

Saturday 4th April 2015

BISHOP'S STORTFORD 2 ST ALBANS CITY 1
(VANARAMA CONFERENCE SOUTH)

Stortford ensured their survival in the Vanarama Conference South for another season with this victory over their county rivals the Saints whilst Farnborough were losing at home to Wealdstone. The Blues had to do it the hard way by coming back from being a goal down after ten minutes. They drew level later in the first half before grabbing a winning goal just before the hour mark in what was largely a scrappy match.

Rod Stringer's side hit by unavailability, suspension and injury showed a number of changes to the line-up's last outing. Kenzer Lee was in the centre of defence alongside Rickie Hayles and Anthony Edgar was in the starting eleven for the first time. New loan signing from Leicester City, Marcel Barrington, was on the substitutes' bench and he came on late in the contest.

The visitors threatened in the opening minute as Joe N'Guessan struck an angled rising effort from the right edge of the box that cleared James Bransgrove's crossbar. Then in the 8th minute it looked certain that the Blues would go in front when Ben Marlow slipped the ball forward for Greg Pearson to take on down the right flank and cross low for Anthony Edgar at the far post but from a few yards out the ex Hammer somehow failed to put the ball in the net.

Play quickly moved to the other end and when N'Guessan found space again on the right Bransgrove came quickly off his line to block well. The Stortford stopper excelled again seconds later making an instinctive save after another N'Guessan effort deflected goalwards off of fellow Saint Sam Corcoran.

Stortford's relief was short-lived as a long throw from skipper Lee Chappell in the 10th minute was headed goalwards by **SIMON THOMAS** and the ball beat Bransgrove close by the far post (0-1).

The Blues found it hard to get any cohesion into their attacks but in the 20th minute Kenzer Lee drove a 30 yard daisy-cutter that former Stortford keeper Joe Welch diving to his left turned away for a corner. It was from another corner six minutes later that the scoreline reverted to level pegging. Bobby-Joe Taylor's flag kick from the right was only half cleared and **RICKIE HAYLES** found the back of the net with a first time shot from just inside the box. It was the defender's first goal for Stortford (1-1).

Two minutes later James Walker almost broke through after collecting a Joe Tabiri pass on the left but was crowded out by a defender. But it was the visitors who should have retaken the lead five minutes from the break. John Frendo and Lee Chappell combined in a move on the left and when the latter crossed low into the six yard box goalscorer Thomas screwed the ball wide from a couple of yards distance.

The last action of the half saw Greg Pearson, from the edge of the box fire a shot into the midriff of keeper Welch.

Half time: 1-1

Stortford almost took the lead in the opening thirty seconds of the second half. Greg Pearson played a through ball down the middle for Sheldon Sellears to fasten on to but Sellears' shot struck the advancing Welch's legs and rebounded away to safety.

Although the hosts had the better of the second period there were few openings created until the winning goal arrived in the 59th minute. Again it came after another Taylor corner on the right. A deep flag kick past the far upright was met by a header from Rickie Hayles back across the face of the goal and **GREG PEARSON** nodded in from close range (2-1).

Pearson nearly extended the lead in the 75th minute after Sheldon Sellears cross from the right gave the striker an opportunity but the ball seemed to stick between his legs and Welch gained possession.

City pushed players forward in the closing stages of the match in search of an equaliser but James Bransgrove was scarcely troubled and the nearest they came was in the 89th minute when a deflected shot from the edge of the area by Sam Corcoran skimmed the roof of the net.

Referee Mike George booked Greg Pearson in the first half and Saints' Darren Locke in the second.

The result meant that the Blues leapfrogged over City in the league table.

Full time: 2-1

BISHOP'S STORTFORD: James Bransgrove; Ashley Miller; Bobby-Joe Taylor; Joe Tabiri; Kenzer Lee; Rickie Hayles; Sheldon Sellears; Ben Marlow; Greg Pearson (sub – Marcel Barrington 83 mins); James Walker (sub – Anthony Church 66 mins); Anthony Edgar (sub – Frankie Merrifield 78 mins).

Unused substitutes: Connor Peters and Anthony Furlonge.

ST ALBANS CITY: Joe Welch; Howard Hall; Lee Chappell; James Kaloczi (sub – Jack Green 69 mins); Darren Locke; James Comley; Joseph N'Guessan (sub – Michael Malcolm 69 mins); Sam Corcoran; John Frendo (sub – Danny Green 53 mins); Simon Thomas; Jamal Lowe. Unused substitutes: Steve Wales and John Kyriacou.

Attendance: 444