

# WESTON-SUPER-MARE 1, BISHOP'S STORTFORD 1 (VANARAMA NATIONAL LEAGUE SOUTH)

Mikel Suarez has missed much of the season so far through injury but it was his first half goal that helped the Blues to a share of the points at the Woodspring Stadium. The Spaniard has made a couple of substitution appearances recently but this was his first time in Rod Stringer's starting eleven since the match back in August at Truro City when the striker was injured. After taking the lead before the break Stortford were unable to hang on to it with the Seagulls equalising with about twenty minutes to go and putting them under sustained pressure before the final whistle. However, Stortford, with an improved performance than of late, deserved to bring away a point against a side that has recently been on a run of good form.



The Blues' team sheet showed a number of changes with on loan keeper from Bolton Wanderers, Ross Fitzsimons, between the sticks in place of Tom Lovelock who was on the bench. Also on the bench making way for Suarez was Morgan Ferrier while another new player Jon Muleba – a defender on loan from AFC Bournemouth – was to come on late in the match as a substitute. Midfielder Josh Ekim was also in the starting line-up and De'Reece Vanderhyde was missing due to his serving a one match suspension.



After some heavy periods of rain around and after lunchtime the pitch survived two pitch inspections before referee Daniel Cook gave the okay for the game to go ahead. Rain was always a threat during the match and was again heavy during spells of the second half.



The hosts began like a team in form but it was the Blues who provided the first threat with a free-kick on the left in the 2<sup>nd</sup> minute from Josh Ekim carrying a couple of deflections including one from Elliott Buchanan towards the far post where defender Ollie Barnes headed away from danger close to the goal-line. Shortly afterwards at the other end Dayle Grubb whipped in an acute angled shot towards the near post and Fitzsimons tipped the ball away for a corner.



Having survived the early pressure Stortford were close to going ahead in the 18<sup>th</sup> minute. An attack up the left flank involving Johnny Herd, Suarez and Buchanan ended with the latter switching play and slipping the ball towards the far side of the box where Kieran Bywater gained control and hit the post with a drive. Coming up to the half hour point a fine tackle from Chris M'Boungou stopped striker

Scott Wilson as he was about to shoot and then Fitzsimons made a good low save from Grubb from the edge of the area.



But it was the Blues who took the lead with a well worked goal. It was initiated by a move on the left in which Tom Beere, Kieran Bywater and Frankie Merrifield were all involved and it finished with a great cross from Elliott Buchanan to the far post where MIKEL SUAREZ netted with a downward header for his first goal of the season. The ball was hacked away by a defender behind the goal-line but it had clearly crossed (0-1).

The Seagulls fought back and three minutes later following a corner on the left from Grubb, Pat Keary stabbed the ball goalwards and a combination of Fitzsimons and M'Boungou cleared the danger inches from the goal-line. Leading up to the interval Bywater almost got himself on the end of a Buchanan cross in the six yard box whilst Wilson for Weston saw his effort from the edge of the box deflected just wide.

Half time: 0-1

With the elements in their favour Stortford started the second half brightly with skipper George Allen finding the top of the net with an acute angled shot on the turn after a free-kick. Gradually though Weston began to get more possession but the Stortford defence was coping well. Midway through the half Wilson was close for the hosts after good work by Grubb and then in the 70<sup>th</sup> minute Joe McClennan slipped the ball to Wilson cutting in from the right but the Seagulls' number nine saw his shot well blocked away by Fitzsimons. But just a minute later the scores were level. Another attack on the right ended with McClennan crossing for SCOTT WILSON to beat Fitzsimons from close range (1-1).

The hosts continued to have most of the possession and exert some pressure but Elliott Buchanan was narrowly wide with a poke at goal in the 84<sup>th</sup> minute. In the closing couple of minutes before the end of normal time both Bradley Ash and Dayle Grubb were close with shots for the home side. Then the last action of the match in stoppage time substitute Morgan Ferrier was fouled on the byline yards from the corner flag but Kieran Bywater's free-kick was punched out from under the bar by Weston stopper Luke Purnell. Both Ian Gayle and Mikel Suarez were shown yellow cards during the match.



#### TEAM DETAILS AND MATCH DETAILS:-

**BISHOP'S STORTFORD:** Ross Fitzsimons; Ian Gayle; Johnny Herd; Josh Ekim (Jon Muleba 75); Chris M'Boungou; George Allen (Dymon Labonne 85); Kieran Bywater; Tom Beere; Mikel Suarez (Morgan Ferrier 78); Frankie Merrifield; Elliott Buchanan.

Unused substitutes: Omar Rowe and Tom Lovelock.

**WESTON-SUPER-MARE:** Luke Purnell; Ben Withey (Syd Camper 46); Ollie Barnes; Jacob Cane; Pat Keary; Clayton Fortune; Joe McClennan; Bradley Ash; Scott Wilson (Jake Mawford 78); Dayle Grubb; Alex Byrne.

Unused substitutes: Jason Pope, Jamie Edge and Danny Wring.

Half time: 0-1

Goalscorers: Bishop's Stortford – Mikel Suarez 33.

Weston-Super-Mare – Scott Wilson 71

Referee: Mr Daniel Cook

Attendance: 318

