

HEMEL HEMPSTEAD T. 0 BISHOP'S STORTFORD 2

Stortford completed a hat-trick of victories over the Tudors last season but the first meeting this term at Vauxhall Road saw the Blues lose after taking an early lead.

Having been on top in the early stages they fell behind to two quick goals midway through the first period before Hemel increased their lead early after the restart. Substitute Ioannis Varouxakis reduced the arrears five minutes from the end of normal time but Gordon Boateng's side were unable to force an equaliser.

Boateng gave a debut to midfield new signing Lee Sawyer and with the home defence looking vulnerable, especially in the early stages, the Blues took the lead following a Dominic Green corner on the right in the 4th minute. The ball was headed into the back of the net and although there were some thoughts it might have come from a Hemel defender's head the goal was credited to striker Sam Smith

Stortford's good start continued and in the 13th minute a driving run cutting in from the left by Tambeson Eyong ended with the midfielder's low effort deflecting across the goalmouth of off of keeper Jonathan Henly's legs for another corner.

Green's flag-kick eventually came out to Michael Rumens who volleyed goalwards only to see defender Jack Kelly clear off the line.

The Blues were then hit by a double blow as the weather worsened with the Tudors scoring twice in five minutes – the first goal from a debateable penalty.

Attacking the right edge of Blues' penalty area Hemel's James Potton was slightly nudged shoulder-to-shoulder by a Stortford defender as he slipped the ball into the path of skipper Sam Corcoran whose shot arrowed narrowly wide of Joe Wright's left upright.

With the Blues expecting a goal-kick Referee Elliott Kaye awarded a penalty to the hosts that Jake Robinson netted. A few minutes later the Tudors were ahead when Stortford's defence was unable to deal with a Graeme Montgomery corner that was whipped into the six yard box and Robinson glanced in from close range, Smith was close with a header in the 32nd minute from a Paul Rodgers' cross but the home side had

the edge until the break with Wright holding a close range header from Montgomery seven minutes from half-time.

Hemel increased their lead three minutes after the resumption with a simple goal. A run by Robinson on the right ended with the striker crossing low into the middle and James Potton firing in from ten yards.

Eyong had a shot saved by Henly in the 65th minute but for most of the rest of the match the Blues were put under pressure as Hemel dictated the midfield action. They had a number of chances to have added a further goal or two and Corcoran struck the underside of the bar in the 71st minute.



Stortford's hopes were lifted, however, in the 85th minute. In an attack down the middle substitute Bradley Woods-Garness slipped a pass forward for Sam Smith to take round the keeper and although the on-loan striker from Reading lost control of the ball Ioannis Varouxakis was on hand alongside to shoot into an empty net,

The closing minutes of the game were played in heavy rain and with the Hemel players looking edgy it seemed possible that the Blues could snatch something from the encounter. However, the closest they came to an equaliser in added time was when a deep free-kick from Joe Wright bounced across the box and wide of the far post.

BISHOP'S STORTFORD: Joe Wright, Paul Rodgers (Howard Hall 46), Johnny Herd, Tambeson Eyong (Ioannis Varouxakis 67), Tarik Moore-Azille, Danny Rumens, Evans Kouassi (Bradley Woods-Garness 54), Josh Ekim, Sam Smith, Lee Sawyer, Dominic Green. Unused sub: Tom Lovelock.

HEMEL HEMPSTEAD TOWN: Jonathan Henly, David King, Jack Kelly, Jonathan McNamara (Mitchell Weiss 68), Taylor McKenzie, Kyle Connolly, James Kaloczi, Sam Corcoran (Michael Richens 82), Jake Robinson, James Potton, Graeme Montgomery (Matt Spring 73). Unused subs: Ed Asafu-Adjaye and Kai Stonnell

Attendance: 435.