

Sunday 4th January 2015

WHITEHAWK 1, BISHOP'S STORTFORD 0
(VANARAMA CONFERENCE SOUTH)

The Blues' catastrophic slump continued at the Enclosed Ground, East Brighton when losing to a second half penalty. Against a side pushing for promotion, this time Stortford conjured up defeat against an outfit that played with only ten men for over an hour and in fact finished with nine men at the final whistle having had another player shown a red card in the last minute of the contest.

Whilst there are worries throughout a side lacking in confidence Stortford have now gone over six hours without finding the net and this was their fourth successive loss.

Rod Stringer brought a number of new players into the squad for this match. In goal was Dillon Phillips on loan from Charlton Athletic who by coincidence was on loan from the Addicks to Whitehawk last season and had played against the Blues in the Conference South fixture and the FA Trophy at the Enclosed Ground last term. Another new goalkeeper, who was on the bench, was former Academy keeper Matt Gill. He last played for Stortford towards the end of the 2011-2012 campaign. The other newcomer was midfielder Jay Davies a midfielder who last played for Southern Leaguers St Neots Town and was previously on the books of Peterborough United.

Stortford started the match as if they were still suffering a hangover from the Boreham Wood defeat. They seemed content to sit back and allow the hosts to come at them and rarely ventured forward in the opening stages. In the first minute an attack up the right flank by the Hawks saw Sam Deering and Nick Arnold combine with the latter crossing into the six yard box where the ball deflected off of Ashley Miller's thigh and spun away for the first of a number of early corner kicks for the Sussex side.

In the 4th minute Dillon Phillips punched away a corner from Deering and when Deering returned the ball into the box the Blues stopper caught the ball at his near post. After a clearance out of the Stortford defence David Ijaha struck a rising 25 yard effort over the top. The Blues' first attempt at goal didn't materialise until the 20th minute when Donovan Simmonds collected a loose crossfield pass from Nick Arnold and advancing to the edge of the box shot wide of the target.

The Blues nearly went ahead in the 24th minute as Ashley Miller, not far from goal, was on the end of a deep cross from the right by Jay Davies but headed close past the far upright. Their hopes were boosted two

minutes later as the hosts were reduced to ten men following the straight red card shown to their influential midfielder John-Paul Kissock after his reckless challenge on Frankie Merrifield just inside the Whitehawk half.

Little altered however in the pattern of play as the home side continued to have the edge up to the break with the Hawks Jake Robinson going close with a long distance effort in the 38th minute.

Half time: 0-0

Stortford had the benefit of kicking down the slope in the second half but were almost further behind four minutes after the restart when Hawks striker Danny Mills broke clear from the right but fortunately Rickie Hayles came across quicky to make a perfectly timed tackle and concede a corner.

In the 57th minute Phil Anderson and Joe Tabiri were involved in an attack that ended with Johnny Herd narrowly missing with a 25 yard shot that skimmed the bar.

The hosts despite being a man down weren't shy to go forward and went close again in the 63rd minute after a move on the left saw skipper Lee Hills and Sam Deering provide space for Jake Robinson to have an attempted flick at goal over Dillon Phillips. The Stortford keeper, however, darted back quickly to retrieve the ball before it crossed the line.

The same Whitehawk players were involved five minutes later in the attack that led to the winning goal. Another move on the left eventually saw Robinson play Deering into the box and when Ashley Miller fouled the player Referee Ian Cooper pointed to the spot. **SAM DEERING** duly got up and sent Phillips the wrong way with the penalty (1-0).

The goal against them seemed at long last to spur the Blues into action and in the 71st minute they came their closest to finding the net. Substitute Sheldon Sellears slipped the ball to Frankie Merrifield who advanced on goal and had his shot well saved by keeper Craig Ross diving across goal to his left.

The Hawks were dangerous on the break and could have doubled their lead in the 78th minute when substitute Sylvestre Guyonnet shot wide when presented with a chance inside the box. Stortford missed an even clearer chance to bring the scoreline back to level terms in the 86th minute with Sheldon Sellears crossing low from the left and the ball finding its way via James Walker to an unmarked Ryan Auger who lifted the ball over the bar from ten yards range. Substitute Auger was also in the action

in the last minute of normal time when his cross from the right went across the face of the Whitehawk goal but no one was there to provide the vital necessary conversion.

There was seven minutes of added time during which Stortford pressed relentlessly to no avail. In the final minute of the match the hosts were reduced still further in numbers as Sergio Torres was dismissed from the pitch when he raised his foot up in a dangerous manner towards Blues skipper Anthony Church.

Church, himself, had been shown a yellow card by Referee Cooper only a couple of minutes beforehand whilst Ashley Miller was also booked – this being for his challenge that resulted in the penalty.

Full time: 1-0

BISHOP'S STORTFORD: Dillon Phillips; Ashley Miller; Johnny Herd; Phil Anderson (sub – James Walker 74 mins); Adam Bailey-Dennis; Rickie Hayles; Frankie Merrifield; Jay Davies (sub – Sheldon Sellaars 64 mins); Donovan Simmonds; Joe Tabiri (sub – Ryan Auger 82 mins); Anthony Church.

Unused substitutes: Spencer McCall and Matt Gill.

WHITEHAWK: Craig Ross; Nick Arnold; Lee Hills; David Ijaha; Osei Sankofa; Tom Cadmore; Sam Deering (sub – Ahmed Abdulla 86 mins); Sergio Torres; Jake Robinson; Danny Mills (sub – Sylvestre Guyonnet 77 mins); John-Paul Kissock.

Unused substitutes: Sam Gargan, Pa Saikou Kujabi and Michael Malcom.

Attendance: 174