

CHELMSFORD CITY 4, BISHOP'S STORTFORD 1 (VANARAMA NATIONAL LEAGUE SOUTH)

Blues' dreams of ending the City hoodoo vanished in the cold night air at Melbourne Community Stadium as the hosts stretched their unbeaten league run over Stortford to ten matches.

This was after the Blues had made a great start taking an early lead. However, the hosts soon equalised and once they had gone ahead shortly before the break it was always going to be hard work for Rod Stringer's side to get back on terms. Although they had a good spell after the hour mark they conceded two further goals. In addition in the second period they had Ashley Miller sent off receiving two yellow cards in quick succession for dissent by referee Matt Buonassisi whose performance throughout was poor and seemed to favour the home side. Also, both Mikel Suarez, with a hamstring injury, and Frankie Merrifield, ankle, had to be withdrawn after the interval.



There were three changes in Stortford's starting eleven – Alli Abdullahi, Chris M'Bougou and

Mikel Suarez were selected and Anthony Church, returning from injury, was on the bench. Former Woodside Park favourite Reece Prestedge was in the Clarets' ranks on loan from Bromley. Morgan Ferrier gave another lively display for Stortford and he initiated the opening goal in the fourth minute. He gained possession on the left and then drifted in-field past a couple of challenges before finding Robbie Willmott on the opposite wing. Willmott took the ball on to his left foot and arked a great cross towards the far upright where FRANKIE MERRIFIELD outwitted defender Rob Girdlestone and hit the base of the post with an angled shot. The ball rebounded off of the left heel of keeper Christian Dibble and his efforts to retrieve it before just crossing the goal-line were in vain. The goal has been officially credited to Merrifield (0-1). The lead only lasted five minutes. Bagasan Graham's corner on the right was headed out by Alli Abdullahi and when Graham regained possession he whipped in a strong cross that deflected off the top of Johnny Herd's head and was met in the six yard box by glancing header from MARK HAINES that finished in the far corner of the net (1-1).

For most of the rest of the half there was little to choose between the two sides and there were few openings but this was to change as the interval approached. In the 44th minute Corby Moore set Morgan Ferrier off on a run on the left flank that he finished with a rising deflected shot that stopper Dibble saved well tipping the over at the near post. Then a minute later, at the other end, a throw on the left by Graham was controlled on the edge of the box by Jason Williams. The striker tried a shot on the turn that rebounded off of his marker Kenzer Lee into the path of JACK BRIDGE and, after taking the ball forward a few paces, beat Tom Lovelock with a low effort across the goal from 12 yards (2-1).

The action for the half wasn't complete as the Blues nearly struck an equaliser in added time before the break. In a move similar to the lead-up to Stortford's goal Willmott crossed from the right to the far post and this time Merrifield was thwarted by City skipper Mark Hughes who conceded a corner. Then Willmott's flag-kick saw Chris

M'Boungou's firm header cleared off the line by Jason Williams who sent the ball ballooning into the air and M'Boungou's follow-up header was unfortunately straight at Dibble who comfortably caught the ball.

Half time: 2-1

City had the edge on the restart and widened their lead in the 54th minute. Bagasan Graham ghosted past Ashley Miller down the left and carried the ball almost to the near post before laying it back for JASON WILLIAMS to shoot low into the net from close range (3-1). Mark Hughes shot over the top from a Williams cross on the hour whilst Stortford had to regroup following injuries to Merrifield and Suarez that saw them replaced by Anthony Church and George Allen. Elliott Buchanan also entered the fray replacing Alli Abdullahi.

The Blues then came close to reducing the arrears twice after Johnny Herd long throws into the box. Firstly in the 66th minute Kenzer Lee swung his boot at the ball and his effort bounced off the ground and rolled on to the roof of the netting and then another throw three minutes later came out to Corby Moore and his fierce 15 yard low drive was well saved at the foot of a post by Dibble.

Chelmsford's fourth goal arrived in the 72nd minute and with it came controversy. An attack up the right finished with the ball running loose to the edge of the box where MARK HUGHES fired high into the net past Tom Lovelock (4-1). The Blues had every reason to then protest on two counts as at the start of the move on the right striker Billy Bricknell was in an offside position before he went on to have a shot blocked and then as Kenzer Lee tried to bring the ball away from goal Jason Williams committed a strong challenge from behind on the central defender which warranted a free-kick. As it was, the ball ran loose for Hughes to hammer home.

Stortford protestations to referee Buonassisi were very strong and Ashley Miller departed the pitch having been shown two yellow cards for dissent. With a player advantage it was one way traffic for a time as Williams, Prestedge went close and substitute Sandro Samedo forced an excellent diving save from Tom Lovelock with a shot from 25 yards in the 79th minute. Morgan Ferrier, though, continued to worry the hosts and he almost broke clear on a through pass from Church and then, after good individual work on the left, he fired an angled shot across the face of the goal and narrowly wide

of the far upright. The result meant that Chelmsford moved above the Blues in the league table.

Apart from the cards shown to Ashley Miller, Alli Abdullahi, Corby Moore and Anthony Church were also booked by the referee as was City's Jack Bridge.

TEAM DETAILS AND MATCH DETAILS:-

BISHOP'S STORTFORD: Tom Lovelock; Ashley Miller; Johnny Herd; Alli Abdullahi (Elliott Buchanan 61); Kenzer Lee; Chris M'Boungou; Robbie Willmott; Corby Moore; Mikel Suarez (George Allen 64); Frankie Merrifield (Anthony Church 55); Morgan Ferrier.

Unused substitutes: Byron Lawrence and Josh Ekim.

CHELMSFORD CITY: Christian Dibble; Rob Girdlestone; Marvel Ekpiteta; Mark Hughes; Mark Haines; Rory McAuley; Jack Bridge (Luke Daley 90+1); Reece Prestedge (Lee Sawyer 82); Jason Williams; Billy Bricknell; Bagasan Graham (Sandro Samedo 76).

Unused substitutes: Harry Morgan and Marvin Ekpiteta.

Half time: 2-1

Goalscorers: Bishop's Stortford – Frankie Merrifield 4

Chelmsford City – Mark Haines 9, Jack Bridge 45, Jason Williams 54, Mark Hughes 72.

Referee: Mr Matt Buonassisi

Attendance: 630