

Saturday 29th November 2014

**BISHOP'S STORTFORD 4, CHELMSFORD CITY 3
(FA TROPHY 3RD QUALIFYING ROUND)**

Stortford progressed into the 1st Round of the FA Trophy and a home tie with Vanarama Conference Premier side Torquay United with this win over local rivals City. They had a late scare as after being four goals ahead they contrived to concede three goals in the last twenty minutes to create a very nervous final few minutes at the ProKit (UK) Stadium.

The Blues first victory since 11th October when Farnborough were beaten came due to the excellent display in the first seventy minutes of the tie. Fired up beforehand by Rod Stringer Stortford played at a very high tempo and it was a shame that the final scoreline didn't reflect the earlier dominance over the Clarets.

The squad selected by the Blues boss included new signing Cheye Alexander from Concord Rangers who filled the right back slot and Donovan Simmonds returned to the starting line-up alongside Mikel Suarez. Joe Tabiri was unavailable and George Allen was not included due to the condition of his broken toe being worsened at Stevenage in midweek whilst Anthony Church and Ashley Miller were both on the bench although not fully fit.

Attacking the Airport end in the first half Stortford soon made their intent clear. Donovan Simmonds narrowly missed with a shot past the near post from the angle of the area after receiving Mikel Suarez's pass and then in a move soon afterwards City keeper Bradley Watkins dived to hold and cut out a cross from Sheldon Sellears who had collected a pass from Spencer McCall.

Suarez was over the bar with an attempt from distance before Stortford went ahead in the 19th minute. Frankie Merrifield was fouled by Lee Sawyer on the right midway inside the Clarets half and McCall's free-kick to the far post found Mikel Suarez whose looping header rebounded off the crossbar to fall to **RYAN AUGER** and the midfielder hit a left footed shot on the turn high into the net from eight yards (1-0).

It was almost two to the good in the 25th minute. New boy Cheye Alexander set Suarez away down the middle and it took a fine blocking save at the expense of a corner from Watkins to deny the Spaniard. Continuing to have the upper hand Phil Anderson then headed wide at the far post for Stortford following a deep cross from the right by Auger.

A Suarez header from another McCall free-kick wasn't far off the mark and then at the other end just before the half hour City skipper Mark Hughes finished a move with a shot from the edge of the area but it lacked sufficient power and was held by a falling David Gregory.

Chelmsford were setting up a number of probing attacks but the Blues defence at this stage defended comfortably and their confidence grew with a second goal six minutes from the break. A long throw from the left by Johnny Herd saw Mikel Suarez and Donovan Simmonds go up for the ball and when it dropped it rebounded off the shin of City's **CHRISTIAN SMITH**, under pressure from Ryan Auger, wide of stopper Watkins (2-0).

The visitors fought back and in the 42nd minute David Gregory did well to save from striker Michael Cheek who had got on the end of a cross from the right by Joe Ward. The ball ran loose to Mark Hughes but Phil Anderson stopped his goalbound shot with a brave block.

Half time: 2-0

City made a double substitution at the interval but it was Stortford who looked the more dangerous on the restart and Donovan Simmonds was narrowly wide with a low 20 yard drive past Watkins' right hand upright in the 48th minute.

There was an escape for Stortford three minutes later as an unmarked Mark Hughes' close range header skimmed the bar after a Nicky Nicolau corner. But the Blues came back and after a Ryan Auger long range effort was a foot over the target a corner a minute later from Spencer McCall nearly resulted in a goal with keeper Watkins grabbing the ball as Simmonds lurked near the goal-line.

The third goal for Stortford arrived in the 56th minute. A long ball forward was nudged on by Donovan Simmonds into the path of **SHELDON SELLEARS** coming in from the left and his driving run took him in between two defenders and past Marvin Ekpiteta before smashing a low shot from the edge of the box past Watkins and into the far bottom corner (3-0).

Just past the hour City nearly profited from an error by Phil Anderson that let in Leon Redwood but David Gregory did well to block the substitute's shot. The visitors' Joe Ward also had a run and shot that could have pulled a goal back but Stortford then further extended with a fourth goal in the 68th minute. A great move and goal was begun by Mikel Suarez with an excellent pass from his own half that set Donovan Simmonds racing away down the right flank. Deep into City territory Simmonds pulled the ball back into the area and **RYAN AUGER** netted

his second of the afternoon with a first time left footed shot from 12 yards (4-0).

It looked as though at that stage Stortford could have gone to create more misery for their opponents but the match turned within a couple of minutes. Chelmsford's first goal came through a misunderstanding between skipper Adam Bailey-Dennis and David Gregory. The ball was running in loose towards goal from the right flank and as they left it to each other substitute Jason Williams nipped between them and although Gregory half saved William's shot it ran to **MICHAEL CHEEK** who steered it into the net. Phil Anderson almost blocked the shot on the line but the ball deflected off the defender (4-1).

With the Blues starting to look fragile at the back City pushed forward strongly. Redwood and Cheek both were close and then Stortford conceded a second goal ten minutes from time. There may have been a question of offside when Michael Cheek flicked on Lee Sawyer's pass for substitute **JASON WILLIAMS** to get possession and fire wide of Gregory with Blues' defenders waited for a non-existent offside flag (4-2).

It was now a thrill a minute as with City going forward gaps at the back left Stortford with spaces to exploit and Auger could easily have completed a hat-trick. Substitute George Sykes' long ball to the right in the 84th minute put Auger through but although his shot went past Watkins the ball hit the covering Nicky Nicolau on the backside and was cleared.

City's Leon Redwood with a half chance was close and then Auger following good work by substitute Rod Young, saw his shot from the edge of the box saved by Watkins diving to his left. The Claret's third goal came with a minute of normal time left. Stortford's defence failed to deal with Rob Girdlestone's long throw from the right and after a goalmouth scramble Jason Williams had a shot blocked but another substitute **YADO MAMBO** smashed the ball home from close range (4-3).

There was 4 minutes of added time but although giving the supporters a few more heart stopping moments Stortford survived.

There was only one yellow card shown by Referee Christopher Pollard in the tie and that was to the visitors' Joe Sawyer for a foul on Sheldon Sellars.

Full time: 4-3

BISHOP'S STORTFORD: David Gregory; Cheye Alexander; Johnny Herd; Frankie Merrifield; Adam Bailey-Dennis; Phil Anderson; Sheldon

Sellears (sub – Ryan Melaugh 86 mins); Spencer McCall; Mikel Suarez (sub – George Sykes 72 mins); Donovan Simmonds (sub – Rod Young 69 mins); Ryan Auger.

Unused substitutes: Ashley Miller and Anthony Church.

CHELMSFORD CITY: Bradley Watkins; Rob Girdlestone; Nicky Nicolau; Mark Hughes; Mark Haines; Marvin Ekpiteta (sub - Yado Mambo 83 mins); Lee Sawyer; Joe Ward; Rohdell Gordon (sub - Jason Williams 46 mins); Christian Smith (sub – Leon Redwood 46 mins).

Unused substitutes: James Love and Niklas Freund.

Attendance: 522