

AFC RUSHDEN & DIAMONDS 1 BISHOP'S STORTFORD 1

(FOOTBALL CONFERENCE YOUTH ALLIANCE – DIVISION 'C')

The Blues' Academy side finished their away programme by taking a point back home from the "Dog and Duck Stadium". Stortford didn't get their game together in the first half as the hosts closed them down quickly allowing them little space but after the break they gave an improved performance. Missed chances looked likely to cost the Blues until Jordan Handscomb leveled the scores with seven minutes to go.

Stortford's first worthwhile attack came in the seventh minute with Mason Naylor's short cross from the right being headed into the ground and bouncing over the bar by Sam Philpot. At the other end, two minutes later, Callum Lynskey was called into action turning aside a shot from Diamonds' Matt Pinder for a corner after the striker had cut inside from the right flank.

Most of the action was in midfield but the home side had the edge and looked the more dangerous going forward. They took the lead in the 21st minute after being awarded a free-kick wide on the right. ASHLEY HEWETT swung the ball towards goal and it went over Lynskey and under the bar (1-0).

Some inaccurate passing was letting the Blues down and for a period the home side threatened to increase their lead. However, on the half-hour, Aaron Thomas almost gained control of the ball near goal after good work by Jordan Handscomb but keeper Sam De Boer just managed to grab hold of it. Then a free-kick on the left from Naylor towards the six yard box saw Handscomb miss contact with the ball with an attempted flick in front of goal. In the 36th minute another free-kick from Naylor was headed narrowly over the bar by Handscomb with the ball skimming the roof of the net. A minute from the interval Aaron Thomas was unlucky when his low shot from 15 yards was parried away by the keeper and his second attempt from a very acute angle was cleared off the line by a defender making a good sliding interception.

Half time: 1-0

Stortford made a good start on the resumption, and in the 53rd minute Sam Philpot and Mason Naylor were involved in a move on the left before Jordan Handscomb crossed to the far post where Aaron Thomas headed wide. There was another near miss two minutes later as Aaron Thomas finished a run on the right with a cross into the middle where the ball spun off of Handscomb and Sam Philpot lifted it over the bar from close range. The Diamonds' Ryan Baird headed over when well-placed near goal in the 71st minute whilst a cross to the far post by Bryn Thorpe resulted in Blues' substitute Joe Senior volleying straight at the keeper.

Another deep cross from the right by Thorpe towards the back post in the 83rd minute helped produce the equalising goal. The home defence failed to clear their lines and eventually JORDAN HANDSCOMB hooked the ball into the net (1-1). Stortford continued to have most of the possession until end and pressed hard to clinch a winner. But the closest they came was a 20 yard effort from Danny Palmer that cleared the bar and Rushden substitute Christy Nginamau was close for the home side in the last minute with a shot just past the post.

Full time: 1-1

BISHOP'S STORTFORD: Callum Lynskey; Alex Rogers; John Clarke; Jack Thomas; Ross Gill; Bryn Thorpe; Sam Philpot (Joe Senior 70); Danny Palmer; Jordan Handscomb; Mason Naylor; Aaron Thomas (Ted Dean 64)
Unused substitute: Callum O'Brien.