lacked cohesion and posed little threat in the entire 90 minutes.

The changes for Stortford were the result of Gillingham not allowing Connor Essam's and Dean Rance's loan spells to continue, Phil Anderson was starting his three match ban following his red card in the previous home game against Boston United whilst Scott Shulton was absent injured with a hamstring problem picked up at Gainsborough. Coming back into the starting line-up were Max Lette Jallow, Alli Abdullahi and Mitch Hahn. Also starting in the centre of defence was Paco Craig. On the bench was new signing and ex West Ham youth team player Daniel Subuola.

The start of the match was quiet with Lloyd Ellams striking the first shot at goal in the 6th minute. His shot from 18 yards was easily held by Nicky Eyre. At the other end Dwight Gayle set up a shot for Alli Abdullahi and the midfielder's low effort from just inside the box was gathered on his knees by Danish keeper Jan Budtz. A deep free-kick by Andy McWilliams from the left looked to be causing problems but Eyre managed to grab hold of the ball.

In the 11th minute Eyre was again in action after a menacing Celtic attack when he had to dive to hold on to a shot from Greg Wilkinson. Although Dwight Gayle was close with a shot on the turn in the 13th minute the visitors took the lead a minute later. McWilliams, Jack Rea and Wilkinson were all involved in a fine move which seemed to have come to nothing when Wilkinson crossed the ball from the right. The ball fell to Mo Habu but the defender's attempted clearance hit LLOYD ELLAMS and rebounded off the Stalybridge striker past Eyre and into the net (0-1).

Stalybridge were much stronger on the ball than the Blues and they continued to have most of the possession. Around the midway point of the half Stortford won two successive corners but these came to nothing. A speculative shot from distance by Alli Abdullahi went wide in the 34th minute and three minutes later the Manchester side almost extended their lead as a header back to his keeper from Mo Habu dropped short and Phil Marsh's lob over Nicky Eyre was just wide of the target.

In the 39th minute a cross from the right from Mitch Hahn was headed goalwards by Ade Cole but keeper Budtz held on to the ball comfortably. The second Stalybridge goal that had been threatening for some time arrived three minutes before the break. A long pass downfield by right back Kristian Platt towards the Stortford penalty area was met by CONNOR JENNINGS, who despite being under pressure from a couple of Blues defenders, managed to turn the wide on the oncoming Eyre (0-2).

In the 44th minute Eyre made a fine blocking save to deny Jennings another goal following a long punt upfield by keeper Budtz. The Stortford stopper injured an ankle in the incident and although he carried on after treatment he was clearly in some discomfort for the rest of the match. Jennings had the ball in the net in the closing minute of the half but it was disallowed for offside.

Half time: 0-2

Ian Walker made a change at the break with Steffan Gaisie coming on for Max Lette Jallow. Michael Bakare dropped back to the left side of defence and skipper Reece Prestedge, who had started in the left back position moved into midfield.

A promising move on the left in the 51st minute saw Ade Cole and Michael Bakare link on the left and the latter's centre sped low across the six yard box but no one was there to turn it into the net.

Connor Jennings again put the ball into the net only to see another offside decision given in the 56th minute.

Stortford almost pulled a goal back after 62 minutes as Dwight Gayle cut from the right and saw his drive saved low down at the near post by Budtz. The ball ran loose but Mitch Hahn was unable to force the ball past the Celtic keeper.

The visitors extended their lead in the 65th minute. They were awarded a free-kick just outside the box following a melee and scramble for the ball. Celtic's leading goalscorer PHIL MARSH stepped up to take the kick and sent it over the wall and under the bar with Eyre motionless (0-3)

Reece Prestedge tried a 23 yard shot with 20 minutes remaining that Budtz held and then a minute later the Blues came their closest to scoring in the entire game. Dwight Gayle fastened on to a long ball upfield from Ritchie Jones and the striker hit a shot on the turn that Budtz kept out with a fine one handed save diving low to his left.

With twelve minutes remaining Phil Marsh hit a rasping shot from outside the box that clipped the top of Nicky Eyre's bar. Then, in the 85th minute Paco Craig, who otherwise had a good match, was shown a red card by Referee Stephen Ross after a challenge for the ball with Stalybridge's Jack Rea midway in the Stortford half. From the resultant free-kick taken by substitute Callum Warburton Jennings found the net again but once more saw an Assistant Referee's flag raised for offside.

The last kick of the match saw a free-kick from Dwight Gayle held at the near post by keeper Budtz after substitute Bernard Quainoo was fouled.

Full time: 0-3

BISHOP'S STORTFORD: Nicky Eyre; Ritchie Jones; Max Lette Jallow (sub – Steffan Gaisie 46 mins); Alli Abdullahi; Mo Habu; Paco Craig; Mitch Hahn; Reece Prestedge (sub – Daniel Subuola 76 mins); Dwight Gayle; Ade Cole (sub – Bernard Quainoo 58 mins); Michael Bakare.

Unused substitutes: Jack Jeffries and Junior Dadson.

STALYBRIDGE CELTIC: Jan Budtz; Kristian Platt; Andy McWilliams; Rhys Meynell; Chris Lynch; Jack Rea (sub – Arthur Gnahoua 88 mins); Craig Hobson (sub – Callum Warburton 49 mins); Greg Wilkinson; Phil Marsh (sub – Joel Bembo-Leta 83 mins); Lloyd Ellams; Connor Jennings.

Unused substitutes: Adam Kay and Tom Buckley.

Attendance: 358