

BISHOP'S STORTFORD 0, KETTERING TOWN 2

Stortford lost to one of the league's frontrunners but this was a match in which crucial moments could have turned the result in favour of the Blues. There was little between the two sides and it was a pity that Stortford couldn't make the most of a positive start that saw them go so close to taking an early lead.



Kevin Watson was able to include Tyrique Hyde again in the starting line-up while Sam Hatton was on the bench after returning from injury. The visiting Poppies included former Blues midfielder Michael Richens in their starting eleven.

Stortford looked fired up at the start and carried the game to the Poppies from the first whistle. Dipo Akinyemi, who was prominent throughout the ninety minutes, worked hard to drill a shot at goal in the 4th minute but keeper Paul White gathered safely and two minutes later Jordan Westcott won a 50-50 challenge to release Jason Williams whose shot was narrowly wide. Then, Ryan Richefond sent Akinyemi away on the left flank and the striker's cross flew across the face of the Kettering goal.

The visitors' first real attack in the 13th minute saw Ben Toseland's deep free-kick from the left met with a goalward header by skipper Brett Solkon but Tyler McCarthy held the effort. Sixty seconds later the Poppies goal had a very charmed life. Darren Foxley's corner from the left produced a header from Williams which smacked against the bar and it was like a pin-ball as other attempts from the six yard

box were blocked before Akinyemi had an effort headed off the line by Rhys Hoenes who was injured in the process.



The match continued to be action packed as Kettering's Lindon Meikle had a shot blocked after the Blues defence failed to clear a throw-in and then in the 20th minute when McCarthy headed out from the edge of his area the ball fell to striker Rene Howe 35 yards out who struck the bar.

Akinyemi had another shot blocked but the Northamptonshire side went ahead in the 24th minute. A swift break upfield cut through the Stortford defence as Meikle slipped the ball on to Aaron O'Connor who swept it into the bottom corner past McCarthy.

Although play was mostly end-to-end until the break the goal seemed to boost the visitors and on the half-hour Hoenes' angled shot forced a save from McCarthy and when the ball ran loose O'Connor back-heeled into the side-netting.



The Blues were unlucky five minutes after the restart as Williams netted after Tyrique Hyde had crossed into the six yard box from

the right but the Assistant Referee raised his flag indicating that the ball had gone over the bye-line before being crossed.

A minute later and the Blues found themselves two down. The speed of the Kettering forwards was a constant menace and when a passing movement on the Blues left was intercepted by Rhys Hoenes the Poppies player sped away to just inside the box before unleashing a fierce shot past McCarthy



McCarthy had his palms stung by a shot from Meikle five minutes later.

Kevin Watson brought on Sam Hatton and Christian Owusu to replace Ryan Richefond and Tyrique Hyde during the second half but there was still generally little between the two sides. With twenty minutes to go O'Connor was wide with a chance and McCarthy had to make a fine diving save from a deflected effort by Toseland in the 82nd minute whilst less than sixty seconds later at the other end an Akinyemi drive was saved by the Poppies stopper White at his near upright.

STRATFORD TOWN 3 BISHOP'S STORTFORD 1

The Blues slipped to their fourth successive league defeat when losing at the Moodchimp Stadium.

Stortford could have few complaints with this loss. They had started the match brightly and it has to be said that there was little between the two sides until the hosts were awarded a penalty shortly after the half hour but after that they played with little confidence until rallying in the closing stages.



Before the final whistle McCarthy saved a shot from Meikle and Freddy Moncur saw an attempt at goal blocked in the box but Stortford were unable to net a consolation goal.

STORTFORD: Tyler McCarthy; George Casey; Darren Foxley; Ryan Richefond (Sam Hatton 66); Marvel Ekpiteta; Joe Robinson; Tyrique Hyde (Christian Owusu 73); Jordan Westcott; Jason Williams; Freddy Moncur; Dipo Akinyemi.

Unused substitutes: Jack Thomas, Alex Rogers and Callum Taylor.

KETTERING TOWN: Paul White; Durrell Berry; Ben Toseland; Brett Solkhon; Gary Mulligan; Michael Richens; Lindon Meikle (James Brighton 90+1); Aaron O'Connor (Matty Stevens 73); Rene Howe; Ben Milnes; Rhys Hoenes (Liam Bateman 84).

