

BISHOP'S STORTFORD 5, ROYSTON TOWN 4  
(HERTS CHARITY CUP – SEMI-FINAL)

The Blues progressed to their sixth successive Herts Charity Cup final but they were made to work hard by the Crows in this nine goal thriller.

The Evo-Stik Central Division side were very attacking minded and worried the Stortford defence for most of the tie. The hosts twice held a three goal lead in the match but on each occasion were then pegged back to a single goal margin.

Rod Stringer's squad was without Alli Abdullahi who was unavailable and Ian Gayle who was injured. Max Oldham was given his debut.

The match started as it was to continue with plenty of action and near misses at both ends. Morgan Ferrier had a shot blocked at close range by stopper Ronnie Yates and then the Crows' Reece Dobson was put clear but Tom Lovelock saved well. Stortford went ahead in the 14<sup>th</sup> minute following a move on the left that finished with Ferrier cutting inside and Yates half saving the striker's acute angled effort and with the ball running loose KIERAN BYWATER netted from a few yards (1-0).

Royston skipper Scott Bridges soon afterwards missed out on chances to equalise. In the 18<sup>th</sup> minute he had a 15 yard shot saved by Lovelock and then he missed an easy chance shooting wide from close range after a cross from Dan Brathwaite. Play continued to be very open and whilst Elliott Buchanan and Ferrier nearly scored for the Blues either side of the half hour Ryan Ingrey saw a header well saved by Lovelock. Stortford doubled their lead in the 34<sup>th</sup> minute after a Bywater corner from the right. The flag-kick was retrieved by Ferrier past the far post and his deep cross back into the far side of the box was headed home by FRANKIE MERRIFIELD (2-0).

The lead was further extended four minutes later from the penalty spot. Royston central defender George Powell fouled MORGAN FERRIER as he tried to connect with a Buchanan cross and Ferrier himself converted the spot-kick (3-0). The Blues were very close to adding to their lead as in the 43<sup>rd</sup> minute Merrifield worked himself into a shooting position just inside the area when receiving a Buchanan pass but saw his shot brilliantly saved by Yates who produced a one handed save to divert the ball for a corner. Seconds before the break the visitors reduced the arrears when Luke Robins' deep cross from the left was headed past Lovelock by RYAN INGREY (3-1).

Half time: 3-1

The Crows made a double substitution at the break with Rhys Hoeness and Rob Mason replacing Robins and Ingrey and it was the two substitutes who combined to score Royston's second goal three minutes after the interval, Hoeness crossing for ROB MASON to beat Lovelock (3-2).

Omar Rowe replaced Max Oldham in the 53<sup>rd</sup> minute and just before the hour Stortford scored twice in as many minutes to restore a three goal cushion. A Bywater corner wasn't cleared properly and eventually Elliott Buchanan laid the ball on for FRANKIE MERRIFIELD to send a great 20 yard shot past Yates' despairing dive to his right (4-2). Then a minute later Bywater's free-kick from the right saw George Allen go up with a defender and when the ball dropped CHRIS M'BOUNGOU fired into the net for his first Blues' goal (5-2).

Buchanan, who just missed connecting with an Omar Rowe cross in the six yard box, was replaced by Mikel Suarez in the 68<sup>th</sup> minute. If the Blues thought they were home and dry they were mistaken as the visitors again started to cut into the lead. In the 71<sup>st</sup> minute a header into Blues' territory by Scott Bridges caught out Allen and M'Boungou for REECE DOBSON to race through and slide into the net from an acute angle (5-3).

Tom Beere found the net but was offside and Royston scored their fourth in the 77<sup>th</sup> minute from a penalty. Following a Danny May corner on the left Omar Rowe gained possession but when bringing the ball out of the box was harshly ruled to have handled

by Referee Mark Mellor and ROB MASON gave Tom Lovelock no chance from the spot (5-4).

The remaining minutes saw the Blues under concerted pressure but they survived and but for an outstanding double save by Yates from Omar Rowe and Morgan Ferrier in the 86<sup>th</sup> minute they would have found the net for a sixth goal.

Stortford will now meet Hemel Hempstead Town or St Albans City in the Final at the County Ground Letchworth in the New Year and attempt to win the Cup for the third successive year.

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TEAM DETAILS AND MATCH DETAILS:-

BISHOP'S STORTFORD: Tom Lovelock; De'Reece Vanderhyde; Johnny Herd; Frankie Merrifield; Chris M'Boungou; George Allen; Kieran Bywater (Dymon Labonne 80); Tom Beere; Morgan Ferrier; Elliott Buchanan (Mikel Suarez 68); Max Oldham (Omar Rowe 53).

Unused substitute: Josh Ekim.

ROYSTON TOWN: Ronnie Yates; Erkan Okay (Adrian Cambridge 72); Dan Brathwaite; Scott Bridges; George Powell; Jack Bradshaw; Ryan Towner; Danny May; Reece Dobson; Ryan Ingrej (Rob Mason 46); Luke Robins (Rhys Hoeness 46).

Unused substitutes: Michael Graham and Mayson Tewkesbury.

Half time: 3-1

Goalscorers: Bishop's Stortford – Kieran Bywater 14, Frankie Merrifield 34 and 58,  
Morgan Ferrier 38 (pen), Chris M'Boungou 59.

Royston Town – Ryan Ingrej 45, Rob Mason 48 and 77 (pen),  
Reece Dobson 71.

Referee: Mr M. Mellor

Attendance: 101