

## BISHOP'S STORTFORD 1 HITCHIN TOWN 2

The Blues succumbed to a 90<sup>th</sup> minute goal against the Canaries and for the second successive season were eliminated from the Charity Cup at the semi-final stage.



It was probably the right result as Stortford had been on the back foot most of the first half and gone behind early. Improved play after the break saw the Blues level the scores but poor defending allowed the visitors to net in the final minute. Even then it took an excellent save by Hitchin stopper Michael Johnson in the final action otherwise the tie would have gone to extra-time.

Manager Kevin Watson used the match to try out some of the squad players so that midfielder Jack Thomas was making his first team debut and Alex Rogers was making his first start of the season whilst Christian Owusu was in the starting eleven for the first time.

The substitutes bench was strong with Jason Williams, Dipo Akinyemi, Darren Foxley, Mark Hughes and Joe Robinson all available to be brought into the action.



Hitchin made the early running and went ahead in the sixth minute. Lucas Kirkpatrick took a corner on the right and when the ball was returned out to him he delivered it to the

far post and with an uninterrupted passage it sailed over the top of the stretching Tyler McCarthy and into far corner of the net).

The rest of the half saw the visitors have the edge but although both sides had shots and headers at goal it wasn't a memorable forty five minutes.

Hitchin had the better of the early stages of the second half with McCarthy making saves from Jonny McNamara and substitute Tremayne Charles. There was then a change in the flow of the tie as within a matter of minutes Foxley, Williams and Akinyemi entered the action and immediately Stortford looked much more confident and positive.

In the 71<sup>st</sup> minute Foxley had an effort beaten away by Johnson after good work by Akinyemi and then more pressure from the Blues eventually led to the equaliser two minutes later. Akinyemi crossed deep from the left to the far upright where a downward header by Williams found the back of the net

Minutes later George Casey headed away from under his own bar after Charles had crossed from the right but at the other end Dipo Akinyemi shot just wide of the target twice in a matter of minutes and then with five minutes remaining a Jordan Westcott header was held by Johnson following a Ryan Richefond free-kick.



However, in the 88<sup>th</sup> minute, a blocking save by McCarthy denied McNamara when been put through on goal by Kirkpatrick. Then as the tie entered four minutes of added time Town scored the winner. Unfortunately the Blues defence was all over the place as Josh Bickerstaff centred from the right and Dan Webb headed the ball on to Jonny McNamara

towards the far post and he slammed it into the net from ten yards.



Dramatically with the last kick of the match Tyrique Hyde-Skerritt was close to taking the match into extra-time when his deflected low drive forced Johnson into an excellent save diving to his right to stop another equaliser.

STORTFORD: Tyler McCarthy; George Casey; Aaron Tumwa; Ryan Richefond; Marvel Ekpiteta; Alex Rogers; Tyrique Hyde-Skerritt; Jack Thomas (Jason Williams 64); Christian Owusu (Dipo Akinyemi 70); Jordan Westcott; Calvin Ekpiteta (Darren Foxley 61).

Unused substitutes: Joe Robinson and Mark Hughes.

HITCHIN TOWN: Michael Johnson; Kavan Cotter; Josh Bickerstaff; Charlie Smith; Dan Webb; Lewis Rolfe; Lucas Kirkpatrick; Callum Donnelly (Kieran McCaffrey 62); Elliot Bailey; Jack Green (Tremayne Charles 46); Jonny McNamara (Jay Dowie 90+1)

Unused substitutes: Ben Walster and Toby Syme

Referee: Russell Jones

Attendance: 142

