

MAIDSTONE UNITED 1, BISHOP'S STORTFORD 1 (VANARAMA NATIONAL LEAGUE SOUTH)

Stortford finished 11th in the National League South table after this draw at Maidstone's Gallagher Stadium which meant a good run of results since the end of February had seen them take nineteen points from their final eleven matches.



A closely matched contest with the hosts, who had already qualified for a play-off place, saw the Blues take a first half lead from an Elliott Buchanan penalty but the scores were level shortly after the interval. On the overall action the result was the right one with Stortford shading the first half and the Stones having slightly the better of the second half.



As expected George Allen hadn't

recovered from a thigh injury so De'Reece Vanderhyde partnered Kenzer Lee in the middle of the defence with Robbie Willmott in the right back berth.



Watched by a crowd of over two and a half thousand, Maidstone threatened in the first minute on their 3G artificial pitch when former Blue loanee Bobby-Joe Taylor sent Dumebi Dumaka clear on the left but Tom Lovelock, who was in good form throughout the afternoon, foiled the striker by diving to his left to push the shot from the edge of the box away to safety. Corby Moore shot over the bar in the 6th minute when the ball was loose in the area and then Stortford took the lead in the 13th minute from a penalty. A deep cross from the right by Robbie Willmott was aimed for Bradley Fortnam-Tomlinson in the box and when the ball fell loose Frankie Merrifield hit it against defender Manny Parry's arm and Referee Anthony Da Costa awarded a spot-kick. Buchanan sent keeper Lee Worgan the wrong way with his penalty.



Midway through the half, Dumaka almost broke through from the right but Anthony Church stopped his progress with a timely challenge and the ball was collected by Lovelock. Then, thirty seconds later at the other end, Merrifield slipped the ball through to Fortnam-Tomlinson advancing on the left but his first time low angled effort went across the face of the goal and wide of the far upright. A drive from distance by Church was comfortably held by Worgan in the 27th minute whilst Joe Healy for the Stones drove a chance wide of Lovelock's left-hand post before the break and a 25 yard attempt from the same player was comfortably pouched by the Blues' keeper.



Half time: 0-1

The hosts started the second period on the front-foot and pressed the Stortford defence. One long throw into the box from Alex Flisher caused problems and then Manny Parry was close following a corner. It was from another throw on the right by Flisher that brought the equaliser. With aid of deflections the ball bounced across the area and Joe Healy hooked it past Lovelock from eight yards although the stopper almost saved the shot.



There was a chance for United to have taken the lead four minutes later when Callum Driver's through pass found Flisher running into space towards goal but he fired his shot wide of the target. Soon afterwards substitute Jay May headed inches over the far angle after a Taylor free-kick. Maidstone continued to have most of the possession to the final whistle and produced a couple of alarms in the closing minutes. A fine tackle by De'Reece Vanderhyde stopped May as he ran towards goal and then a good move on the left by home side finished with a Taylor shot that fortunately lacked power and Lovelock saved diving to his left. Finally in the last minute of normal time Jack Richards found Jay May cutting in from the

right but Lovelock saved with his feet at the expense of a corner.

The only yellow card of the afternoon came late in the game and was shown to Robbie Willmott for clipping the back of Bobby-Joe Taylor's heels. Elliott Buchanan's penalty success was his 28th Vanarama National League South goal of the season and kept him top of the goalscoring chart to ensure he won the Golden Boot. His tally of goals was exactly half that totaled by the Blues in the league campaign – 56.



Full time: 1-1

TEAM DETAILS AND MATCH DETAILS:-

BISHOP'S STORTFORD: Tom Lovelock; Robbie Willmott; Johnny

Herd; Alli Abdullahi; Kenzer Lee; De'Reece Vanderhyde; Corby Moore; Anthony Church; Elliott Buchanan; Bradley Fortnam-Tomlinson (Mikel Suarez 59); Frankie Merrifield (Ashley Miller 73).

Unused substitutes: Josh Ekim, Byron Lawrence and Anthony Furlonge.

MAIDSTONE UNITED: Lee Worgan; Callum Driver; Bobby-Joe Taylor; Jamie Coyle (Callum Davies 73); Manny Parry; Joe Healey; Jack Paxman; Alex Flisher; Dumebi Dumaka (Jay May 46); Jack Richards; Vas Karagiannis (Matt Bodkin 68).

Unused substitutes: Charles Banya and Dan Sweeney.

Goalscorers: Bishop's Stortford – Elliott Buchanan (penalty) 13

Maidstone United – Joe Healy 52

Referee: Anthony Da Costa

Attendance: 2,549