

ST ALBANS CITY 1, BISHOP'S STORTFORD 1 (VANARAMA NATIONAL LEAGUE SOUTH)

A match of two halves saw the Herts rivals share the points at a rain-swept Clarence Park with Stortford having the better of the first half and taking the lead and the Saints grabbing an equaliser after the interval and edging the second period.

The Blues had the chances in the opening 45 minutes to have added to their lead and made life difficult for the hosts but in the end the score-line was probably correct as City pressed strongly after the resumption. Whatever, both sides served up an entertaining match in difficult conditions in what was Stortford's third successive National League South away draw.



Rod Stringer's starting eleven showed one change to that which had drawn at Concord Rangers five days earlier – Mikel Suarez was absent due to flu and this allowed new signing from Forest Green Rovers, midfielder Corby Moore, to make his debut. Included on the bench were Alli Abdullahi, now available again, and defender Kenzer Lee who was back to fitness.



Kicking uphill, Stortford made a promising start with Morgan Ferrier, as he was to do most of the

afternoon, causing problems to City's defence. In the third minute Ferrier's run and low cross from the left presented an opportunity to newcomer Moore but he mis-kicked in front of goal. However, by the ninth minute the Blues were ahead. Elliott Buchanan, tight on the right touch-line laid the ball back to De'Reece Vanderhyde and the full-back's first time cross into the middle was met by Morgan Ferrier whose glancing header found the net via the inside of keeper Joe Welch's right-hand post.



The Saints came back briefly with Louie Theophanous driving a shot a foot over followed by the striker seeing his header in the 13th minute brilliantly saved by Ross Fitzsimons diving to his left following a cross into the middle by Tom Bender. But after that and up until the break Stortford were the team on the front-foot. Moore tried a shot from outside the box that Welch held whilst Morgan Ferrier was twice denied by last-ditch tackles from defenders and the Blues were unable to make count a high number of corners that they were awarded leading up to the interval.

Four minutes before half-time Frankie Merrifield released Johnny Herd with a pass towards the left flank and Herd's low drive was saved by the sprawling stopper. Then in the 43rd minute Elliott Buchanan missed out on doubling the lead when he fastened on to a loose ball which Anthony Church had won in midfield and made tracks for goal but finished with a low effort that screwed just wide of an upright.

Half-time: 0-1

Stortford began the second half as they had finished first. In the first minute after the restart Ferrier flew down the left before slipping the ball inside to Merrifield who went down in the penalty area. Despite protests referee Sam Purkiss gave no penalty. Then moments later Buchanan's 20 yard shot was over the target after Moore had supplied a pass to Blues' leading marksman.



However, City began to build up some momentum and in the 54th minute a quick bouncing cross from the left wing by Jernade Meade struck the near post and it was Meade who was involved in the approach play leading to the host's leveler two minutes later. His centre from the right towards the edge of the box was neatly guided by Ben Martin into the path of Louie Theophanous, in space and just inside the area, and he smashed a rising shot past Fitzsimons.



From this point Stortford had to withstand a good deal of pressure. On the hour Fitzsimons stretched to claw away a lofted cross from James Comley on the left out of danger and Theophanous was close with a shot. In a rare penetrative Stortford attack keeper Welch upended Ferrier inches outside the box in the 71st minute and Josh Ekim's resultant free-kick cleared the bar. City had strong appeals for a penalty turned down minutes later as Anthony Church, under pressure at the far post, seemed to

handle the ball when it came across goal from James Comley's corner.

Rod Stringer brought on Alli Abdullahi twelve minutes from time to replace a limping Frankie Merrifield. In the remaining minutes City continued to push forward at Stortford's defence. Ross Fitzsimons held on to a deflected shot from Comley and substitute Kevin Krans, Louie Theophanous and skipper Lee Chappell all had attempts at goal although not troubling the Blues keeper.

TEAM DETAILS AND MATCH DETAILS:-

BISHOP'S STORTFORD: Ross Fitzsimons; De'Reece Vanderhyde; Johnny Herd; Josh Ekim; George Allen; Chris M'Boungou; Frankie Merrifield (Alli Abdullahi 78); Anthony Church; Elliott Buchanan; Morgan Ferrier; Corby Moore.
 Unused substitutes: Kenzer Lee, Jon Muleba, Ian Gayle and Tom Lovelock.

ST ALBANS CITY: Joe Welch; John Kyriacou; Lee Chappell; Sam Corcoran; Jorell Johnson; Ben Martin; Tom Bender; James Comley; Louie Theophanous; Jonathan Edwards (Harry Crawford 67); Jernade Meade (Kevin Krans 78).
 Unused substitutes: Scott Thomas, Billy Gibson and Jack Green.

Half time: 0-1

Goalscorers: Bishop's Stortford – Morgan Ferrier 9.
 St Albans City – Louie Theophanous 56

Referee: Mr Sam Purkiss

Attendance: 524

