

BISHOP'S STORTFORD 3, AFC RUSHDEN & DIAMONDS 1  
(FOOTBALL CONFERENCE YOUTH ALLIANCE – DIVISION 'C')

Playing their first match at the ProKit (UK) Stadium since the middle of January three goals in the last twenty five minutes of this contest, two of which were scored by substitute Lewis McDonald gave the Blues maximum points. Goal-less at half time the visitors took the lead early on after the restart before Stortford struck back.

There was little to choose between the two sides in the early stages but in the 10<sup>th</sup> minute Diamonds' striker Connor Worrall broke upfield but Danny Palmer got across quickly to cover and concede a corner. From the flag-kick Isse Ali-Farah's shot on the turn was held by Blues' keeper Steve Robinson.

Stortford gradually settled into the match and Ben Smith was close from the edge of the box after a spell of pressure in the 16<sup>th</sup> minute. Then in the 27<sup>th</sup> minute visiting stopper Sam De Boer just beat Smith to the ball after George Bartlam had released it into the box. A minute later Palmer crossed into the middle and Bartlam was twice denied by De Boer. Before the break another shot from Bartlam was held by De Boer whilst Smith was inches wide of the target with another effort. The Blues were creating a number of threatening attacks but there was no end product.

Half time: 0-0

Three minutes after the restart Mason Naylor produced a fine pass to set up Ben Smith to cut in from the right but the Diamonds keeper narrowed the angle and Smith's shot was over the bar. Stortford were then made to pay in the 52<sup>nd</sup> minute as Thomas Craddock and Matt Pinder attacked down the right flank and whilst the Blues waited for an offside decision that wasn't forthcoming Pinder rounded Robinson and squared towards the six yard box where substitute CHRISTY NGINAMAU netted easily (0-1).

Tim Moylette's team fought back and within minutes of going behind Bartlam had a header from an Aaron Thomas cross held by the keeper and this was immediately followed by a fine save by De Boer again from Bartlam after good lead-up play by Aaron Thomas and Ben Smith.

Just before the mid-point of the second half, Bartlam was replaced up front by Lewis McDonald, coming back from injury and normally a full-back. The substitute soon had an influence on the match as in the 66<sup>th</sup> minute he touched on Danny Palmer's cross from the left into MASON NAYLOR's path and Naylor found the back of the net with a low effort wide of De Boer (1-1).

Stortford were now dictating the play and McDonald rounded off a good move with a shot into the side-netting in the 73<sup>rd</sup> minute. Four minutes later LEWIS McDONALD was on the score-sheet when he finished off an attack in which Danny Palmer and Ben Smith played a prominent part, by breaking clear down the middle and firing home (2-1). In the 82<sup>nd</sup> minute Callum O'Brien's corner resulted in a shot from Smith blocked by the keeper and when the ball ran loose to the angle of the box substitute Joe Senior powered a fine effort against the keeper's left hand upright and McDonald placed his shot from the rebound wide.

The Blues' third and final goal came with four minutes left of normal time. Joe Senior crossed from the right to the far post and Naylor stretched to set up LEWIS McDONALD to net from close range (1-3).

In added time the Northamptonshire visitors nearly reduced the arrears as a clearance from Steve Robinson hit Joe Ackroyd but fortunately the ball rebounded wide of the goal.

Bishop's Stortford: Stephen Robinson; Danny Palmer; Callum O'Brien; Jack Thomas; Ross Gill; Bryn Thorpe; Alex Rogers (Sam Philpot 71); Mason Naylor (Ted Dean 87); George Bartlam (Lewis McDonald 64); Ben Smith; Aaron Thomas (Joe Senior 71).  
Unused substitute: Callum Lynskey.