

## HEMEL HEMPSTEAD TOWN 1 BISHOP'S STORTFORD 2 (VANARAMA NATIONAL LEAGUE SOUTH)

Blues overcame the blow of losing Sheldon Sellears to a serious knee injury in only the second minute of the match to record back-to-back away victories with this win at Vauxhall Road.



A goal in each half put Stortford on course for three points and they almost kept a clean sheet but the hosts pulled a goal back in added time.

Sellears early departure on a stretcher came about when the winger, who had only just come back into the side after an appendix operation, tussled for the ball on the right touch-line with the Tudors' Ben Herd. There was a six minute delay and eventually Sellears was replaced by Dymon Labonne who was making his Blues debut.

The only change that Rod Stringer made to his starting eleven that had won a week earlier at Hayes & Yeading was the inclusion of Sellears in place of Matty Fanimio. Kenzer Lee remained on the sidelines injured. Hemel included in their squad on the bench Michael Richens and Ben Sampayo who had both worn the Stortford shirt in the past when on loan. Following Sellears' injury Stortford struggled for a time as the hosts, kicking

down the slope, pressed. Tom Lovelock had to punch clear a sliced attempted clearance by Alli Abdullahi and the Stortford stopper also made a fine save diving low to his left shot to hold a shot on the turn by striker John Frendo. At the other end Labonne was beginning to make an impression and when the substitute was fouled just outside the box Elliott Buchanan's free-kick was not far over the target.

The Blues settled and netted their first goal in the 25<sup>th</sup> minute. Johnny Herd found Matt Johnson on the left touch-line and the midfielder, on loan from Ebbsfleet United, fired over a great cross that found ANTHONY CHURCH in space centrally and the skipper headed wide of keeper Jamie Butler from eight yards. The goal shocked Town and Stortford had by far the better of exchanges for the next twenty minutes. Buchanan, Mason Walsh and Johnson all went close before a run by Labonne on the right led to a curling shot by Church that cleared the bar at the near post.



However, in the six minutes of added time at the end of the half Hemel fought back. Their number nine Oliver Hawkins had a half chance from the edge of the box and then Lovelock dived high to his left to hold a free-kick from Jack Smith. Soon afterwards Lovelock excelled again when a deep free-kick from his opposite number Butler landed in the box and he spread himself well to save at the feet of James Potton.

Four minutes after the restart Dennis Oli ran at the Stortford defence but his shot from the edge of the area rose over the bar.



The Blues looked to have an opening soon afterwards as Church put Labonne away in space towards the right-hand edge of the box but Butler rushed out to foul the substitute – an action that earned him a yellow card. The resultant free-kick from Christian Smith hit the defensive wall. The Tudors' experienced midfielder Matt Spring struck a fierce 30 yard volley that skimmed the roof of the Blues' net but the lead was doubled in the 59<sup>th</sup> minute after a great attack upfield with ELLIOTT BUCHANAN playing a part in the move and then finishing it with a clinical strike.



Out wide on the left near the half-way line the Stortford top goalscorer played the ball inside to Matt Johnson who in turn spread it

out to Dymon Labonne. The substitute sped forward on the right and crossed to the far post where Buchanan timed his run to perfection to volley past Butler.

Most of the remainder of the match saw the hosts piling forward but the Blues defence was solid and strong and had only a few alarms. A diagonal low shot from the right by John Frendo was inches past the far upright in the 69<sup>th</sup> minute and then soon afterwards the striker just failed to get a toe on a centre from Jack Smith that flew across the six yard box. Then in the 76<sup>th</sup> minute a long range attempt from Michael Richens was held by Lovelock.

The Tudors finally netted a consolation goal in the fourth minute of stoppage time when a long ball down the Hemel left flank found its way to MO SHARIFF who fired in an acute angled shot that went in via a deflection off of Lovelock's legs.

Both teams received three bookings from Referee Paul Kelly with Stortford's Tom Lovelock, Alli Abdullahi and Mason Walsh being cautioned along with Hemel's Jamie Butler, Jack Smith and Kyle Connolly.

#### TEAM INFO AND MATCH DETAILS:

**BLUES:** Tom Lovelock; De'Reece Vanderhyde; Johnny Herd; Alli Abdullahi; Christian Smith; George Allen; Sheldon Sellears (Dymon Labonne 8 (Frankie Merrifield 89)); Anthony Church; Elliott Buchanan; Matt Johnson; Mason Walsh (Matty Fanimio 74).

Unused subs: Josh Ekim and Anthony Furlonge.

**HEMEL HEMPSTEAD TOWN:** Jamie Butler; Ben Herd; Dennis Oli; Matty Harriott (Kyle Connolly 78); Terrell Forbes; Matt Spring (Michael Richens 60); James Potton; Ed Oshodi; Oliver Hawkins (Mo Shariff 60); John Frendo; Jack Smith. Unused substitutes: Ben Sampayo and Xavier Comas Leon.

Half time: 0-1

Goalscorers: Bishop's Stortford – Anthony Church 25, Elliott Buchanan 59.

Hemel Hempstead – Mo Shariff 90+4

Referee: Mr P Kelly

Attendance: 561