

## Banbury United 2 Blues 1

**This match against the league leaders followed a familiar pattern as Stortford lost a very close match by the odd goal whilst, as in the previous away contest at Tiverton, they were defeated after going in front.**

Additionally, the Blues succumbed for the second successive Saturday to a winning goal that was either extra special or plain lucky.

Kevin Watson's side, making their first ever visit to play the Puritans, included new signing Joe Maybanks on the bench and keeper Tyler McCarthy was making his first league start.

The hosts had the early edge on proceedings but Stortford were making several promising attacks in the opening stages.

Winger Tom Winters was prominent early on and in the 15<sup>th</sup> minute McCarthy tipped away a deep free-kick from the right by the Banbury player at the expense of a corner. Soon afterwards Winters went on a run on the left that finished with the ball on the roof of the net. McCarthy, as he did throughout the game, was cutting out crosses well.

In the 23<sup>rd</sup> minute, following a Blues attack, a cross from Dipo Akinyemi just evaded Darren Foxley. However, in the 29<sup>th</sup> minute, Stortford went ahead with an excellent goal. Ryan Richefond gained possession just inside the hosts' half and played the ball up to Jason Williams who started a run some 40 yards out and steamed into the right side of the box before accelerating between two defenders and driving an angled low shot wide of Banbury stopper Jack Harding inside the far upright.



The Oxfordshire club fought back and striker Conor McDonagh finished a move on the right with a shot across the face of the goal. Then, in the 38<sup>th</sup> minute, they equalised through an old adversary of the Blues. Stortford lost possession close to the halfway line on the left when a pass from Richefond was intercepted by Charlie Hawtin. The veteran Jefferson Louis was then set free by Hawtin to cut in and shoot past McCarthy after outpacing Ricky Spriggs. United had the better of the period up to the break. McCarthy was in action to hold a shot above his head after Sam Humphreys struck a shot from distance and Louis went close a couple of times.

There was an immediate substitution after the break with Marvel Ekpiteta replacing Spriggs in the Blues back-line.

Blues made a bright start to the second period with a cross from George Casey being met by Williams who saw his early shot go straight at Harding and then a centre by Darren Foxley from the left was gathered by Harding a split second before Williams could get his shot in on target.

Another move just before the hour mark saw Mark Hughes and Williams involved before the Puritans' central defender blocked Ryan Richefond's 15 yard shot on goal. Louis shot wide after Aaron Tumwa had lost possession near the halfway line and then the striker's first time rising effort in the 66<sup>th</sup> minute was a few feet over the bar. Dipo Akinyemi had a half-chance for Stortford a minute later but struck the ball over the top.

The winning goal arrived with just over twenty minutes left. Hawtin, on the right, crossed into Ravi Shamsi who had his back to goal just inside the angle of box. Aided by a fortunate contact that saw the ball rise in front of him the substitute performed a bicycle-kick that looped it over everyone including McCarthy and under the bar at the far side of the goal.

The Blues battled to try to get back on level terms and in the 73<sup>rd</sup> minute when a Stortford corner was cleared to Tumwa the left back had his effort held by Harding. Joe Maybanks came on for his debut with some thirteen minutes left and was soon in the action as he had a

free-kick held by the keeper and then had a shot deflect away for a corner. The Blues also forced a number of late corners that led to some scrambles in and around the six yard box whilst they could have had a penalty when Mark Hughes went down near the goal but in the end they came away with nothing.

Mark Hughes collected a yellow card a minute before the break and Joe Robinson was cautioned late in the match.

STORTFORD: Tyler McCarthy; George Casey; Aaron Tumwa; Mark Hughes; Ricky Spriggs (Marvel Ekpiteta 46); Joe Robinson; Ryan Richefond (Zak Guerfi 68); Jordan Westcott

(Joe Maybanks 77); Jason Williams; Dipo Akinyemi; Darren Foxley.

Unused substitutes: Calvin Ekpiteta and Christian Owusu.

BANBURY UNITED: Jack Harding; Charlie Hawtin; Matt Peake-Pijnen; George Nash; Ricky Johnson; Luke Carnell; Jack Westbrook; Sam Humphreys (Ravi Shamsi 62); Jefferson Louis; Conor McDonough (Darren Pond 75); Tom Winters (Tom Bradbury 90+5).

Unused substitutes: Duran Martin and Damien Robertson

Referee: Mr Bradley Hall

Attendance: 453