

DARTFORD 3, BISHOP'S STORTFORD 1 (VANARAMA NATIONAL LEAGUE SOUTH)

It was not a great day for the Blues at the Princes Park Stadium as their four game unbeaten run in the National League South was brought to a halt in this Good Friday fixture.



The Darts took full advantage of lapses by the Stortford defence to register their first victory after four straight league defeats and so revive their hopes of a play-off place. However, the final result could well have been different but it was determined by a key and controversial moment in the 77th minute as the host's defender Keaton Wood clearly fell on and handled the ball in the penalty area. The Blues 2-1 adrift and down to ten men at this stage, couldn't believe a penalty wasn't given with referee Carl Fitch having a different opinion. Dartford broke straight upfield and scored their third goal to wrap up the points.



Rod Stringer's side saw a couple of changes. De'Reece Vanderhyde was ill and so Ashley Miller returned to the right-back spot and Bradley Fortnam-Tomlinson was given a first league start. Amongst those on the bench were Mikel Suarez and new loan signing Hammed Lawal.

The hosts were on the front foot from the start with striker Tom Bradbrook proving a handful for the central defenders and they went ahead after six minutes as slack defensive play allowed former Stortford player DANNY HARRIS to turn on a Ryan Hayes' pass from the right wing and guide the ball inside a post from just inside the box (1-0). However, Stortford fought back and a Robbie Willmott free-kick had Dartford stopper Deren Ibrahim punching the ball away from danger and then another Willmott free-kick saw Ibrahim take the ball above George Allen's head. A corner from the Darts' Barry Cogan was headed away at the far post by Johnny Herd and it was Herd's long throw from the left shortly afterwards that led to the equaliser in the 15th minute. His throw was deflected across goal as Elliott Buchanan and Wood challenged for the ball and defender RONNIE VINT firmly headed past his own keeper for an own goal (1-1).



Three minutes later Robbie Willmott, receiving a pass in space from Bradley Fortnam-Tomlinson, hit the bar from 15 yards for the Blues but Dartford retook the lead in the 26th minute. Ibrahim's deep free-kick from his own half to the edge of the box resulted in Vint, not closed down, providing a pass for WOOD to net easily with a low shot wide of Craig King (2-1).

The home side continued to have the edge with defensive frailties showing again as Wood hooked a shot not far off target after another free-kick and Herd having to head away again at the back post following a Hayes' corner. However, Ibrahim had to be alert to hold the ball at Buchanan's feet in the area when the marksman gained possession of a

long pass forward from Allen in the 40th minute. Then a minute from the break Corby Moore set Buchanan off on a run on the left but approaching the box he hammered the ball high and wide.

Half time: 2-1



The Bishop's had to make a substitution at start of the second half with Ashley Miller clearly not fit and he was replaced by Jack Fowler and Stortford's cause wasn't helped either by losing Buchanan in the 54th minute having suffered a "dead leg". To make matters even worse the third substitute Mikel Suarez was only on the pitch for four minutes before having to depart in the 73rd minute with another hamstring injury leaving them with ten men.

Since the interval Dartford had continued to look the stronger side although there had been no further clear cut chances at either end. In the 75th minute King made a relatively comfortable save from Cogan and then the Stortford keeper was fouled as Tom Bradbrook had a goal disallowed. But the key and controversial moment of the match came a minute later as defender Wood clearly handled the ball in the penalty area. This happened after Willmott had released Bradley Fortnam-Tomlinson into space on the left and Blues' new signing had run deep into the area. Fortnam-Tomlinson jostled for the ball with Wood who fell and clearly handled. Referee Fitch had other ideas and when the home side broke straight upfield another defensive error occurred when Kenzer Lee should have cleared enabling TOM BRADBROOK to cut in from the right flank and drive a low angled shot past King (3-1).

Referee Fitch booked Johnny Herd in the first half and Alli Abdullahi in the second.

TEAM DETAILS AND MATCH DETAILS:-

BISHOP'S STORTFORD: Craig King; Ashley Miller (Jack Fowler 46); Johnny Herd; Alli Abdullahi; Kenzer Lee; George Allen; Corby Moore (Mikel Suarez 69); Anthony Church; Elliott Buchanan (Josh Ekim 54); Bradley Fortnam-Tomlinson; Robbie Willmott.

Unused substitutes: Hammed Lawal and Frankie Merrifield.



DARTFORD: Deren Ibrahim; Lee Burns (Tom Gardiner 31); Tom Wynter; Ronnie Vint; Keaton Wood; Lee Noble (Jack Simmons 61); Ryan Hayes; Nathan Ferguson; Tom Bradbrook; Barry Cogan; Danny Harris (Becka-Kah Dembele 84)..

Unused substitutes: George Sykes and Ben Francis.

Half time: 2-1

Goalscorers: Dartford – Danny Harris 6, Keaton Wood 26 and Tom Bradbrook 78

Bishop's Stortford – Own goal (Ronnie Vint) 15.

Referee: Mr Carl Fitch

Attendance: 921

