

Saturday 7th March 2015

WEALDSTONE 1, BISHOP'S STORTFORD 4
(VANARAMA CONFERENCE SOUTH)

Stortford were in rampant mood as they wrapped up their biggest win so far of their Vanarama Conference South season at Grosvenor Vale. They put on a different mantle to that seen at the ProKit UK Stadium as they motored to their sixth away league victory of the campaign and their second successive on the road.

The Blues put in a confident showing and looked good throughout the team – from goalkeeper through the defence, midfield and attack. Having been boosted by an early George Allen headed goal Mikel Suarez doubled the lead midway through the first period and although the hosts reduced the arrears from the penalty spot a second half Suarez spot-kick and Bobby-Joe Taylor's first Stortford goal gave the visitors a comprehensive victory. Understandably Stortford had to withstand some pressure after the break but the defence dealt well with what the Stones – in particularly experienced striker Jefferson Louis - threw at them.

Rod Stringer recalled Anthony Church to the squad although the skipper had to leave the pitch after the break with his hamstring tightening up. There was also a place in the starting line-up for Kenzer Lee. The substitutes included Spencer McCall and Nicky Nicolau.

Amongst the watching crowd of over 700 was Astrologer Russell Grant and former England Test pace bowler Angus Fraser.

Stortford had already made a promising start before they took the lead from a corner on the left in the sixth minute. Sheldon Sellears' flag kick found the head of **GEORGE ALLEN** and the defender netted powerfully inside the angle at the far upright (0-1).

More early pressure saw Ashley Miller have a shot on the turn blocked by a defender and another corner forced. As the hosts started to settle down Adam Bailey-Dennis at the other end made two good blocks when Jefferson Louis threatened in the 14th minute after a break upfield involving the striker and Jonny Wright.

An excellent save by Jake Larkins in the 17th minute prevented the Stones from equalising. Nathan Mavila crossed in from the left and Luke O'Nien's low first time shot from 15 yards was turned aside for a corner by the Stortford stopper diving low to his left.

A Sheldon Sellears' free-kick led to the Blues' second goal in the 24th minute. His free-kick was deflected for a corner quickly followed by another on the right and although neither of them taken by him were particularly good the second was miscued by Jefferson Louis and his attempted clearance fell to **MIKEL SUAREZ** and half turning the Spaniard shot left footed inside the near post from close range with the aid of a very slight deflection off the boot of defender Ryan Watts standing on the goal-line (0-2).

The two goal margin remained for less than two minutes as **JEFFERSON LOUIS** earned himself a penalty when he ran goalwards along the bye-line from the corner flag and was fouled in the area by George Allen. Louis gave Jake Larkins no chance from the spot (1-2).

Although a cross into the box from the right by Greg Pearson caused some confusion in the Wealdstone defence just before the half hour Jonny Wright went close with a header soon afterwards at the other end after a centre from the left by Scott Davies had been headed back across goal. Then, in the 36th minute, Larkins had to be alert when he just punched clear as Luke O'Nien ran forward down the middle.

Larkins was in action again a couple of minutes later holding the ball at the second attempt after a Louis shot on the turn from 20 yards. But a minute before the end of normal time before the interval Stortford looked likely to restore a two goal lead as Suarez and Pearson combined to set Sheldon Sellears breaking clear on the right but the midfielder cut back his cross too far behind Pearson who otherwise would have been faced by an empty net.

Half time: 1-2

Just as at the start of the first half the Blues were set up by an early goal after the restart. In the 51st minute Greg Pearson, Sheldon Sellears and Ashley Miller were involved in an attack close to the right corner flag and when Miller, advancing into the box after receiving the ball from Sellears was nudged over by Michael Corcoran Referee Neil Hair pointed straight to the spot and **MIKEL SUAREZ** sent North the wrong way with his kick (1-3).

Whilst the injured Anthony Church was being replaced by Frankie Merrifield the Stones were making a double substitution and soon afterwards on the hour they nearly reduced Stortford's lead. Jefferson Louis crossed in low from the right towards the near post and Nathan Mavila's effort from close in hit the outside of the upright.

A few minutes later there was another close call for the Blues when an awkward free-kick by Scott Davies into the box was turned away by Larkins and when the ball fell loose close to goal a combination of Larkins and George Allen somehow stopped Louis from scoring at the expense of a corner.

The hosts continued to put pressure on the Blues' defence but they held strong and in the 81st minute broke out of defence to notch a fourth goal. Sheldon Sellears slipped the ball to Joe Tabiri who from his own half found **BOBBY-JOE TAYLOR** running clear centrally and the substitute beat North with a fine left footed shot from the edge of the box (1-4).

Apart from a 20 yard attempt in added time by Wealdstone substitute Matt Ball that was just wide Stortford saw out time easily.

Referee Hair cautioned the Blues' Joe Tabiri, Kenzer Lee and Ashley Miller along with the Stones' Michael Corcoran and Wes Parker.

Full time: 1-4

BISHOP'S STORTFORD: Jake Larkins; Ashley Miller; Kenzer Lee; Rickie Hayles; Adam Bailey-Dennis; George Allen; Sheldon Sellears; Joe Tabiri; Greg Pearson (sub – James Walker 86 mins); Anthony Church (sub - Frankie Merrifield 57 mins); Mikel Suarez (sub - Bobby-Joe Taylor 69 mins).

Unused substitutes: Spencer McCall and Nicky Nicolau.

WEALDSTONE: Jonathan North; James Hammond (sub – Matt Ball 57 mins); Ryan Watts; Wes Parker; Tom Hamblin; Michael Corcoran (sub – Scott McGleish 69 mins); Jonny Wright (sub – Shaun Lucien 57 mins); Luke O'Nien; Jefferson Louis; Scott Davies; Nathan Mavila.

Unused substitutes: Sean Cronin and Carl Martin.

Attendance: 744