

Saturday 7th Sept 2013

Bishop's Stortford FC Match Report



Bishop's Stortford FC



Havant & Waterlooville FC



Bishop 's Stortford 2 - 1 Bromley : HT 0 - 1 : Att 428

The Skril South

The Blues snatched victory from the jaws of defeat as superb late headed goals from Sean Francis, in the 88th minute, and George Sykes, in the fifth minute of stoppage time, turned the game on its head to leave the Hawks, who had taken a first half lead, shell-shocked.

Apart from a bright opening fifteen minutes or so, Stortford were laboured and disjointed for most of the afternoon. The visitors, with their star player and goalscorer Christian Nanetti a constant danger, could easily have notched further goals particularly in a spell just before the break when Sean Francis cleared off his line twice. However, as one now expects of the team, the Blues gave one hundred per cent effort to the end and the hard work paid off with Francis' equaliser and Sykes' winner.

Again Rod Stringer opted for an unchanged starting eleven and the only change was on the bench with new signing Nicky Symons being one of the substitutes. There was a blow for Havant before the match started because regular stopper Scott Bevan injured his hand in the warm-up and wasn't able to play so that reserve keeper Charlie Searle took his place between the sticks. Stortford started the better of the two sides and had already threatened before in an attack in the 12th minute Johnny Herd crossed deep to the far post from the left and when George Sykes hooked the ball back Kyle Vassell had an attempt at goal blocked by the keeper and Matt Johnson's follow-up was blocked away by a defender. Then, three minutes later, a corner was cleared out to the right and when Callum McNaughton crossed into the middle George Sykes headed narrowly over the bar.

After the promising start the Blues then entered a phase of losing possession in midfield and being hampered by the Hawks' tight marking throughout, they lost their fluency whilst the visitors enjoyed the greater share of possession. However, in the 28th minute, following good work by Sean Francis and George Sykes on the right the latter beat a couple of defenders before firing an angled shot across the face of the goal and then three minutes later Vassell, played through the middle by Anthony Church missed an opportunity by delaying his shot.

Havant took the lead in the 33rd minute after Matt Johnson lost possession in midfield. CHRISTIAN NANETTI broke quickly on the left flank and from just inside the box fired a low shot that went under Joe Wright towards his near upright (0-1).

Stortford were unable to pick their game up before the break and survived a couple of incidents where they could have fallen further behind. Nic Ciardini slipped the ball forward for Sahr Kabba to collect and attack the Stortford goal from the right but Joe Wright held the striker's shot at the near post. Soon afterwards in the 38th minute Kabba ran clear down the middle and when Joe Wright came out speedily to block, the loose ball was collected by Perry Ryan whose effort deflected off of the Blues keeper and seemed destined for the net only for Sean Francis headed off the line. Then, just sixty seconds later Ci-

ardini saw his shot kicked off the goal-line by Francis.

The action on the restart was slow until George Allen was close with a drive past the post after a Reece Prestedge cross in the 55th minute. But it was the side from Hampshire that looked likely to net the next goal and three minutes later Perry Ryan collected a throw from Daniel Blanchett and advancing on goal hit the outside of the near post.

George Sykes was just wide following a cross from the left by Anthony Church and then Kyle Vassell collected a long clearance to make tracks for goal but keeper Searle came out quickly to block at the striker's feet. This proved to be Vassell's last action as he was replaced by Kyle Asante shortly afterwards. Once again Havant had a chance to double their advantage, this time in the 69th minute, when Pedro Monteiro set Sahr Kabba away down the middle but the striker, trying to go round Joe Wright, was forced wide and the opportunity lost.

Both sides made double substitutions in the 72nd minute with, for the Blues, Nicky Symons, making his Blues debut, coming on for Anthony Church whilst Harry Baker replaced Ashley Miller. Christian Nanetti continued to cause more problems for Stortford and in the 76th minute he instigated a move that ended with substitute Steve Ramsey having an attempt at goal deflected for a corner. During a brief spell of pressure by the Blues Harry Baker headed well wide from a Johnny Herd cross and then there were appeals for a handball by a defender in the Havant box turned down. With ten minutes of normal time remaining Kabba once more had a chance to wrap the points up for the visitors but had his shot held by Wright.

As the end of the contest approached the Blues seemed to get some momentum and with the Hawks appearing to tire and happy to fall back and defend the hosts pressed forward although by this stage George Allen was injured and with all the substitutions used Rod Stringer had to push the young loan player forward and away from the defence.

There was only two minutes left of normal time when the equaliser arrived. Harry Baker, after a run on the right, was fouled and Matt Johnson swung his free-kick into the middle where SEAN FRANCIS climbed to power a header past keeper Searle and into the top right hand corner of the net from 15 yards (1-1).

Before the ninety minutes was up Christian Nanetti's deflected shot was inches wide of Joe Wright's near upright whilst Steve Ramsey also went close for Havant. Due to various injury stoppages in the second half there was no less than seven minutes of stoppage time added on by Referee Ashvin Degnarain and it was in the fifth of those minutes that the Blues grabbed the winner to celebrate and leave the Hawks shattered. After taking a throw on the right Matt Johnson regained possession after the ball was cleared out back to him and when the midfielder returned it into the box GEORGE SYKES leapt high to bullet a header under the bar and into the top corner for almost a carbon-copy of the first goal (2-1).

There were no cautions recorded against the Blues whilst the Hawks had Nic Ciardini, Ryan Woodford and Daniel Blanchett booked.

BISHOP'S STORTFORD: Joe Wright; Ashley Miller (sub – Harry Baker 72 mins); Johnny Herd; George Allen; Sean Francis; Callum McNaughton; Matt Johnson; Anthony Church (sub – Nicky Symons 72 mins); Kyle Vassell (sub – Kyle Asante 65 mins); George Sykes; Reece Prestedge.

Unused substitutes: Cliff Akurang and Ben Adams.

HAVANT & WATERLOOVILLE: Charlie Searle; Dan Strugnell; Daniel Blanchett; Pedro Monteiro (sub – Scott Jones 81 mins); Ryan Woodford; Ed Harris (sub – Eddie Hutchinson 72 mins); Christian Nanetti; Jesse Kewley- Graham; Nic Ciardini; Sahr Kabba; Perry Ryan (sub – Steve Ramsey 72 mins).

Unused substitute: Harry Wedlake.