

Saturday 22nd Feb 2014

Bishop's Stortford FC Match Report



Concord Rangers FC



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Concord Rangers 0 - 2 Bishop 's Stortford : HT 0 - 2 : Att 212

The Skril South

The Blues brought home a hard-earned three points with a “ backs to the wall ” performance after keeper Joe Wright was sent off in the 13th minute of this contest at the Aspect Arena. Cliff Akurang, who began the match up front alongside Brian Woodall, volunteered to go between the sticks and he, alongside a gutsy defence, kept the Beachboys at bay despite intense pressure particularly after the interval. In an incident packed opening half, a goal from Sean Francis after 20 minutes and an own goal soon afterwards by ex Blues defender Paul Goodacre shocked the hosts and gave Stortford a little leeway.

By the fact that Stortford were down to ten men so early in the match and that Cliff Akurang had so little experience in goal this must rate as one of their best results so far this campaign. They were well organised at the back with Sean Francis and George Allen outstanding giving Rangers few opportunities to threaten but when he had to, though, Cliff Akurang was equal to the task. Everyone did their bit with Brian Woodall worked his socks off to constantly annoy the Concord back line.

The starting line-up for Stortford saw the return of the previously injured Akurang and Sean Francis. Callum McNaughton and Liam Enver-Marum dropped to the bench that included Ryan Melaugh on his return to the Club.

There was little between the two sides in the first ten minutes or so with a deflected cross from the right by Rangers ' Taylor Miles being held by Joe Wright in the 4th minute and then, three minutes later, an Anthony Church drive going a yard or so wide after good work by Brian Woodall.

Joe Wright 's sending off happened shortly afterwards. He came quickly off his line to intercept Steve Cawley who had been put clear in the inside left channel by James White. The Blues keeper was ruled to have tripped Cawley some thirty yards out and although the former Blue looked to be heading in the direction of the corner flag and Sean Francis and Ashley Miller seemed to be covering back, Referee Mike George showed the red card to Wright for denying a clear goalscoring opportunity.

Within seconds Cliff Akurang 's first action was to save Sam Collins ' free-kick at the foot of the post and then make blocking stops from Steve Cawley and Leon Gordon in quick succession as the ball ran loose.

Stortford hit back when, in the 20th minute, they took the lead after a throw-in from the right by Matt Johnson. Anthony Church back headed the ball and it bounced nicely for SEAN FRANCIS to send a looping hooked volley from 15 yards over keeper Jamie Butler and under the bar (0-1).

In the next attack, after being released on the left by Matt Johnson, Reece Prestedge fired in an angled low drive that Butler

saved at full stretch. Cliff Akurang was in action again when he had to turn a long distance effort Sam Higgins over the top at the angle before the Blues doubled their lead in the 24th minute thanks to an own goal.

It was Akurang who launched a long ball upfield for Brian Woodall to chase and under pressure from the striker ex-Blues central defender PAUL GOODACRE headed over Butler, who was caught in no-mans land, and into the net (0-2).

Coming up to the half-hour mark Cliff Akurang saved well to keep out a 10 yard shot on the turn from Leon Gordon and then a near post effort from Steve Cawley was held by Stortford's stop-gap stopper.

The Blues were not far off from extending their lead three minutes from the break when a Matt Johnson free-kick to the near post saw Anthony Church misjudge the timing of his header and the ball fell wide of the target.

Half-time: 0-2

From the restart the Beachboys were encamped in the Blues half. There were extended periods of pressure but the excellence of the Stortford defence kept out any danger until the 62nd minute when a long drive from Taylor Miles flew a foot wide. Four minutes later Akurang held on to an awkward dipping centre from Miles.

The nearest that the hosts came to reducing the deficit was in the 79th minute when Sam Higgins laid the ball into the middle from the right and James White thundered a 25 yard shot that Akurang finger-tipped on to the bar and managed to grab the rebound.

Stortford's only meaningful attack of the second half occurred in the 82nd minute as Michael Richens forced a corner on the right from which Matt Johnson's flag-kick was met by header from Anthony Church that Butler comfortably held.

A minute later, at the other end, Sam Higgins' acute angled shot-cum-cross was tipped over the top by Akurang. With five minutes left of normal time Jake Hall slipped the ball through for Reece Prestedge to advance on the left but the skipper delayed his shot and was shut down before shooting.

There was four minutes of stoppage time and during that period Rangers' Sam Higgins shot wide when well placed and a 12 yard rising attempt from substitute Tony Stokes was over the bar as Stortford saw out time relatively comfortably.

Referee George booked Reece Prestedge along with Concord's Paul Goodacre and Taylor Miles.

Full time: 0-2

BISHOP'S STORTFORD: Joe Wright; Michael Richens; Ashley Miller; George Allen; Sean Francis; Jake Hall (sub – Harry Baker 86 mins); Matt Johnson; Anthony Church; Brian Woodall (sub – Josh Fagbohun 88 mins); Cliff Akurang; Reece Prestedge.

Unused substitutes: Callum McNaughton, Liam Enver-Marum and Ryan Melaugh.

CONCORD RANGERS: Jamie Butler; Jack Lampe (sub – Reece Harris 33 mins); Danny Glozier; Taylor Miles; Steve King (sub – Tony Stokes 59 mins); Paul Goodacre; Leon Gordon (sub – Rob Girdlestone 77 mins); James White; Sam Higgins; Sam Collins; Steve Cawley.

Unused substitutes: Ollie Bowles and Nicky Cowley.