

HYTHE TOWN 4, BISHOP'S STORTFORD 2 (FA TROPHY – 3RD QUALIFYING ROUND)

The Blues woeful season continued when they were eliminated at the first hurdle of the FA Trophy by Ryman Division One South side Hythe Town. The tie saw Stortford take an early lead but by the end of the game thanks to a lack of discipline they had had three players sent off. Also, they weren't helped by losing keeper Joe Wright having to leave the pitch suffering with a serious facial injury. A disastrous afternoon could have seen the Kent side win by a bigger margin by the end.

Stortford started the tie without George Allen who was attending a wedding whilst Michael Richens was also missing having been injured at work during the week.

Blues started in confident style and went ahead in the sixth minute. Jon Nouble, receiving a long ball downfield from Harry Hickford, then slotted a precision pass down the middle for Femi Akinwande to collect and the on-loan frontman drilled a low left-footed shot past stopper Joe Mant from just inside the front edge of the box.

Shortly afterwards Aaron Greene fired in a low effort from the edge of the area that Mant, diving to his left, had trouble clearing.

That was as good as it got for the visitors. In the 11th minute Marvel Ekpiteta, having been fouled by the Cannons' Alfie May deep in Stortford territory, then kicked out in retaliation and was duly shown a straight red card. May was the centre of most of the afternoon's action scoring a hat-trick and being involved in all the Stortford dismissals.

Two minutes later a May shot hit a post and the follow-up attempt at goal from Alex Mulrooney-Skinner was partially saved by Wright and cleared off the line by Harry Hickford. Wright's action for the day was completed when he came off his line a few minutes later to try and thwart Mulrooney-Skinner who was bearing in on goal from the right. The two met for the 50-50 ball but the Blues stopper came off the worse and after a few minutes delay had to be helped off by physio Colin Taylor with what turned out to be a fractured eye socket and cheekbone plus a damaged jaw.

After the stoppage Tom Lovelock went between the sticks. Lovelock was soon action saving a point-blank header from Kenny Pogue following a Mulrooney-Skinner cross. Continued pressure by Hythe eventually resulted in the hosts netting three goals before the interval. Their first goal arrived in the 26th minute when a ball into the edge of the box from skipper Craig

Cloke found Pogue and his deflected header fell nicely to May on the left side of area and the striker beat Lovelock with an excellent curling shot into the far top corner.

The Cannons took the lead in the 35th minute with Pogue netting with a bullet header after Ryan Johnson had crossed from the right.

The third goal for Hythe came four minutes later as Pogue's back post header from Josh Burchell's centre from the left went across the face of the goal and with no one closing him down May had time to control the ball and shoot low past Lovelock from an angle.

Stortford made a double substitution at the break with Lee Sawyer replacing Zach Fagan and Evans Kouassi coming on for Jon Nouble.

seemed some hope eight minutes after the restart when Freddy Moncur was brought down in the area by Dave Cook and Moncur, taking the spot-kick himself, beat Mant with a penalty down the middle.

Within minutes, however, the Blues were down to nine men when Lee Sawyer, fouling May, picked a second yellow card quickly following the first.

There were vain thoughts that the pace of Femi Akinwande and Evans Kouassi might cause problems to the home defence and an equaliser might be forced.

However, Hythe's two-man advantage was always likely to hold sway and they missed a number of chances to extend their lead before they registered their fourth goal in the 80th minute.

Substitute Frankie Sawyer broke away on the left and his cross to the far post was easily converted by May to complete the marksman's hat-trick.

Stortford's day of misery was complete in the 85th minute when Harry Hickford recklessly fouled May when there was no danger on goal and Referee Jacob Miles again brandished the red card.

The hosts had late chances to add to their tally in the final minutes but the scoreline remained unchanged.

BISHOP'S STORTFORD: Joe Wright (Tom Lovelock 21), Marvel Ekpiteta, Johnny Herd, Freddy Moncur, Harry Hickford, Yado Mambo, Paul Rodgers, Zach Fagan (Lee Sawyer 46), Jon Nouble (Evans Kouassi 46), Femi Akinwande, Aaron Greene.
Unused substitutes: Ryan Auger and Josh Ekim

HYPHE TOWN: Joe Mant, Matt Newman, Josh Burchell (Ben Wilson 58), Ryan Johnson, Craig Cloke, Nick Reeves, Dave

Cook, Sam Adams, Kenny Pogue, Alfie May (Liam King 85),
Alex Mulrooney-Skinner (Frankie Sawyer 67).

Unused substitutes: Charlie Webster and Chris Saunders.

Referee: Mr J Miles

Attendance: 234