

Saturday 6<sup>th</sup> September 2014

**BISHOP'S STORTFORD 2, BASINGSTOKE TOWN 3  
(VANARAMA CONFERENCE SOUTH)**

Stortford slipped to their third successive home defeat when in-form Basingstoke made the most of another slow start in the first half from the Blues to race into a 3-1 lead by the interval.

The victory for the Dragons sent them to the top of the Vanarama South table. They were two ahead shortly after the half hour before Ryan Auger pulled a goal back but former Blues striker Liam Enver-Marum restored the two goal advantage a minute from the break. Stortford battled back in the second half and George Allen netted with a header with 18 minutes left to set up a grandstand finish that saw visiting keeper Stuart Moore make several crucial saves to deny Rod Stringer's men an equaliser.

Following the previous weekend's success at Havant the Blues' squad showed just one change and that was due to the unavailability of Joe Tabiri – attending a wedding - and so Spencer McCall was in the starting eleven and Jermaine Osei was amongst the substitutes.

It was McCall's misplaced pass on the halfway line that led indirectly to Stokes' opening goal in the 7<sup>th</sup> minute. Midfielder Louie Soares diverted McCall's pass forward to Liam Enver-Marum who appeared to handle the ball as he brought it under control. Play carried on however and the striker threaded a through pass to **CHRIS FLOOD**, in space and advancing into the box, and he placed his shot wide of the oncoming Joe Wright (0-1).

The Blues failed to settle after this set back and the visitors looked very confident at this stage with Flood, in particular, causing problems. He went close with a shot after a penetrating run and then when the Stortford defence failed to cut out a cross from the left his first time effort was a foot over the bar.

Enver-Marum drove the ball close past the post in the 19<sup>th</sup> minute when the Blues failed to clear a corner. The first time Stortford looked dangerous was at the midpoint of the half when Sheldon Sellaars went on a typical run past a number of players but his final shot was held low down by the Dragons' stopper Stuart Moore.

Sellaars raid was a rare event however as the Blues' defence struggled to cope and Stoke's Shaun MacAuley was narrowly wide in the 31<sup>st</sup> minute before **CHRIS FLOOD**, towards the far post, doubled their lead a minute later after receiving a deep cross from the left flank by Tom Bird and

guiding a fine shot across and past Joe Wright's full length dive and inside the keeper's right hand upright (0-2).

Stortford came back with a deflected 30 yard effort from Ryan Auger held under the bar by Moore and then skipper Anthony Church was just over with another shot from distance. The deficit was reduced three minutes from the interval. Spencer McCall gained possession on Blues right and played the ball inside to **RYAN AUGER** who advanced towards the box and then hammered a 25 yard shot between keeper Moore and his near post. It was Auger's first goal for Stortford (1-2).

Hopes of keeping the Hampshire side quiet until the interval were shattered when they restored their two goal lead in the 44<sup>th</sup> minute. Tom Bird and Chris Flood exchanged passes to take them into the box and with Stortford's defence split open **LIAM ENVER-MARUM** was left with an easy opportunity to net from close range (1-3).

Half time: 1-3

Although Flood curled a shot on to the roof of the Stortford net within a minute of the restart it was soon evident that the Blues had come out in a determined mood and they were close to notching their second goal in the 48<sup>th</sup> minute. Rod Young was fouled outside the box and from Spencer McCall's free-kick from the right the ball dropped down for George Allen to fire at goal but keeper Moore made an outstanding save and Young sent the loose ball wide of the post.

Rod Stringer had to make a substitution ten minutes into the half with Mikel Suarez injured during the first half replaced by George Sykes. The Barnet loan striker was soon in action as, on the hour, he received a pass from Ryan Auger, flicked the ball over the head of a defender and made tracks for goal but his shot was well saved by Moore at the expense of a corner.

The Blues continued to have most of the possession but the Dragons were dangerous on the break and in the 69<sup>th</sup> minute when Lloyd Macklin broke clear on the left Joe Wright denied the substitute with a save at the near post.

An excellent finish to the match was set up in the 72<sup>nd</sup> minute when the Blues netted their second goal of the afternoon. They were awarded another free-kick on the right taken this time by Johnny Herd. Although the visitors' defence cleared, Spencer McCall drove the ball forward towards goal and **GEORGE ALLEN** neatly flicked the bouncing ball into the corner of the net from ten yards. This was the central defender's first league goal for the Blues (2-3).

Stortford forced a number of corners in the remainder of normal time with Ryan Auger driving just wide in the 82<sup>nd</sup> minute following one of the flag kicks. At the other end Joe Wright made another good save when Shaun MacAuley broke free on the left in the 89<sup>th</sup> minute.

There was five minutes of added time during which there was plenty of further action. George Sykes headed a cross from Johnny Herd wide of the target and then Lloyd Macklin missed a great chance to net a fourth goal for the visitors after robbing Joe Wright of the ball close to the corner flag he shot into the side-netting, albeit from a very tight angle, when faced with a virtually open goal.

Then in the very last minute of the match the Blues so nearly grabbed an equaliser. Ryan Auger found Sheldon Sellears in space on the left of the box and the midfielder had his low shot well stopped by Moore and Rod Young's follow-up effort from close in was scrambled away for a corner.

Referee Alan Young booked Joe Wright along with four Basingstoke players during the afternoon – Manny Williams, Tom Bird, Andrew Jenkinson and Lloyd Macklin.

Full time: 2-3

**BISHOP'S STORTFORD:** Joe Wright; Ashley Miller (sub – Harry Baker 83 mins); Johnny Herd; Spencer McCall; George Allen; Danny Fitzsimons; Sheldon Sellears; Anthony Church; Rod Young; Mikel Suarez (sub – George Sykes 56 mins); Ryan Auger.

Unused substitutes: Ryan Melaugh, Jermaine Osei and Phil Anderson.

**BASINGSTOKE TOWN:** Stuart Moore; Nathan Smart; Tom Bird; Louie Soares (sub – Andrew Jenkinson 63 mins); Jay Gasson; David Ray; Simon Dunn; Shaun McAuley; Liam Enver-Marum (sub – Lloyd Macklin 66 mins); Chris Flood; Manny Williams (sub – Rob Rice 87 mins).

Unused substitutes: Kieran Maylen and Sam Argent.

Attendance: 444