

BISHOP'S STORTFORD 1, ROYSTON TOWN 0

(HERTS CHARITY CUP FINAL)

Thanks to a 33rd minute goal by Sheldon Sellears Stortford won the County Charity Cup for the 14th time and the fourth time in the last five years. The Cup Final at the County headquarters at Letchworth never reached any great heights in quality and a frustrating end to the tie for the Blues' management and supporters saw Stortford waste a number of chances to wrap up the match way before the final whistle.

Royston, from the Evo Stik Southern League Division 1 Central Division, were busy and industrious in midfield and probably over the ninety minutes had more of the game territorially. However, although Jake Larkins had to make a couple of good stops the Blues back four largely protected him and the Crows chances were kept to a minimum. Stortford always looked the classier side and it was disappointing that they didn't win by a larger margin. Sheldon Sellears' winning goal was his ninth of the campaign taking him currently to the top of the Bishop's scoring charts. The scoreline also meant that the Blues didn't concede a goal in this season's Charity Cup.

Rod Stringer made a few changes from the side that had taken a point at the weekend against Ebbsfleet United. Rickie Hayles, Spencer McCall and Donovan Simmonds were included in the starting line-up as was newcomer Nick Salapatas.

Both sides played at a high tempo early on as they looked to make an early breakthrough. The Crows' Ryan Lockett was wide with a low effort from outside the box whilst Blues' skipper for the night, Joe Tabiri, finding space on the right side of the area chose to pass inside instead of shooting at goal. Donovan Simmonds found the net following a cross from the right by Sheldon Sellears but the goal was disallowed due to an offside decision.

In the 15th minute a useful attack on the left flank ended with Nick Salapatas, after linking with Spencer McCall, crossing to the far post and Sellears goalbound header being excellently tipped over the bar by Royston stopper Ron Yates. Then Jake Larkins was called into action midway through the half as he had to divert an awkward corner from Chris Watters over his head and upwards past his back stick. The Crows were causing a few problems in this period and five minutes later a raid down the middle saw Larkins make a fine save from Stuart Bridges getting down quickly low to his left to turn a shot away from danger.

On the half hour Spencer McCall was presented with an opportunity when Rickie Hayles slipped the ball to him on the right side of the box but it somehow eluded the midfielder otherwise he would have been in on goal with just Yates to beat.

The only goal of the final came with twelve minutes remaining before the break. Another attack on the left wing this time involving Joe Tabiri and Salapatas saw the latter cross towards the far upright and an unmarked SHELDON SELLEARS volleyed into the net from ten yards (1-0).

Before the interval the Crows' skipper Kaan Fehmi had an attempt on goal held by Larkins and Ryan Lockett shot over the bar from 15 yards and for the Blues, Sellears' shot from an angle in the 38th

minute was close as was Adam Bailey-Dennis heading on to the roof of the net following a Sellears' corner a minute from half-time.

Half time: 1-0

Early after the restart the Blues had a chance to extend their lead. A free-kick from Sellears struck the Royston defensive wall and rebounded out to Bobby-Joe Taylor and the Cambridge United loan player had his strong shot turned for a corner by Yates diving to his right. Sellears then laid the resultant flag-kick inside to Spencer McCall and when the midfielder centred towards the near post Donovan Simmonds' diving close ranger header was wide.

Royston retaliated in the 54th minute and when Chris Watters' deep cross into the box was flapped away by Larkins the Stortford keeper was a little fortunate that Scott Bridges' low 15 yard shot at goal lodged under his body as he fell on it. A long range attempt from Ryan Lockett was then saved relatively comfortably by Larkins shortly afterwards.

Both sides made a number of substitutions during the midpoint period of the second half before. In the 73rd minute, Bobby-Joe Taylor and substitute James Walker combined on the right and when the latter crossed in to the far side of the area Sheldon Sellears collected the ball in space and fired in a shot that was cleared off the Royston goal-line by substitute George Powell and his follow-up shot was parried away by Yates.

Then a minute later a Sellears' corner was deflected into the net seemingly by Joe Tabiri was Referee David Rock overruled the goal apparently for a foul. Another chance came Stortford's way as Spencer McCall ran through the middle but lost control of the ball and Yates gathered it.

Following a rare attack from the Crows Jake Larkins just managed to scramble the ball away at his near post to keep out a shot from Royston's experienced substitute striker Gary Hart. Then with ten minutes of normal time remaining on the clock Stortford missed their best chance to make the tie safe. Bobby-Joe Taylor crossed into the six yard box from the left and an unchallenged James Walker contrived to shoot over the bar from three yards.

Town keeper Ron Yates ventured forward for a late corner as the Crows tried to press in the closing minutes of which there were three of added time but Stortford saw out time fairly easily.

Referee Rock showed no cards in the tie.

At the conclusion of the match captain on the night Joe Tabiri and Club captain Anthony Church stepped up to collect the Cup from Herts FA Official Alan Willmott and this was followed by low key celebrations by the Blues.

Full time: 1-0

BISHOP'S STORTFORD: Jake Larkins; Rickie Hayles; Kenzer Lee (sub – Ashley Miller 63 mins); Spencer McCall; Adam Bailey-Dennis; George Allen; Sheldon Sellears; Joe Tabiri; Donovan Simmonds (sub – Anthony Church 71 mins); Bobby-Joe Taylor; Nick Salapatas (sub – James Walker 59 mins).

Unused substitutes: Frankie Merrifield and Luke Milbourne.

ROYSTON TOWN: Ron Yates; Jack Bradshaw; Chris Watters; Scott Bridges; Dave Theobald; Tyler Corlett; Robbie Nightingale (sub – George Powell 46 mins); Stuart Bridges; Kaan Fehmi; Ryan Lockett (sub – Craig Hammond 59 mins); Ryan Ingrey (sub - Gary Hart 68 mins).

Unused substitutes: Ryan Wharton and Liam McDevitt.