

BISHOP'S STORTFORD 3, CONCORD RANGERS 2 (VANARAMA NATIONAL LEAGUE SOUTH)

Another hat-trick, which included two penalties, from Elliott Buchanan sealed the three points for Stortford in a closely contested match at the ProKit (UK) Stadium. The striker's last spot-kick came in the 2nd minute of stoppage time and was his 9th goal so far this campaign from six National League South outings. His tally has already overtaken the number by the Blues' joint top Vanarama South goalscorers last term – Anthony Church and Mikel Suarez with 8 goals apiece. The match could have gone either way with the Beachboys, who were looking to end a losing run, looking the sharper particularly in midfield during periods of the match. However, with the help of the two Buchanan spot-kicks the Blues got over the line.

Rod Stringer was missing important players Mikel Suarez and Sheldon Sellears from his squad. The tackle that forced the Spanish striker off the field in the second half of the match at Truro left a ruptured calf muscle that is likely to put him out of action for a few months. Sellears, in the meantime, was recovering from an appendix operation in midweek. On the positive side both Adam Bailey-Dennis and Matty Fanimmo were fit enough to take their place on the subs bench whilst Matt Johnson was playing his first match on return following the one month loan agreement with Ebbsfleet United

The Beachboys took the lead in the 6th minute following generally slack play in the Stortford defence. Joe Gardner ran free in the middle after the Blues lost possession from a throw-in on the right side of their half and although Tom Lovelock did well to block the ball away from the original shot the visitors quickly regained possession. Max Cornhill crossed low in towards the six-yard box and Gardner guided the ball wide of the Blues stopper from close range.

Rangers' movement looked better than Stortford's at this stage – Stortford finding it difficult to bring accuracy to their passing. However, Buchanan with a glancing header wide from a Kieran Bywater cross and Mason Walsh with an acute angled effort that was cleared off the goal-line when Concord keeper Ben McNamara failed to catch another Bywater centre went close to levelling the scores.

In the 28th minute Elliott Buchanan, after collecting a pass from George Allen, struck a 20 yard low effort that was well saved by McNamara diving quickly to his left. It looked as though the first half was going to be a disappointing one for Stortford but ten minutes before the break they equalised. Johnny Herd and Mason Walsh worked the ball up the left until Walsh arrowed the ball into the middle where Buchanan sent a glancing header past McNamara and just inside the far upright.

The visitors fought back before the interval with Lewis Taaffe almost in with a chance but Lovelock quickly grabbed the ball and then Steve King's header from a Ben Greenhalgh free-kick fortunately bounced over the crossbar.

The Blues couldn't have wished for a better start to the second half as they took the lead for the first time when they got the benefit of a debateable penalty decision four minutes after the restart. Former Stortford defender Steve King went in for a tackle on Frankie Merrifield in the box after a poor back pass from defender Jeremy Walker and was surprised to see Referee Lee Betts point to the spot. Buchanan gave Rangers stopper McNamara no chance with the penalty that flew into the top right hand corner.

Both sides were close to scoring as the game past the midway point of the second period. When substitute Raphael Duyile crossed in from the left with twenty minutes remaining Taaffe's back-heel at the near post was blocked by De'Reece Vanderhyde. Then a few minutes later Frankie Merrifield missed out at the back post when shooting across the face of goal from a Mason Walsh centre.

The visitors equalised in the 79th minute. A corner from Ben Greenhalgh saw Max Cornhill hook the ball goalwards but Lovelock saved excellently stretching to turn it over the bar but when Greenhalgh crossed deep to the far post seconds later Steve King's flying header beat the Blues' keeper.

Kieran Bywater for Stortford and Greenhalgh for the visitors went close as the ninety minutes approached. Then in stoppage time Lovelock was again in action this time tipping over a long range rising attempt from substitute Bertie Brayley. The winner came in the second minute of added time. Frankie Merrifield played the ball into the box for Michael Thalassitis to collect and the substitute went down under a joint challenge of

defenders Keaton Wood and Jeremy Walker. Elliott Buchanan fired the resultant spot-kick down the middle past McNamara. Referee Betts cautioned Matt Johnson, Elliott Buchanan, Adam Bailey-Dennis and Tom Lovelock along with Concord's Walker – all in the second half.

TEAM INFO AND MATCH DETAILS:

BISHOP'S STORTFORD: Tom Lovelock; De'Reece Vanderhyde; Johnny Herd; Matt Johnson; Kenzer Lee; George Allen; Kieran Bywater (Adam Bailey-Dennis 89); Anthony Church; Elliott Buchanan; Frankie Merrifield; Mason Walsh (Michael Thalassitis 80).

Unused substitutes: Matty Fanimio, Josh Ekim and Christian Smith.

CONCORD RANGERS: Ben McNamara; Nathan Fox; Jeremy Walker; Max Cornhill; Steve King; Keaton Wood; Ben Greenhalgh (Bertie Brayley 88); James White; Joe Gardner; Steve Cawley (Raphael Duyile 66); Lewis Taaffe.

Unused substitutes: Luis Morrison-Derbyshire, George Doyle and Arthur Lee

Half time: 1-1

Goalscorers: Bishop's Stortford – Elliott Buchanan 35, 49 (pen) and 90+2 (pen)

Concord Rangers – Joe Gardner 6 and Steve King 79

Referee: Mr Lee Betts

Attendance: 314