

Saturday 15th November 2014

**BISHOP'S STORTFORD 1 EASTBOURNE BOROUGH 1
(VANARAMA CONFERENCE SOUTH)**

Frankie Merrifield, the Blues new signing from Hayes & Yeading United, scored on his debut as Stortford and the visitors, who equalised from the penalty spot, drew 1-1. So it was another two points dropped at the ProKit UK Stadium and equally as worrying were the injuries to Ashley Miller and Johnny Herd during the match and both could be potentially out of action for several weeks.

Herd fell to earth after an early collision with a Borough player and although the plucky defender continued to play until the final whistle he has a suspected fracture of the cheekbone. Meanwhile Miller fell heavily and awkwardly after a challenge just inside the box midway through the second period. Referee Derek Eaton didn't award Stortford a penalty and Miller, in considerable pain, was helped off the pitch with a dislocated shoulder.

Rod Stringer's team showed a number of changes. George Allen remained side-lined with a broken toe and skipper Anthony Church was still not fully fit but did take his place on the substitutes bench. Also missing was Ryan Auger who was serving a one match suspension having picked up five yellow cards so far this term. Apart from Frankie Merrifield coming in for a first start, Adam Bailey-Dennis was in the centre of defence on loan from Bromley and starting a second spell with Stortford.

There were few incidents in a quiet beginning to the match. An early corner on the left from Spencer McCall ran loose in front of goal but was cleared by the Eastbourne defence. The visitors had the greater amount of possession at this stage and in the 15th minute a Simon Johnson corner was cleared and when Matt Aldred lofted the ball towards the six yard box Danny Fitzsimons headed the ball away to end the threat on goal.

David Gregory mis-punched a Sam Beale free-kick in the 18th minute but fortunately the ball flew out of harms way and then, at the Airport end, a Blues attack finished with Mikel Suarez laying the ball out to the left for Rod Young to cut in and shoot and visiting stopper Lewis Carey held the ball low at the near post.

Borough could have taken the lead in the 29th minute when an unmarked Richard Pacquette aimed his far post header wide following a Frankie Raymond corner from the right. The visitors were made to pay within a minute as Stortford took the lead with a well-worked goal. Rod Young

and Johnny Herd, tight on the left touchline, combined in a move and when Herd crossed to the edge of the area Mikel Suarez nodded forward and **FRANKIE MERRIFIELD** coolly finished with a lofted shot over Carey from 12 yards (1-0).

Three minutes later Stortford nearly doubled their lead. A long clearance from Gregory was headed on by Suarez for Young to gain possession but the striker failed to get in an early shot with just Carey to beat and in trying to go round the goalkeeper the ball was claimed from the forward's toes.

A minute from the break Borough dangerman Gavin McCallum posed problems but good blocks from Stortford defenders stopped shots from outside the area.

Half time: 1-0

The Blues started the second half the brighter with Young having yet another shot blocked within the first minute. Wasteful play from Eastbourne brought about another chance when Spencer McCall stole the ball from Sam Beale. McCall found Young in the box who was crowded out, then Joe Tabiri was halted by the Eastbourne backline as the visitors got themselves out of trouble.

Merrifield and Miller linked up well on the 51st minute after a couple of sharp passes between the two released Miller but his near post effort was blocked away at the near post by Carey.

Despite the good start to the second half from the home side it was Eastbourne who hit back in the 56th minute when Referee Eaton awarded them a dubious penalty after skipper Tabiri bundled over Marvin Hamilton just inside the box after Stortford had not cleared a Frankie Raymond free-kick into the area. **RICHARD PACQUETTE** stepped up and lashed his spot kick into the top left corner to level the match (1-1).

Bishop's Stortford had a penalty claim of their own waved away in the 63rd minute in the incident that saw Miller sent tumbling on the fringes of the penalty area. The Referee saw nothing untoward anything untoward with the challenge however.

Eastbourne's Gavin McCallum, had a cluster of shots, with his best striking a post in the 76th minute after cutting in from the right flank.

McCall thought he'd set up the winner for the Blues in the 83rd minute when he laid the ball back to Young but the forward couldn't sort out his feet in time and the visitors were able to clear their lines.

The Blues threw men forward in a grandstand finish and following a corner from Spencer McCall with two minutes of normal time remaining a chance fell to Phil Anderson who couldn't direct his header towards goal and the ball went agonisingly wide of the upright.

Referee Eaton booked the Blues' Joe Tabiri, Phil Anderson and Frankie Merrifield along with Borough's skipper Ian Simpemba during the contest.

Full time: 1-1

BISHOP'S STORTFORD: David Gregory; Ashley Miller (sub - Sheldon Sellaars 67 mins); Johnny Herd; Adam Bailey-Dennis; Danny Fitzsimons; Phil Anderson; Frankie Merrifield; Joe Tabiri; Mikel Suarez; Rod Young; Spencer McCall.

Unused substitutes: Ryan Melaugh, Anthony Church, Damien Green and George Sykes.

EASTBOURNE BOROUGH: Lewis Carey; Marvin Hamilton; Sam Beale; Matt Aldred; Ian Simpemba; Frankie Raymond; Gavin McCallum; Matt Parsons; Richard Pacquette; (sub – Darren Lok 77 mins) Simon Johnson; James Walker (sub – Moses Ashikodi 84 mins).

Unused substitutes: Ryan Worrall, Richie Welch and Dean Sinclair.

Attendance: 362