

Tue 8th Apr 2014

Bishop's Stortford FC Match Report



Farnborough FC



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Farnborough 4 - 2 Bishop 's Stortford : HT 2 - 0 : Att 291

The Skril South

Farnborough completed the "double" over Stortford when the two Clubs met in the Conference South three seasons ago and it was the same story this campaign when the Hampshire side comprehensively won this Skril South encounter at the Paddy Power Park.

The Blues were well below par in the previous meeting this term at the ProKit UK Stadium a couple of weeks ago but the return match was one of their worst, if not their worst so far. They were two nil behind at the break and in all honesty could have been five down so poor were they. There was a slight improvement after the interval but at the final whistle they were well beaten by, what has to be said, an average team.

Stortford continually lost possession when bringing the ball away from defence especially in the first half and seemed incapable of basic defending. All four goals conceded were as a result of slack defending. The promise shown in the previous three matches seemed to completely evaporate at Farnborough. With this listless display it seemed as though the effect of the matches coming thick and fast in the last few weeks had finally caught up with them.

Rod Stringer had to make a number of changes to his side through injury and unavailability. Sean Francis was still out of action due to his injury and he was joined on the side-lines by fellow central defender Callum McNaughton who had suffered a knee injury. Rod Young was unavailable as he was required by Norwich City and Anthony Church was starting a four match suspension following his sending-off against Whitehawk a fortnight earlier. These absences meant that Cliff Akurang partnered George Allen in the centre of defence and there were recalls to the starting eleven for Sam Cutler, Jake Hall and Michael Richens. There was also a place on the bench for keeper Sam Cowler returning to the squad for the first time since his bad injury at Bath City in early February.

A very sluggish start by Stortford saw them almost fall behind in the second minute when Dan Bennett's cross into the box from the right resulted in blocks from Joe Wright and George Allen prevented Matt Ball and then Adam Doyle giving the Borough the lead. The next attack from the hosts ended with the ball in the net but an offside decision was given.

A Brian Woodall speculative effort in the 5th minute was wide and when Ashley Miller was just inside the box in the 20th minute he was unable to keep a high bouncing ball down enough to threaten goal and his shot from 15 yards was over the target.

The first goal conceded by Stortford arrived in the 24th minute. Reece Prestedge committed a foul on Farnborough's right touchline and Matt Ball's deep free-kick towards the far post was patted out tamely from under the bar by Joe Wright. JOSH HUGGINS, reacting the quickest, headed into the net from close range (1-0).

A second goal for the hosts almost materialised three minutes later as the Blues were caught in possession on the halfway line and when Adam Doyle released Phil Page the Borough number nine broke quickly on the left and then after turning inside fired wide past the far angle. Then, on the half hour, the failure of Stortford players to put in a reasonable tackle meant that Page again ran clear on goal only to see Joe Wright make a good save. The ball ran loose to Dan Bennett who shot over the bar with the goal at his mercy.

Phil Page was again wide from a chance to score soon afterwards and five minutes before break the striker missed out again after Josh

Huggins had slipped the ball to him with Wright, again, blocking the shot away.

Eventually the Borough doubled their lead in the 41st minute as Stortford's defence was exposed after George Allen lost possession yards inside his own half. Matt Ball ran through centrally and after drawing out Joe Wright from his goal-line passed to PHIL PAGE who was left with an empty net to aim at (2-0).

Half time: 2-0

After a poor first half things didn't get much better in the early seconds on the resumption. Straightaway Cliff Akurang gave away the ball to Phil Page on the left and his pass found Josh Huggins whose shot was kept out by Wright diving to his left.

Rod Stringer's immediate reaction was to move Cliff Akurang up front and Stortford played out the rest of the match with three at the back. This at least made the Blues look a more potent force going forward and in the 52nd minute Akurang and Matt Johnson linked in a move and the latter's cross to the far post was headed over the bar by Reece Prestedge.

That had been a good chance to pull a goal back but it didn't really matter as a minute later the lead was halved. In the next attack Cliff Akurang headed the ball out to Ryan Melaugh who had just come on to the pitch and the substitute's excellent cross from the left was headed home at the far post at close range by BRIAN WOODALL (2-1).

A short period of end to end action followed but Borough restored a two goal lead on the hour. Adam Doyle was ruled to have been fouled by Ashley Miller a couple of yards outside the area and MATT BALL's free-kick high into the net beat Joe Wright (3-1).

Adam Doyle flashed a long range attempt just past a post soon afterwards but the Blues were now threatening the home goal more regularly and when Johnny Herd found Cliff Akurang with a pass up the left flank Akurang cut inside and saw stopper Fitzsimons save his shot at the foot of his near upright and the loose ball was struck over the angle by Brian Woodall.

The Blues cut the lead again in the 75th minute. A Reece Prestedge corner on the right was deflected across the six yard box and out for a flag - kick on the other side which, taken by Matt Johnson, resulted in a close range header by CLIFF AKURANG finishing in the back of the net (3-2).

Stortford's flickering hopes of perhaps taking a point from the game lasted sixty seconds as the hosts went up the other end of the pitch to register their fourth goal of the evening. Striker Phil Page forced his way past a series of timid challenges from Blues' players on and then laid the ball into the path of JOSH HUGGINS who swept the ball into the net from close range for his second goal of the evening (4-2).

With ten minutes left Cliff Akurang combined with Josh Fagbohun in an attack that ended with the latter's shot trickling past the post with the aid of a deflection and from Reece Prestedge's corner Akurang headed a foot over. Then from a Matt Johnson corner, a minute later, another header from Akurang was parried out well by home stopper Ross Fitzsimons.

There was three minutes of stoppage time at the end of the match and when George Allen made an error Phil Page had a chance to add to his tally but his angled shot was turned away for a corner by Joe Wright.

Referee Stuart Butler cautioned the Blues' Ashley Miller and George Allen in the match along with Farnborough substitute Tyrone Berry.

Full time: 4-2

BISHOP'S STORTFORD: Joe Wright; Ashley Miller; Johnny Herd; George Allen; Cliff Akurang; Michael Richens; Matt Johnson; Sam Cutler (sub – Harry Baker 46 mins); Brian Woodall (sub – Josh Fagbohun 65 mins); Jake Hall (sub – Ryan Melaugh 51 mins); Reece Prestedge.

Unused substitutes: Luke Milbourne and Sam Cowler.

FARNBOROUGH: Ross Fitzsimons; Josh Huggins; Ollie Treacher; Courtney Fearn; Alan Inns; Adam Doyle; Dan Bennett (sub – Tyrone Berry 84 mins); Matt Ball; Phil Page (sub – Connor French 90+3 mins); Fraser Colmer; Alfred Bosch.

Unused substitute: Youssef Bamba.