

Saturday 24th January 2015

GOSPORT BOROUGH 2, BISHOP'S STORTFORD 0
(VANARAMA CONFERENCE SOUTH)

Stortford were unable to build on the previous week's win at Maidenhead when a goal in each half scored by the host's leading scorers Justin Bennett and Matt Paterson coupled with a missed penalty immediately after the break by Frankie Merrifield conspired to make it a fruitless journey to Privett Park.

Territorially the Blues had almost as much of the game as Borough but crucially they lacked conviction in front of goal and didn't do enough in the box compared to Gosport.

Rod Stringer's squad was missing Johnny Herd for the first time this season with the defender out with a knee ligament problem and Mikel Suarez, although on the substitutes bench, was still troubled with a groin strain. Also, loan player Ben Marlow was absent due to a family bereavement. On the plus side George Allen was in the starting line-up for the first time following his absence through injury.

There was little between the two sides in the opening stages but then in the 9th minute a reverse pass from Donovan Simmonds almost set up Ashley Miller to cut in from the right but keeper Nathan Ashmore came out quickly to blast the ball clear.

Just a minute later the hosts went ahead following their first real attack. Steve Ramsey headed on for Matt Paterson to advance in space on the right flank and finish with a low angled shot that Dillon Phillips, diving full length, pushed away. Unfortunately attempts to clear the loose ball out of the danger zone resulted in the ball deflecting off George Allen and Rickie Hayles and drop kindly for **JUSTIN BENNETT** to nod home from three yards (1-0).

After the goal was a period of untidy play but in the 33rd minute Borough were lucky that they weren't down to ten men. Donovan Simmonds broke forward in the inside right channel and with defender Robbie Williams alongside him trying to pull him back all the time Referee John Busby allowed play to continue with the Blues striker finally angling his shot over the bar. Although Williams had clearly been the last man and should have seen red for his actions the Match Official just awarded a goal kick.

Three minutes later Simmonds curled a shot from the angle of the box just wide and over at the far post. With the action livening up towards the break, at the other end indecision in the Blues' defensive ranks allowed

Paterson's header forward reach Tom Dunford who lobbed the ball over the bar when presented with a good opportunity to extend the home side's lead.

Gosport's Sreve Ramsey saw his long range effort held by Phillips and then Stortford went close to equalising in the 41st minute. A Sheldon Sellaars' free-kick hit the defensive wall but eventually the ball found its way to Jay Davies on the left. The midfielder crossed to the far upright where Rickie Hayles headed across the six yard box and the ball was headed away by Borough's Andy Forbes at the other post for a corner.

In the one minute of time added on at the end of the half a deep free-kick from Borough skipper Brett Poate into the box was met by an unmarked Justin Bennett whose header was tipped over the bar by Phillips.

Half time: 1-0

Stortford were out of their traps quickly on the resumption and had already looked dangerous before they were awarded a penalty in the 48th minute. Ashley Miller latched on to a back heeled pass from Sheldon Sellaars and when he advanced into the box he was brought down by Tom Dunford. With regular penalty taker Mikel Suarez on the bench it was Frankie Merrifield who took the spot kick but his low attempt lacked power and was too central and stopper Nathan Ashmore saved comfortably with a combination of legs and arms.

The hosts retaliated and within minutes had a couple of chances to add to their lead. Firstly a shot from Bennett rebounded off of Phillips' legs and then Paterson lifted the ball over the bar from close range after Bennett had crossed into the box from the right. With action at both ends in a short space of time Donovan Simmonds completed a run on the left with a low deflected shot that Ashmore saved at his near upright.

Dillon Phillips held a free-kick from Steve Ramsey in the 73rd minute but Gosport doubled their lead with fifteen minutes left on the clock. Following a move up the left wing Rory Williams pinpointed a deep cross to the far side of the area skimming over George Allen's head and **MATT PATERSON** controlled the ball well and slotted past Phillips into the bottom corner of the net (2-0).

Rickie Hayles, two minutes later, made a fine tackle to deny Paterson causing further damage when the number nine fastened on to a through pass by Justin Bennett. Then sixty seconds later Bennett struck the bar with a 35 yard effort.

In the remaining time that included four added minutes the action petered out and the Blues were unable to net a consolation goal.

Referee Busby did eventually book Gosport's Robbie Matthews in the first half whilst yellow cards were also shown to Stortford's Adam Bailey-Dennis and George Allen.

Full time: 2-0

BISHOP'S STORTFORD: Dillon Phillips; Ashley Miller; Adam Bailey-Dennis; Joe Tabiri (sub – Spencer McCall 86 mins); George Allen; Rickie Hayles; Jay Davies (sub – Ryan Auger 71 mins); Anthony Church; Donovan Simmonds; Frankie Merrifield (sub – James Walker 65 mins); Sheldon Sellears.

Unused substitutes: Cheye Alexander and Mikel Suarez.

GOSPORT BOROUGH: Nathan Ashmore; Andy Forbes; Rory Williams; Andy Robinson; Brett Poate; Robbie Matthews (sub – Paco Saez 54 mins); Tom Dunford (sub – Adam Wilde 86 mins); Danny Smith; Matt Paterson; Justin Bennett (sub – Lee Wort 86 mins); Steve Ramsey.

Unused substitutes: Matt Benham and Curtis Da Costa.

Attendance: 394