

Saturday 23<sup>rd</sup> August 2014

ST ALBANS CITY 2, BISHOP'S STORTFORD 1  
(VANARAMA CONFERENCE SOUTH)

Two defensive errors decided the destination of the points in what was otherwise a close encounter at Clarence Park. Looking to bounce back after the previous week's home defeat to Maidenhead United, keeper Joe Wright gifted the ball to the Saints' James Comley for the hosts' first goal early on and then after the Blues had equalised through Spencer McCall before the break defeat beckoned when Wright and Mikel Suarez collided going for the ball allowing City skipper Ben Martin to slot in what proved to be the winning goal.

Rod Stringer's squad showed a few changes and included two loan signings – defender Danny Fitzsimons from Luton partnered George Allen in the centre of defence whilst George Sykes, who had a spell with the Blues last season from Barnet was on the bench and came on as a substitute late in the match. The Blues' Manager was back on the touchline after his three match ban.

City had the edge in the early minutes with Steve Wales going close with a lob after two minutes and John Kyriacou, cutting in from the right, seeing his shot blocked away by Joe Wright after five minutes. Then, for Stortford kicking down hill in the first half, a Ryan Melaugh cross from the left was headed over by Mikel Suarez before another header from the striker after a George Allen free-kick into the box was held under the bar by keeper Joe Welch.

Almost immediately, in the 14<sup>th</sup> minute, the Blues fell behind. Joe Wright looking to find Ryan Auger on the right under-hit his pass out and the ball was intercepted by **JAMES COMLEY** who floated it over the keeper and inside the far side of the net (1-0).

With Stortford frustratingly giving the ball away in midfield the hosts had a spell when they looked as though they might get on top. A Darren Locke header following a Comley free-kick was held by Wright and Steve Wales was again close when he shot narrowly wide of an upright.

Shortly after the half hour mark Anthony Church was just over the bar with a free-kick after he himself had been fouled. But Stortford didn't have long to wait for an equaliser that came from a fine move in the 35<sup>th</sup> minute. Ryan Auger's header forward was chested down and turned down the middle by Mikel Suarez into the path of **SPENCER McCALL**. The midfielder took the ball on to just inside the box before slipping it

wide of the advancing Welch (1-1). This was McCall's first goal for the Blues.

The Blues thought they might get a penalty decision in their favour four minutes later when Anthony Church running on to a Ryan Melaugh pass into the box was grounded after a nudge by David Keenleyside but Referee Ian Cooper was unmoved.

Stortford continued to press up until the break. A drive from McCall was just over the top whilst Ishmael Kamara twice threatened the Saints' goal a minute from the interval.

Half time: 1-1

There was an early chance for the Blues after the restart when Suarez slipped the ball through the legs of a defender for Spencer McCall to take on but he drilled the ball wide of the near post.

At the other end another error by Wright went unpunished as striker Elliott Buchanan lobbed inches wide from distance. However, around the midway point of the half Stortford twice threatened with an angled shot-cum-cross from Johnny Herd held under the bar by Welch and a McCall volley not far over the target.

Stortford's hopes took a nosedive in the 71<sup>st</sup> minute though when gave away a second goal. Joe Tabiri concede a free-kick towards the touch-line and when Lee Chappell swung the ball in from the right Joe Wright caught the ball but lost grip of it a split second later as the stopper collided with Mikel Suarez. The ball was spilled and dropped kindly for Saints' skipper **BEN MARTIN** to steer into an empty net (2-1).

Rod Stringer made a double substitution three minutes later with George Sykes replacing Mikel Suarez and Harry Baker coming on for Ryan Melaugh.

The game opened out as the Blues searched for another equaliser but City substitute Sean Shields was proving a handful and when the Blues' defence was stretched by an attack across the pitch a shot on the turn by Shields was just wide of the far post.

The nearest Stortford came to levelling the scores was nine minutes from the end of normal time when Spencer McCall found Sheldon Sellaars on the right and after cutting inside the substitute's attempt at goal was saved by Welch.

The action then swung to the other end and Steve Wales' angled shot from the right struck the far post and in the 88<sup>th</sup> minute George Allen slipped to allow Sean Shields to advance on goal but the final shot was inches over the bar.

There was six minutes of added time at the conclusion of the game but the Blues were unable to seriously threaten the home goal in that time.

St Albans' Darren Locke was cautioned by Referee Ian Cooper for what was the only booking in the match.

Full time: 2-1

BISHOP'S STORTFORD: Joe Wright; Ryan Auger; Johnny Herd; Joe Tabiri; George Allen; Danny Fitzsimons; Ishmael Kamara (sub – Sheldon Sellears 63 mins); Anthony Church; Mikel Suarez (George Sykes 74 mins); Spencer McCall; Ryan Melaugh (sub – Harry Baker 74 mins).  
Unused substitutes: Phil Anderson and Ashley Miller.

ST ALBANS CITY: Joe Welch; John Kyriacou; Lee Chappell; Sam Corcoran (sub – Lee Clarke 12 mins); Ben Martin; Darren Locke; Danny Green; James Comley; Elliott Buchanan (sub – Loick Pires 54 mins); David Keenleyside (sub – Sean Shields 54 mins); Steve Wales.  
Unused substitutes: Matt Taylor and Tom Coulton.

Attendance: 461