

## BASINGSTOKE TOWN 1, BISHOP'S STORTFORD 1 (VANARAMA NATIONAL SOUTH)

Stortford came away from the Camrose very disappointed not to take maximum points from this contest. They were good value for a first half lead courtesy of a Michael Thalassitis goal, his first for the club, and after the break they had the opportunities to have put the game to bed only to be denied by a Stoke equaliser five minutes from time.

Rod Stringer's side showed a couple of changes to the one that lost in midweek at Maidenhead. Adam Bailey-Dennis came into the middle of the defence for his first Vanarama National match of the campaign and Kenzer Lee switched to the left back berth whilst with Christian Smith absent with a groin strain Sheldon Sellears returned to the starting eleven. Further forward Thalassitis started and Matty Fanimio was on the bench. Although Buchanan had a shot from just inside the box held by the Dragons' keeper Aaron Howe in the 3<sup>rd</sup> minute there were few incidents early on. However, the Blues were showing more ideas going forward than their lack lustre counterparts and they went ahead in the 23<sup>rd</sup> minute. Anthony Church did well to win a 50/50 challenge for the ball on the right and just inside the Basingstoke half. The skipper played the ball up to Sellears who crossed deep to the far side of the box where Mikel Suarez guided it into the path of Michael Thalassitis and the striker beat Howe from 15 yards with a low shot.

Buchanan with a 20 yard drive was just off target ten minutes from the break and the first time that Tom Lovelock had to exert himself was in the 37<sup>th</sup> minute when the keeper came out to punch away a Tom Bird free-kick from the left.

Stortford had a chance to extend their lead two minutes after the restart as Sellears gained possession on the left after a quickly taken free-kick and when his cross into the box fell to Thalassitis the former Stevenage man shot over the bar from 15 yards. The hosts looked distinctly uncomfortable at this stage and Buchanan was close with a side-foot effort from the left side of the box after Thalassitis and Suarez had helped a De'Reece Vanderhyde long throw across the edge of the box. Then the Blues leading goal-scorer was denied by a good save from Howe who held on to the ball low down at the second attempt after Sellears had picked up a loose ball and crossed towards the far upright. Soon afterwards, in the 51<sup>st</sup> minute, Mikel Suarez headed Sellear's corner wide. Just before the hour Buchanan again nearly added to Stortford's lead with his deflected shot from an acute angle landing in the side-netting.

Rod Stringer then made a double substitution in the 60<sup>th</sup> minute with Matty Fanimio replacing Sheldon Sellears who was suffering with a "dead" leg, and Billy Lobjoit coming on for Michael Thalassitis. The Hampshire side were starting to enjoy greater possession the more the match went on and Tom Lovelock finally came back into the action in the

62<sup>nd</sup> minute but was hardly troubled by a shot from outside the box from Louie Soares.

With twenty minutes remaining a long clearance downfield by Lovelock was helped on by Billy Lobjoit for Matty Fanimio to collect and advance on goal from the left but the substitute's finish was high over the top.

Then in the 81<sup>st</sup> minute Lobjoit threaded a through ball down the middle for Fanimio to chase but this time the former West Ham United player saw his low shot tantalisingly go inches wide of the post.

The Blues' solid defence was sitting deeper and Dragons' substitute Lloyd Macklin was wide after a concerted attack and shortly after in the 85<sup>th</sup> minute Stortford were rocked by conceding an equaliser. James Harper swept a long cross-field pass to the right hand angle of the area and with Kenzer Lee slipping space opened up for Chris Flood to advance and fire a low angled drive wide of Tom Lovelock's dive and into the net via the base of the far post. Former Stortford forward Liam Enver-Marum could have caused further damage a couple of minutes later when in a similar position to Flood but instead of shooting opted to cross and the Blues defence cleared upfield.

The final action of the match saw Stortford almost claim all the points with Church sending Lobjoit away down the right touch-line and when the substitute cut inside his shot was narrowly wide of the far post.

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#### TEAM INFO AND MATCH DETAILS:

**BISHOP'S STORTFORD:** Tom Lovelock; De'Reece Vanderhyde; Kenzer Lee; Frankie Merrifield; Adam Bailey-Dennis; George Allen; Sheldon Sellears (Matty Fanimio 60); Anthony Church; Mikel Suarez; Michael Thalassitis (Billy Lobjoit 60; Elliott Buchanan.

Unused substitutes: Johnny Herd, Josh Ekim and Ejiro Okosieme

**BASINGSTOKE TOWN:** Aaron Howe; Nathan Smart; Tom Bird; James Harper; Jay Gasson; David Ray; Louie Soares (Simon Dunn 75); Shaun McAuley (Harrison Gilkes 65); Liam Enver-Marum; Chris Flood; Manny Williams (Lloyd Macklin 56).

Unused substitutes: Rob Rice and Will Salmon.

Half time: 0-1

Goalscorers Michael Thalassitis (Bishop's Stortford) 23, Chris Flood (Basingstoke Town) 85.

Referee: Mr Savvas Yianni

Attendance: 462