

BISHOP'S STORTFORD 1 DARTFORD 2 (VANARAMA NATIONAL LEAGUE SOUTH)

It was another disappointing showing from Stortford at the ProKit (UK) Stadium as they still await a success there since late August. For Dartford this was their first league victory for over a month.



Blues were behind early on but when Christian Smith equalised five minutes from the break they finished the half on top. However, they didn't capitalise on the goal and once the Kent side had retaken the lead eight minutes after the restart Stortford never threatened strongly before the end although they did have a few chances to equalise.

Rod Stringer, on his birthday, chose a similar side to that which had won at Eastbourne a week previously. The only alteration to the starting ii was Smith coming into the centre of defence in place of Kenzer Lee who wasn't fully fit. Lee together with Frankie Merrifield, Omar Rowe, Morgan Ferrier and Josh Ekim made up the bench. Rowe was to come on and make his debut late in the match.

The Blues had started brightly with Charlie Sheringham almost edging them ahead in the 3rd minute with

keeper Deren Ibrahim turning the striker's low shot from ten yards round the post after good work by Alli Abdullahi and Matt Johnson and they followed this with two successive corners. Former Blue Danny Harris cut in from the wing but shot tamely to Tom Lovelock at the near post but shortly afterwards in the 11th minute the Darts took the lead when Tom Gardiner's deep cross towards the far post was deftly fired into the far corner by Barry Cogan past Tom Lovelock's full length dive.



Ibrahim blocked a shot from Buchanan shortly afterwards after Bywater had chipped the ball over the visitors' back-line and the Darts stopper also parried away an acute angled effort from Bywater when the midfielder had broken quickly following a corner at the other end. The visitors had a goal over-ruled for offside in the 25th minute and they had the edge but the Blues fought back and levelled with Smith heading in Bywater's right wing corner from close range five minutes from the break It was Stortford's first goal at home for 400 minutes.

The hosts finished the half on top and when Buchanan slipped the ball to Johnny Herd advancing from the left the full back struck a rising shot that was diverted narrowly past the near upright for a corner.



Stortford were behind again though in the 53rd minute after Lee Noble's corner ran free and Elliot Bradbrook's rising shot on the turn found the net.

Chances for any further goals before the end were few and far between although Bywater volleyed a half chance for Stortford wide in the 56th minute and a Sheringham header was narrowly wide from a Bywater cross in the 83rd minute. Lee Noble was close twice for the visitors who also saw substitute Jack Simmons slip over in front of goal when left with a gilt-edged opportunity three minutes from the end of normal time.



The Blues could have equalised in stoppage time but Frankie Merrifield shot over the bar from 12 yards after a Matt Johnson throw on the right had been nudged across the box by skipper Anthony Church to the substitute.

Blues: Tom Lovelock; De'Reece Vanderhyde; Johnny Herd; Alli Abdullahi (Frankie Merrifield 64); Christian Smith (Omar Rowe 76); Chris M'Boungou; Kieran Bywater; Anthony Church; Elliott Buchanan (Morgan Ferrier 71); Charlie Sheringham; Matt Johnson.

Unused substitutes: Josh Ekim and Kenzer Lee.

DARTFORD: Deren Ibrahim; Tom Gardiner; Mark Onyemah; Ronnie Vint; Callum McNaughton; Lee Noble; Ryan Hayes (Jack Simmons 84); Elliot Bradbrook (George Sykes 74); Tom Bradbrook; Barry Cogan; Danny Harris (Andy Pugh 90).

Unused substitutes: Becka-Kah Dembele and Ebrima Adams.

Attendance: 402

