

Tuesday 12th August 2014

**BISHOP'S STORTFORD 2, WEALDSTONE 2
(VANARAMA CONFERENCE SOUTH)**

Stortford's first Vanarama Conference South match of the season at the ProKit UK Stadium provided great entertainment over the 90 minutes against newly promoted Wealdstone. In a game that saw fortunes fluctuate between the sides Anthony Church gave the Blues the lead with a superb shot before the visitors fought back to take the lead with a couple of goals in the space of a few minutes either side of the break. Then Mikel Suarez restored parity with a thumping effort eight minutes from time.

Rod Stringer's pre-match planning was hindered when keeper Joe Wright was involved in a car accident coming to the game and was unable to play. This meant that Sam Baxter was between the sticks for his debut. Also, Will de Havilland was unavailable so that Rio Bryan-Edwards slotted into right side of the Blues defence and he also was making his first competitive start in a Stortford shirt.

The Stones had the slight edge in the early action with veteran striker Scott McGleish having a 9th minute header held under the bar by Baxter but Blues supporters then saw a wonder strike give their side the lead in the 22nd minute. Ryan Melaugh tussled with visiting defender Elliott Godfrey for the ball close to the left wing corner flag and when it deflected away from them Jonny Wright could only nudge it on into the path of **ANTHONY CHURCH**. The Blues skipper, some twenty yards out and in the angle of the box, struck a great first time shot that went over keeper North and under the bar into the far corner of the net (1-0).

Six minutes later North picked up a back pass and from Spencer McCall's free-kick Church's driven effort was blocked by the Wealdstone defensive wall. However, the Middlesex side began to build up some momentum and Sam Baxter did well to hold on to a cross from the right by Luke Pigden in the 36th minute. Then, six minutes later, George Allen gave the ball away inside his own half but fortunately for the Blues Michael Malcolm lobbed the ball over both Sam Baxter and the bar after running clear.

In Stortford's last attack before the interval Sheldon Sellears was fouled on the right and Johnny Herd's resultant free-kick was well held by stopper North on the ground. Stortford hopes of going in at the break in front were dashed when Wealdstone equalised in the second minute of added time. Referee Antony Coggins ruled that Church had fouled Stones' Luke Pigden some 25 yards out and **JACK MILLS'** free-kick

went over the defensive wall and wide of Sam Baxter's full length dive (1-1).

Half time: 1-1

Within four minutes of a damp restart Stortford found themselves behind. Jack Mills and Scott McGleish linked on the right and the latter swung over a perfect cross for **JONNY WRIGHT** to ghost in towards the near post and head into the net from eight yards (1-2).

Credit to the Blues who soon battled back. In the 53rd minute Joe Tabiri swung over a deep centre from the left that keeper North did well to punch away and then an Anthony Church shot on the turn soon afterwards went wide.

Wealdstone continued to look lively up front, though, and, on the hour, when Pigden found McGleish just inside the box with an accurate pass the striker's first time volley was well saved by Baxter.

In the 64th minute only an excellent reflex save by North stopped the Blues equalising through an own goal as Sheldon Sellears run and low cross from the right deflected off a defender's legs goalwards. Then, within seconds, from another Sellears centre, Mikel Suarez's header looked destined for the net but North threw himself to his left to turn the ball aside.

Another Stortford player to make his debut was substitute Jermaine Osei who came on in the 79th minute to replace Sheldon Sellears.

McGleish went close to scoring with a header again but the Blues levelled in the 82nd minute. Mikel Suarez was fouled midway inside the Wealdstone half by centre back Tom Hamblin and Johnny Herd's free-kick towards the far post saw both George Allen and Mikel Suarez go up for the ball with defenders and **MIKEL SUAREZ** was the first to react with the Spaniard lashed the ball past North from eight yards (2-2).

There were two minutes of added time but no more goals at the end of this excellent contest.

Referee cautioned three players – the Blues' Mikel Suarez and the Stones' skipper Sean Cronin and Jack Mills.

Full time: 2-2

BISHOP'S STORTFORD: Sam Baxter; Rio Bryan-Edwards ; Johnny Herd; Joe Tabiri; George Allen; Phil Anderson; Sheldon Sellears (sub –

Jermaine Osei 79 mins); Anthony Church; Mikel Suarez; Spencer McCall; Ryan Melaugh.

Unused substitutes: Luke Milbourne, Josh Fagbohun, Jamie Guy and Declan Hunt.

WEALDSTONE: Jonathan North; Jack Mills; Carl Martin; Tom Hamblin; Sean Cronin; Elliott Godfrey (sub – Toby Little 75 mins); Jonny Wright; Luke Pigden; Scott McGleish; Tom Hickey; Michael Malcolm (sub – Tom Collins 82 mins).

Unused substitutes: Wes Parker, Joe Turner and James Hammond.

Attendance: 477