Unused substitutes: Gary Stohrer and Munashe Sondire

Referee: Mr Paul Forrester

Attendance: 355

As in the last few games Stortford rarely posed a threat in front of goal and just as worrying was their lack of ball retention with some sloppy passing in midfield giving possession away. The one bright point was the performance of 16 year-old substitute Callum Taylor who came on with 27 minutes to go and netted his first goal for the senior side.

Kevin Watson's squad was without Jason Williams, who was starting another

suspension, and Sam Hatton who was injured.



The Blues were on the front-foot at the start and forced the first corner which, taken by George Casey, unfortunately came to nothing. In the 10th minute Town's Mike Taylor headed over from a Will Grocott free-kick. There were openings at both ends at this stage of the encounter and a good Stortford attack saw Christian Owusu play the ball to Casey who scuffed his shot at the edge of the area and home defender Liam Francis cleared the danger. Then, at the other end in the 21st minute Marvel Ekpiteta misjudged his back-pass to Tyler McCarthy not seeing Taylor lurking and the striker gained possession to cut the ball back to Ben Stephens in front of goal. Fortunately the Blues skipper made up for his error by producing a strong tackle to prevent Stephens getting his shot at goal away. Shortly afterwards Freddy Moncur struck two shots that were deflected away for corners. But then in the 25th minute the Blues lost Tyrique Hyde to a hamstring injury and the midfielder was replaced by Jack Thomas. Two minutes later, following a Darren Foxley corner, Ekpiteta's shot on the turn was deflected away by a defender for yet another corner.

The hosts' Dan Summerfield was yellow carded in the 31st minute for simulation when going down in the box, but Stratford were awarded a penalty just three minutes later. The spot-kick awarded by referee Howes was a dubious one when Ekpiteta seemed to win the ball when tackling Justin

Marsden from behind and it was doubly unfortunate in that the Stratford player was making tracks away from goal. Will Grocott duly dispatched the penalty giving McCarthy no chance.

The Warwickshire side could have doubled their lead two minutes from the interval as Taylor missed an easy chance in front of goal following a Grocott free-kick.

The early stages of the restart saw play mostly restricted to the midfield but Stratford looked stronger in midfield and Grocott saw a low effort held by McCarthy just after the hour mark.

The Blues boss brought on Taylor replacing Ryan Richefond and Stortford began to push players forward. A Foxley corner on the right flew across the face of the goal as Thomas just failed to get his head on the ball at the near post and then Dipo Akinwande was narrowly over with a shot from an angle in the 68th minute. With Stortford pushing up there were more gaps at the back for the home side to take advantage and it took an excellent save from McCarthy, tipping away left handed for a corner, a rising 20 yard shot from Grocott after substitute Eli Bako had supplied him with a pass. However, the resultant corner produced a second goal for Stratford. Grocott's flag-kick was headed on by Loyiso Recci to the six yard box and Eli Bako bundled the ball into the net.

Jack Thomas released Akinwande on the left two minutes later but the on loan striker's shot was eventually held at the near post by keeper Louis Connor.

The hosts extended their lead in the 76th minute. Grocott was again at the centre of the action sending a through ball down the middle for Ben Stephens to collect and beat McCarthy with a shot into the bottom corner. Stephens was nearly on the score-sheet again nine minutes later as McCarthy saved his shot at the expense of a corner but then in the 87th minute Stortford gained a consolation goal. There was a good inter-passing move down the middle between Christian Owusu and Callum Taylor and the

latter finished the attack with a low left-footed drive into the bottom right-hand corner of the net.

Jordon Westcott struck a shot over the bar in the final minute of normal time.

The only caution of the game for the Blues was one shown to Christian Owusu near the end of the first half.

STORTFORD: Tyler McCarthy; George Casey; Darren Foxley; Ryan Richefond (Callum Taylor 63); Marvel Ekpiteta; Joe Robinson; Freddy Moncur; Jordan Westcott; Christian Owusu; Tyrique Hyde (Jack Thomas 25); Dipo Akinyemi.

Unused substitutes: Alex Rogers and Marcus Crowther.

STRATFORD TOWN: Louis Connor; Dan Summerfield; Lee Thomas; Andy Gallinagh; Loyiso Recci; Liam Francis; Justin Marsden (Charlie Evans 60); James Fry (James Hancocks 77); Mike Taylor (Eli Bako 46); Will Grocott; Ben Stephens.

Unused substitutes: Christian-Florin Tudorache and Edwin Ahenkorah

Referee: Mr Mark Howes

Attendance: 184