



Saturday 21st January 2012

BISHOP'S STORTFORD 1, WORKINGTON AFC 1
(BLUE SQUARE BET NORTH)

A 90th minute Dwight Gayle penalty secured a point for the Blues at a blustery Woodside Park and it was very least Stortford deserved after being the more dominant side in this contest. The hosts could have been well ahead by the time the Reds went a goal up in the 16th minute and after the break the visitors were pinned back in their own half for long spells. That they held out until the final minute of normal time was thanks to fine defensive work by their back four who blocked a number of shots and produced some timely tackles to deny the Blues.

Following the reverse to Harrogate Town seven days earlier, Rod Stringer made a number of changes. With Sean Francis injured, Mark Haines on loan from Chelmsford City was drafted into the middle of defence and Matt Johnson, whose last Club was Braintree Town came into the midfield to make his debut. In addition Ricky Sappleton returned to lead the line. Another newcomer in the squad was Callum Stewart a defender formerly with Hampton & Richmond Borough who was amongst the substitutes.

There was early pressure from Stortford who began at a high tempo attacking the Airport end and with the gusting wind in their favour. In the opening two minutes they went close twice. Reece Prestedge and Dwight Gayle provided an opening for Scott Shulton whose shot was deflected over for a corner by the Cumbrians' Paul Johnson and following the flag-kick Phil Anderson's 20 yard effort was pushed aside by keeper Aaran Taylor diving to his right.

The Reds, on their first ever visit to Woodside Park, threatened for the first time in the 7th minute when Phil McLuckie's shot was blocked by newcomer Mark Haines. However, there was another near miss for Stortford when an inswinging Reece Prestedge corner on the right hit the inside of the far post and when Ricky Sappleton miscued the rebound McLuckie was on hand two yards from the goal-line to clear the ball upfield.

Scott Shulton was very prominent in the early stages and soon after shooting into the side-netting he took a free-kick deep on the left which struck the outside of the far upright before going out for a goal-kick. Another promising move involving Sappleton and Shulton saw the ball played infield for Reece Prestedge to slip into the box and Dwight Gayle swivelled to send his shot goalwards but unfortunately it went straight into Taylor's arms.

It was therefore against the run of play in the 16th minute that the Cumbrians took the lead after Mark Boyd's corner on the right. The Blues defence had opportunities to clear the ball but it eventually fell for skipper DAVID HEWSON, 15 yards out, to send an overhead kick past Jordan Archer and just inside a post (0-1).

The goal took the wind out of the Blues' sails but they continued to have the majority of the possession. However, there were no clear cut opportunities until the 34th minute when a Shulton corner on the left was headed back at the far post by Phil Anderson and Alli Abdullahi's 12 yard header was narrowly over the bar.

Five minutes before the break a useful move up the right flank ended with a speculative shot into the side-netting from Ricky Sappleton

Half time: 0-1

With Workington seemingly happy to sit back on their lead and defend in numbers, the Blues pushed forward again on the restart. After a Prestedge free-kick was cleared in the 52nd minute, Sebastian Dunbar swung in a cross from the left that keeper Taylor did well to take under pressure from Sappleton.

The visitors were defending well and a Stortford attack in the 55th minute up the inside right channel looked to be paying dividends but Sappleton was well tackled by Kyle May and then when the ball broke to Dwight Gayle it was Paul Johnson's turn to produce a timely tackle.

Matt Johnson was coming more into the match for the Blues the longer it progressed and he did well on the hour dispossessing Mark Boyd and dribbling the ball towards the near post along the goal-line. It took a desperate tackle by Workington's Johnson to deny him and keeper Taylor was able to gain possession amongst the prone bodies.

Another fine Blues move in the 66th minute ended with a powerful drive from Gayle, just inside the penalty area that Taylor kept out with his legs. Stortford were almost in trouble six minutes later, however, as substitute Jonny Wright, who had only just come on, collected a pass from Gareth Arnison and tried a looping effort from 20 yards that seemed destined to drop under the bar but Jordan Archer arched back to tip the ball over the bar.

Rod Stringer brought on Junior Dadson and Daniel Subuola to add sharpness up front and Dwight Gayle almost produced an equaliser in the 81st minute when he was fouled outside the box and his free-kick whistled close past the target. Then in the last minute of normal time Sappleton and Shulton combined down the middle before the latter slipped the ball just inside the box for Dwight Gayle. A split second before the Stortford leading marksman reached the ball Reds defender Gari Rowntree pushed him from behind and Gayle fell sprawling. Referee Mike George didn't hesitate to point to the spot and DWIGHT GAYLE sent keeper Taylor the wrong way from the penalty (1-1).

There were three minutes of stoppage time and the visitors came close in that time when Arnison and Wright again linked and the substitute's deflected shot was held low down by Jordan Archer dropping to his left. There was only one caution in the match and this was a booking for Workington's Lee Andrews.

Full time: 1-1

BISHOP'S STORTFORD: Jordan Archer; Ritchie Jones; Sebastian Dunbar (sub – Daniel Subuola 85 mins); Alli Abdullahi (sub – Junior Dadson 77 mins); Mark Haines; Phil Anderson; Dwight Gayle; Matt Johnson; Reneil Sappleton; Reece Prestedge; Scott Shulton.

Unused substitutes: Harry Milton, Callum Stewart and Arron Wickham.

WORKINGTON: Aaran Taylor; Lee Andrews; Gari Rowntree; Kyle May; Paul Johnson; Mark Boyd (sub – Stuart Green 74 mins); Phil McLuckie; David Hewson (sub – Adam Main 26 mins); David McNiven (sub – Jonny Wright 70 mins); Gareth Arnison; Anthony Wright.

Unused substitutes: Jake Simpson and Mark Sloan

Attendance: 466