

## OXFORD CITY 3, BISHOP'S STORTFORD 1 (VANARAMA NATIONAL LEAGUE SOUTH)

This match will be remembered for all the wrong reasons by anyone associated with Stortford as their three game winning streak on the road was brought to a juddering halt in embarrassing fashion. Going a goal down in the opening minutes the Blues then levelled from the penalty spot with the added bonus of City having a player sent off. After an eventful first half with the interval arriving with the scoreline unchanged Blues supporters would have thought there could only be one result especially when the hosts had another player sent off within four minutes of the restart. However, Stortford's lack of ideas and conviction helped to see their nine man opponents score twice in the last half hour and it could have been worse.

Following the home defeat to Dartford a week earlier Rod Stringer made a number of changes to his side. Centre half Christian Smith, although on the bench, was not fit and with George Allen and Kenzer Lee still out injured the Blues' boss brought in Daniel Burns on loan from Cambridge United to play alongside Chris M'Boungou. Also on the bench were Elliott Buchanan, Alli Abdullahi and newcomer David Hutton. Coming into the starting eleven were Morgan Ferrier, Frankie Merrifield and Omar Rowe. Second in the table Oxford were unbeaten at home and their side contained several Spanish players.

Stortford's afternoon got off to a poor start when in the 3<sup>rd</sup> minute slack defensive play following a City throw on the right allowed the menacing Kynan Isaac to take the ball on and then slip it inside to BRADLEY BUBB who fired low and wide of Tom Lovelock inside the far post (1-0). It looked as though the hosts had doubled their lead five minutes later as Luke Coulson ran through the Stortford defence with too much ease before lobbing the ball over Lovelock into the net but Referee Anthony Serrano disallowed the goal for an infringement seemingly on Johnny Herd.

A Kieran Bywater free-kick was well saved by City keeper Laurie Walker in the 10<sup>th</sup> minute diving to his right and then four minutes later Stortford were back on level terms. Frankie Merrifield flicked a ball down the middle for Morgan Ferrier to latch on to and when the striker ran through into the left side of the box he was sent crashing to ground by a late tackle from Adrian Santiago for a penalty. Amazingly Referee Serrano was afflicted by a case of mistaken identity as he red carded another Spanish defender Jon Arzamendi instead for the offence. Once all the commotion had died down KIERAN BYWATER confidently beat Walker with the spot-kick (1-1).

The signs were good for Stortford at this stage and for a short period it looked as though they would take control. In the 17<sup>th</sup> minute a Bywater corner produced a far post header from Anthony Church that went across the face of the goal and then shortly afterwards stopper Walker diverted a

shot from the menacing Ferrier away for a corner and the Blues number nine was again close to scoring minutes later.

But Stortford's defence looked suspect virtually every time that the hosts pushed forward and they had a couple of narrow escapes either side of the half hour. First a cross from Isaac into the six yards box was bouncing around in front of the goal with substitute Darren Pond looking to score before Chris M'Boungou cleared away inches from the goal-line and then a long ball from Santiago found Bubb running free and heading towards Lovelock's goal. However, the keeper came off his line quickly and forced Bubb wide and the danger was extinguished.

Chances were coming at both ends in an eventful first half. An attempted clearance out of the Oxford defence deflected into the path of Frankie Merrifield just inside the left angle of the area and his low effort was kept out by Walker at the base of his near post. Then, with the interval approaching Lovelock saved low down from Isaac before the Stortford keeper did well to hold the ball at the feet of Bradley Bubb after the Oxford number nine had fastened on to a through pass from David King. The clearest chance came in the last action of the half when Ferrier broke down the right and crossed to Omar Rowe in front of goal and in acres of space but the newcomer sliced his shot wide.

There was an early alarm for Stortford soon after the restart as Reece Fleet cut in from the right but his angled attempt finished on the roof of the net. Then, in the 49<sup>th</sup> minute, the hosts were reduced to nine men when David King who had been booked in the first half picked up a second yellow card following a late challenge on Morgan Ferrier.

Rod Stringer brought on Elliott Buchanan in place of Merrifield and in the 53<sup>rd</sup> minute Johnny Herd played Ferrier through into the box but Walker came out to block with his legs. There was then trickery from Ferrier when attacking the right hand side of the area bamboozling two defenders but unfortunately his 15 yard drive was straight into Walker's chest and was it held by the stopper.

Disaster struck in the 63<sup>rd</sup> minute when a short corner on the right from Luke Coulson was collected by KYNAN ISAAC at the near side of the box and not closely marked he had time to turn and whip a low shot across the goal and into the far bottom corner of the net (2-1).

A corner from Kieran Bywater was headed narrowly wide by Elliott Buchanan who also struck a rising shot over the bar from 12 yards following a Bywater cross but with the home side understandably defending deep and the action almost one way traffic the Blues could muster few openings and their play was increasingly ragged.

Substitutes Josh Ekim and David Hutton entered the fray but Stortford were shell shocked when City netted their third goal in the 83<sup>rd</sup> minute. LUKE COULSON collected the ball on the right wing and then proceeded to go on a run across the front edge of the area past some weak challenges before breaking into the box at the left angle and delivering a fine shot wide of Lovelock (3-1).

It almost got worse in the 88<sup>th</sup> minute when Coulson put substitute Connor McDonough into space from the right but Lovelock saved and when the ball ran loose half saved the follow-up effort with De'Reece Vanderhyde finally clearing near the goal-line. In the final minute of normal time Kieran Bywater's near post header was wide following David Hutton's corner.

Omar Rowe, Johnny Herd and Hutton were shown yellow cards by the Referee.

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TEAM INFO AND MATCH DETAILS:

BISHOP'S STORTFORD: Tom Lovelock; De'Reece Vanderhyde; Johnny Herd; Matt Johnson (Josh Ekim 69); Chris M'Boungou; Daniel Burns (David Hutton 80); Kieran Bywater; Anthony Church; Morgan Ferrier; Frankie Merrifield (Elliott Buchanan 52); Omar Rowe.

Unused substitutes: Christian Smith and Alli Abdullahi.

OXFORD CITY: Laurie Walker; David King; Jose Lapoujate; Ander Del Alamo (Darren Pond 8); Adrian Santiago; Jon Arzamendi; Luke Coulson; Reece Fleet; Bradley Bubb (Connor McDonagh 46); Julen Lafuente; Kynan Isaac.

Unused substitutes: Omari Sterling-James and Carlos Pifarre-Forner.

Half time: 1-1

Goalscorers: Bishop's Stortford - Kieran Bywater penalty 14.

Oxford City - Bradley Bubb 3, Kynan Isaac 63, Luke Coulson 83.

Referee: Mr A Serrano

Attendance: 278