

SLOUGH TOWN 2, BISHOP'S STORTFORD 4

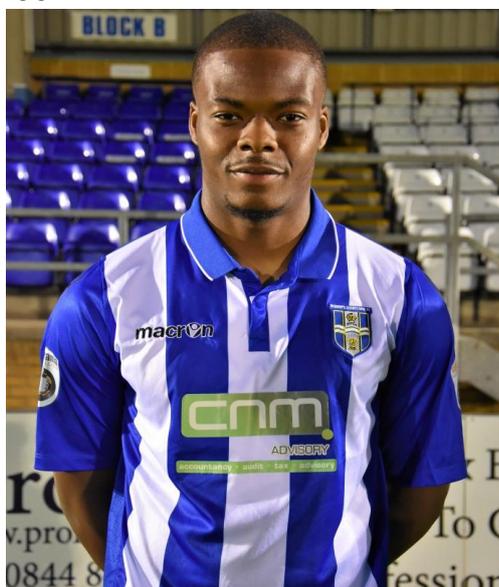
Arguably their best result of the season saw Blues return from Slough's 3G pitch with all three points against the play-off chasing Rebels

The Blues celebrated reaching the midpoint of their longest ever league programme with an excellent if unexpected victory on the Arbour Park 3G pitch.

It was a totally deserved win over 6th in the table Slough Town who had just come off the back of a fine FA Cup run that had only just finished five days earlier when they had been defeated by Skybet Division 2 Rochdale. Stortford inflicted only the third loss in the league suffered by the hosts in the season and their first since September.

It was a hard working and disciplined performance by Kevin Watson's men. They had to soak up a fair amount of pressure by the home side and skipper Marvel Ekpiteta and Joe Robinson particularly shone in the heart of the defence whilst the Blues quick raids forward always looked threatening and they could have found the net on more occasions.

Stortford were without George Casey who was serving a one match suspension, but at left back they had newcomer, Tom Clifford, on a work experience loan from Southend United. He was to have a memorable debut scoring Stortford's third goal of the afternoon.



Slough made a bright start but it was the Blues who took the lead in the sixth minute. Following a throw-in on the right Jordan Westcott got the ball returned to him by Darren Foxley and crossed into the middle where Dipo Akinyemi's header took a strong deflection off the chest of central defender NATHAN SMART to wrong-foot keeper Jack Turner and rebound into the net for an own goal.

Smart was to have a wretched day being sent off in the second half.

The hosts retaliated with a number of attacks with Tyler McCarthy diving to hold on to an acute angled low drive from Warren Harris in the 11th minute whilst striker Chris Flood mishit the ball at the far post after a corner from James Dobson soon afterwards. Then, a 35 yarder by George Wells was turned round an upright by McCarthy diving low to his left.

At the other end in the 24th minute a free-kick on the left from Tom Clifford caused some confusion in the box and it took a last-ditch tackle by Smart to deny Marvel Ekpiteta as he was about to shoot at goal from close range.

The majority of the possession was with the Rebels and Smart had a far post shot blocked away on the line by McCarthy in the 29th minute following another Dobson corner. Both Flood and Harris went close to scoring just after the half hour. In the 37th minute Stortford broke quickly with Akinyemi and Williams linking to provide a chance for Foxley but his close range effort rebounded away from Turner's legs and the ball came out to Jack Thomas whose drive from the edge of the area was gathered by the Town keeper.

Slough equalised six minutes before the break when Manny Williams sent Harris away on the right flank and JAMES DOBSON finished from 15 yards with a neat left footed shot that beat McCarthy's dive at the near post.

In time added on at the end of the half Jordan Westcott did well to block an effort from Slough's Simon Dunn.

The Blues couldn't have wished for a better start to the second half as they went back in front two minutes after the restart. A Jack Thomas pass found JASON WILLIAMS towards the left touchline and after exchanging passes with Darren Foxley the Stortford leading marksman cut inside before unleashing a great shot from 25 yards that went over the despairing Turner and under the bar.



Clifford got his body in the way to prevent Warren Harris netting a leveller at the back post and a Chris Flood shot was deflected away for a corner in the 55th minute. However the Blues extended their lead in the 66th minute. With the hosts committed to throwing players forward they were caught out when Darren Foxley dispatched the ball up the inside right channel for Jason Williams to chase alongside Nathan Smart. Williams always looked to be outpacing Smart and when the Blues number nine fell to the ground referee Russell red carded Smart for being the last man and awarded a free-kick a yard or so outside the box which CLIFFORD delivered past the defensive wall and a virtually motionless keeper Turner and inside the near upright.

Guy Hollis missed a great chance to reduce the arrears when missing a far post header and a number of raids by Town ended with

the ball going across the face of McCarthy's goal but nobody getting a touch, but when Dean Ager raced clear in the 70th minute the home goal had a lucky escape. The Colchester United loanee slipped the ball to Darren Foxley whose shot was well saved by Turner and the keeper made another excellent stop to keep out Akinyemi's follow-up attempt. Turner then saved from Ager four minutes later after another breakaway.

Stortford were defending well but the Rebels scored their second goal of the afternoon in the 78th minute when substitute BRAD WADKINS' flicked header from a James Dobson corner flew into the net high up inside the far post

Shortly afterwards, having used all their replacements, Slough were reduced to nine men on the pitch when another substitute Matt Lench had to be helped off with an ankle injury.

McCarthy held on to another header from Wadkins from a Dobson corner five minutes from the end of normal time and when play raced up the other end Akinyemi fired over the bar from a good position.

Then in the second minute of added time the Blues did notch their fourth goal. It was another swift break upfield that saw Ager prominent and after Foxley had a shot saved and Akinyemi have an attempt blocked near the goal-line it was WILLIAMS who eventually drilled the ball low past Turner.

In the last action of the match Tyler McCarthy caught a header from Chris Flood high up at the far post.

STORTFORD: Tyler McCarthy; Jordan Westcott; Tom Clifford; Josh Simpson; Marvel Ekpiteta; Joe Robinson; Dean Ager; Jack Thomas; Jason Williams; Darren Foxley; Dipo Akinyemi.

Unused substitutes: Callum Taylor, Alfie Mason, Max Brassington and Joe Ryan.

SLOUGH TOWN: Jack Turner; Sean Fraser (Josh Jackman 23); George Wells; Guy Hollis; Nathan Smart; Lee Togwell; James Dobson; Simon Dunn (Matt Lench 57); Manny Williams (Brad Wadkins 72); Chris Flood; Warren Harris.

Unused substitutes: Alan Inns and Nathan Webb.
Referee: Matthew Russell Attendance: 551