

## CONCORD RANGERS 2 BISHOP'S STORTFORD 2 (VANARAMA NATIONAL LEAGUE SOUTH)

Elliott Buchanan's first half penalty and his excellent free-kick after the break seemed to have ensured all the points for Stortford at the Aspect Arena but Rangers fought back to quickly notch two goals in a nine minute spell to share the points. Very much like the match two days earlier against St Albans City the first half had few incidents whilst the second period came to life and there was a hectic end to the contest. The Blues will feel aggrieved that apart from the penalty they were awarded they also had two other valid appeals for spot-kicks that were turned down by Referee Ian Fissenden.

Stortford's squad had just one change from that which had beaten St Albans with Kieran Bywater injured Morgan Ferrier was in the starting eleven and his place on the bench was taken by Dymon Labonne. The Beachboys' side included three players that had worn a Stortford shirt in the past – Steve Cawley, Adam Bailey-Dennis and Steve King plus midfielder Jay Dowie who played in a number of friendlies for the Blues prior to the current season.

Both teams took a long time to settle in the windy conditions that favoured the Blues before the interval. Neither side created anything of note in the first twenty minutes although when the hosts' Max Cornhill saw Ross Fitzsimons off his line he tried a 40 yard effort that the keeper caught. Just after the twenty minute mark Stortford forced three successive corners with Buchanan's last flag-kick causing the most problems before Concord stopper Ben McNamara punched the ball away from danger. In the 25<sup>th</sup> minute Morgan Ferrier was fouled on the left by defender James Hammond and the resultant free-kick from Josh Ekim was headed a foot over the top by George Allen. Then, a little later in the 32<sup>nd</sup> minute Ferrier chased a long ball down the left flank and when he cut inside into the area he was tripped by Steve King. ELLIOTT BUCHANAN gave McNamara no chance with his left footed spot-kick into the top corner (0-1).

In the minutes approaching the break a shot from Joe Gardner was comfortably held by Fitzsimons whilst at the other end there were strong appeals from the Blues for another penalty when Mikel Suarez went down in the box after a tackle from King.

Half-time: 0-1

The action livened up straight from the restart. An early shot from Steve Cawley was held by Fitzsimons in front of his face and then in the 50<sup>th</sup> minute Josh Ekim sent Morgan Ferrier away on the left and Ferrier finished with a low acute angled attempt that McNamara grabbed low at the near post. Fitzsimons was in action again when he did well to hold on to deep free-kick from the left by Ben Greenhalgh and in the 57<sup>th</sup> minute McNamara going to his right held on to a Chris M'Boungou header after an Ekim free-kick from the left into the box.

The Blues had a couple of wobbly moments around the hour mark as first Johnny Herd, heading the ball back towards his own goal, saw it narrowly go wide of Ross Fitzsimons right-hand upright and then when the keeper kicked the ball out poorly it hit M'Boungou and rebounded into Steve Cawley's path but fortunately the former Stortford player was off target with his shot.

It looked as though the points were safe in the 68<sup>th</sup> minute as Stortford doubled their lead. Morgan Ferrier was fouled outside the box and ELLIOTT BUCHANAN's free-kick beat McNamara's dive to strike the inside of the keeper's left hand post and rebound to enter the net just inside the other upright (0-2). It was the fifth goal that Blues' leading marksman had netted against Concord this campaign.

Stortford's joy was short-lived however as the hosts hit back straightaway. Following an attack up the left the ball was switched into the middle outside the box where JAY DOWIE drove a rising 20 yarder past Fitzsimons into the top corner of the net (1-2). Concord with the momentum were now pushing men forward and putting Stortford under pressure. A free-kick from wide on the left from Greenhalgh struck the far side of the top of the goal-frame and in the 78<sup>th</sup> minute the Beachboys equalised. A corner on the right from Greenhalgh was met at the far post by ADAM BAILEY-DENNIS and the defender's acute angled header found the net (2-2).

There was a hectic end to the match with action at both ends. With six minutes of normal time remaining Anthony Church headed narrowly over when a long throw from Johnny Herd had only been half cleared and at the other end a free-kick from skipper James White was just wide.

Stortford were denied another call for a penalty in the second of four minutes of added time as Frankie Merrifield, on a strong run goalwards, looked to be pushed in the back by defender James Hammond and shortly afterwards a volley from Buchanan flew across the face of the goal.

Referee Fissenden booked Anthony Church and Josh Ekim early in the second half.

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TEAM DETAILS AND MATCH DETAILS:-

BISHOP'S STORTFORD: Ross Fitzsimons; De'Reece Vanderhyde; Johnny Herd; Josh Ekim (Ian Gayle 82); Chris M'Boungou; George Allen; Frankie Merrifield; Anthony Church; Mikel Suarez; Elliott Buchanan; Morgan Ferrier (Omar Rowe 70)  
Unused substitutes: Dymon Labonne, Jon Muleba and Tom Lovelock.

CONCORD RANGERS: Ben McNamara; James Hammond; Tom Stephen; Jay Dowie; Steve King (Jordan Cox 76); Adam Bailey-Dennis; Max Cornhill; James White; Ben Greenhalgh; Steve Cawley; Joe Gardner (Lewis Taaffe 65).  
Unused substitutes: John Easterford, Arthur Lee and Sam Bantick.

Half time: 0-1

Goalscorers: Bishop's Stortford – Elliott Buchanan 32 (pen) and 68.  
Concord Rangers – Jay Dowie 69, Adam Bailey-Dennis 78.

Referee: Mr Ian Fissenden

Attendance: 260

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