

Sunday 28th December 2014

**BISHOP'S STORTFORD 0 HAVANT & WATERLOOVILLE 2
(VANARAMA CONFERENCE SOUTH)**

Goals in the closing minutes of the first half saw the visitors take the points at the ProKit UK Stadium and leave the Blues searching for their first point and goal over the Holiday period.

Stortford could have few complaints on the final result. They didn't play as well as a few days earlier in the loss against League leaders Boreham Wood. Although they had matched the visiting Hawks early on the Blues once again failed to show a sharpness up front to threaten a goal. Once the Conference South Championship contenders raised their game leading up to the interval it always seemed unlikely that the Hampshire side would lose their grip on proceedings.

Rod Stringer had to make a change in the Stortford back line as Rickie Hayles wasn't available for selection so Ashley Miller partnered Adam Bailey-Dennis and Ryan Auger slotted into the right back berth. Spencer McCall was also back in the starting eleven getting the nod over Frankie Merrifield.

The match got off to a slow start with Havant's Ben Swallow featuring in the earliest action of any note in the 8th minute when he cut in from wing and his shot from the edge of the box was held by Joe Wright. Wright's opposite number, Havant skipper Ryan Young, didn't make a good start and a sloppy clearance from the keeper in the 10th minute was straight to Sheldon Sellears. The Hawks' stopper partially atoned for his error by diving to his right to save Sellears' effort at goal from 20 yards.

The Blues attacking the Town end had the early edge but it took a very good block by Adam Bailey-Dennis to close down and concede a corner when Alan Connell threatened with a 15 yard effort at goal. There was a half chance for Stortford a minute later when a Sheldon Sellears free-kick from the right dropped in the area to Anthony Church who helped the ball on to Donovan Simmonds but the striker's shot on goal was some way off target.

Just after the half hour mark Joe Wright had an escape when his delayed clearance struck Havant number nine Ben Wright but fortunately rebounded out of play for a goal-kick. In the 35th minute Blues' skipper Anthony Church rounded off an attack on the right with James Walker and Ashley Miller with a volley that keeper Young caught.

It was apparent that the visitors were raising their game to take the initiative and they took the lead four minutes before the interval. A Dan Strugnell centre from the right went beyond the back post but Alan Connell did well to retrieve the ball. His pull back was crossed along the edge of the area by Ben Swallow and **NIC CIARDINI** was well placed to hammer the ball into the net from 16 yards (0-1).

The Hawks then doubled their advantage two minutes into time added on at the end of the half. They won a corner on the left taken by Scott Donnelly and with no defender attacking the ball skimming through the six yard box there was confusion at the back post ultimately leading to Ashley Miller apparently handling close to the line. Referee Alan Young awarded Havant a penalty and **SCOTT DONNELLY** himself took the spot-kick and gave Wright no chance (0-2).

Half time: 0-2

Stortford's hopes of a lifeline were thwarted in the 53rd minute following a corner on the left from Sheldon Sellears when the ball was stabbed against the near post by Anthony Church and rebounded clear of danger. Then Sellears was narrowly over after James Walker had flicked the ball into his path.

Rod Stringer rang the changes with Rod Young, George Sykes and Phil Anderson all coming on as substitutes before the end. However, apart from the odd short spell, the Hawks looked in control as the match progressed.

The nearest the Blues came to reducing the arrears was in the 76th minute when George Sykes set up Sheldon Sellears for an attempt at goal but he pulled his drive wide of the near post.

In fact the visitors had chances to extend their lead. In the 82nd minute Ben Wright threaded a pass down the middle for JJ Hooper to take on towards goal but Joe Wright denied the substitute with a blocking stop. Then, after Joe Tabiri shot over from distance at the other end, Wright again saved from Hooper and seconds later diving to his left turned aside the follow up attempt at goal from Ben Wright who also shot just over from 18 yards in the final minute of normal time.

The only yellow card produced by Referee Young in the contest was a second half booking for Anthony Church that followed a challenge on Scott Donnelly.

Full time: 0-2

BISHOP'S STORTFORD: Joe Wright; Ryan Auger; Johnny Herd; Joe Tabiri; Adam Bailey-Dennis; Ashley Miller; Sheldon Sellears; Anthony Church; James Walker (sub – George Sykes 69 mins); Donovan Simmonds (sub – Phil Anderson 74 mins); Spencer McCall (sub – Rod Young 56 mins).

Unused substitutes: Frankie Merrifield and Bayan Fenwick.

HAVANT & WATERLOOVILLE: Ryan Young; Dan Strugnell; Daniel Blanchett; Brian Stock; Brian Dutton; Ed Harris; Ben Swallow (sub – Shamir Mullings 71 mins); Scott Donnelly; Ben Wright; Alan Connell (sub – JJ Hooper 63 mins); Nic Ciardini (sub – Josh Huggins 63 mins).

Unused substitutes: Bradley Bubb and Ryan Perry.

Attendance: 309