

Saturday 14th March 2015

**BISHOP'S STORTFORD 0, SUTTON UNITED 0
(VANARAMA CONFERENCE SOUTH)**

Stortford made it seven points from three games in a week to ease away from the relegation zone as they and Sutton contested a goal-less deadlock at the ProKit UK Stadium. In a match of little excitement it was the two goalkeepers who featured the most. James Bransgrove on loan from Colchester United and making his debut for the Blues made some important stops during the contest whilst the U's Aaron Howe kept out the efforts that Stortford mustered. Generally though there were few openings created in the ninety minutes with Sheldon Sellaars' shot hitting the post seven minutes from time being the closest to a goal.

With Mikel Suarez and George Allen not fully fit Rod Stringer made a couple of changes although both were on the substitutes bench and Suarez did come on after the break. Frankie Merrifield and the re-signed Ben Marlow were brought into the starting eleven along with Bransgrove who replaced the injured Jake Larkins between the sticks.

It was the visitors who started the stronger with midfielder Ricky Wellard prominent early on. In the 8th minute he cut in from the right and his shot from the edge of the box was deflected for a corner. Then a minute later following a raid down the right flank Dan Fitchett crossed inside and Craig Dundas' close range effort was well blocked away by Bransgrove. The Stortford stopper was almost embarrassed however soon afterwards when he delayed clearing the ball upfield and was almost caught out by Sutton's Jamie White. But he showed his quality in the 13th minute turning away another shot from Wellard after a deep free-kick from Shaun Cooper had eventually fallen to him just outside the six yard box.

Stortford were having difficulty constructing any worthwhile attacks at this stage but Bobby-Joe Taylor was just wide with an effort past the far post in the 18th minute following an attack involving Sheldon Sellaars and Ben Marlow which saw Marlow switch the ball across to the left side of the area. The South London side came back up the other end and Wellard figured again this time with a long range effort that James Bransgrove diving full length to his right tipped away for a corner.

Sheldon Sellaars on the half hour had a good run at goal cutting in from the right but found Craig Dundas in his way blocking him off and keeper Aaron Howe shepherded the ball out of play. The U's continued to have most of the possession and nearly went ahead in the 34th minute. A corner on the left from Wellard was headed across goal by Kevin Amankwaah

and Joe Tabiri foiled Dan Fitchett diverting his goalbound shot for another corner.

From then up until the break opportunities at both ends very limited and the action became very flat and aimless.

Half time: 0-0

There was little creative football for a short period on the restart but the Blues upped their tempo and began to have the edge. Skipper Tabiri unleashed a rising 25 yarder two minutes after the interval that was only just over the target. Rod Stringer brought Mikel Suarez on to replace Frankie Merrifield and more pressure was exerted on the visiting defence.

In the 66th minute Ashley Miller battled to win a loose ball in the box and keeper Howe saved his shot at the near post at the expense of a corner. Then Howe saw more action when, in the 73rd minute, substitute Suarez fed Sheldon Sellaars with a pass out to the right and Sellaars' angled effort was well held by the U's stopper. James Bransgrove also did well to snuff out the danger turning the ball away for corner when Sutton's Dan Fitchett threatened.

The closest either side came to getting on the scoresheet was seven minutes from the end of normal time. Bobby-Joe Taylor advancing from the left found Sheldon Sellaars and the Blues' leading goalscorer this season drove a shot from the edge of the box that hit the keeper's left handed upright and rebounded clear.

Both goalkeepers saw more action to preserve clean sheets in the closing minutes. James Bransgrove made a fine save getting down to his left to divert a shot from striker Bedsente Gomis past the post following a long throw into the box by Kevin Amankwaah and in the 90th minute Sellaars, after being set up by substitute James Walker, saw Howe again save at the near post. The resultant flag kick from Bobby-Joe Taylor almost escaped the keeper's grip but the ball was cleared away from danger.

Referee Simon Knapp showed three yellow cards in the match – all in the second half – to Stortford's Kenzer Lee and Adam Bailey-Dennis and Sutton's Bedsente Gomis.

Full time: 0-0

BISHOP'S STORTFORD: James Bransgrove; Ashley Miller; Kenzer Lee; Joe Tabiri; Adam Bailey-Dennis; Rickie Hayles; Sheldon Sellaars; Ben Marlow; Greg Pearson (sub – James Walker 68 mins); Frankie Merrifield (sub – Mikel Suarez 51 mins); Bobby-Joe Taylor; Unused substitutes: George Allen, Spencer McCall and Nicky Nicolau.

SUTTON UNITED: Aaron Howe; Kevin Amankwaah; Dan Wishart; Ricky Wellard; Shaun Cooper (sub – Michael Spillane 90+2 mins); Jamie Collins; Jamie White (sub – Damian Scannell 62 mins); Kieron Forbes; Craig Dundas; Bedsente Gomis; Dan Fitchett.
Unused substitutes: Shaquille Hippolyte-Patrick, Billy Medlock and Wayne Shaw.

Attendance: 375