

BISHOP'S STORTFORD 0, HITCHIN TOWN 4

(FOOTBALL CONFERENCE YOUTH ALLIANCE – ESSEX/HERTS DIVISION)

With a goal conceded after just 17 seconds and a further two in the final minutes of the match Stortford found themselves on the wrong end of a flattering scoreline in favour of the second-in-the-table Canaries. The Blues had matched the visitors territorially at the ProKit UK Stadium but Hitchin made the most of their opportunities.

Stortford were caught cold when a long ball downfield from his own half by Ashley West to the edge of the Blues' area resulted in **RORY WATKINSON** taking advantage of indecision by Jack Isherwood and Stephen Robinson to flick the ball into the net (0-1).

The Blues overcame this early shock to fight back with high tempo and have most of the possession. The pressure saw Stortford win a number of corners and from one of these in the 15th minute taken on the right by Ben James saw Jack Isherwood's header headed off the line by defender Jordan Jones. Then a swift move upfield finished with Ben Smith slipping the ball to Mason Naylor on the left and the midfielder's angled shot was scrambled away past the far post by keeper Harry Smart.

Stortford continued to have the better of exchanges but were caught out in the 34th minute as a long through ball down the middle from Kane Smith found **SHAUN OKOJIE** running clear to dispatch the ball low past the advancing Stephen Robinson (0-2).

Half time: 0-2

The arrears were almost reduced in the opening minute after the restart with Jordan Handscomb nearly scoring but his effort on goal was deflected away.

Then in the 67th minute a long clearance by Stephen Robinson found Ben Smith on the left and when the ball was cut back to the edge of the box Rene Leacock's low shot was tipped away by Smart for a corner. The Hitchin stopper also made a fine blocking save in the 73rd minute when Jack Isherwood was denied when in on goal following another Ben Smith pass.

Hitchin's third goal arrived in the 89th minute as Stortford lost possession in midfield and Kane Smith released **SHAUN OKOJIE** to advance and beat Robinson (0-3). The visitors then added salt to the wound in the third minute of stoppage time with a fourth goal. A corner on the left by Jake Long was played short to Kane Smith who crossed into the middle and **OKOJIE** completed his hat-trick with a close range header (0-4) – it was the Divisional leading scorer's 24th goal of the season.

Full time: 0-4

BISHOP'S STORTFORD: Stephen Robinson; Ben James; Rene Leacock; Lukeman Agbomabiwon; Bryn Thorpe; Jack Isherwood; Mason Naylor (sub – Arun Melville 59 mins); Danny Palmer; Jordan Handscomb (sub – Alex Askri 70 mins); Ben Smith; Alex Warman.

Unused substitute: Callum Lynskey.