

HITCHIN TOWN 3 BISHOP'S STORTFORD 0

(HERTS SENIOR CUP 2ND ROUND)

Blues suffered their third cup exit of the season against Hitchin as they were made to pay for a poor first half, on Monday.

While Blues' boss Kevin Watson will be disappointed with the Herts Senior Cup defeat, of greater concern will be another red card for Jason Williams, and his side's top scorer now faces another lengthy ban.

Hitchin, the holders of the competition, had already knocked the Blues out of the Charity Cup and the BigFreeBet Cup.

Watson rested several players for this tie so that it was again a very young squad that took to the field. There were debuts for 16 year-old defender Max Brassington, another of the FA Youth Cup side, and Joe Ryan, a former Academy midfielder who has played in the club's development squad this campaign. The starting eleven had seven players under the age of 20, three of whom were only 16. Joe Robinson captained the team on his return after a one match suspension.

The hosts in the meantime fielded almost their strongest squad. It was always going to be a tall order for the Blues and credit should be given for the fact that their heads never dropped and they didn't concede a goal in the second period.

The tie finished with both sides having only ten men on the pitch as Town had defender Ben Walster sent off twenty minutes from time quickly followed by Blues' Jason Williams for two yellow cards.

Stortford were on the back-foot for most of the evening as the hosts gained a tight control of the midfield for long periods. A high ball into the area from Charlie Smith in the 15th minute forced Tyler McCarthy to come off his line to punch it away above the head of Elliot Bailey and then in the 27th minute a shot on the turn from Dan Webb was cleared near the line by Max Brassington after McCarthy had tried to catch a cross from Ben Walster.

The first goal arrived in the 29th minute when Charlie Smith's corner from the right was met by a glancing header into the net by TREMAYNE CHARLES.

The Blues attacked down the right flank straightaway and when Alfie Mason headed on a flighted pass from George Casey, Jason Williams was just beaten to the ball by keeper Michael Johnson.

The lead was doubled in the 34th minute as Connor Vincent crossed short from the right in towards the six yard box where TREMAYNE CHARLES swept the ball into the far corner of the net.

Corners from the right were causing big problems to the Stortford defence and in the 39th minute Canaries skipper Dan Webb had a close range header held by McCarthy following a Smith flag-kick.

The third Hitchin goal came three minutes before the break when McCarthy in intercepting a ball on the edge of the box lost control of it with his feet and the loose ball was hammered home first time from 20 yards by CONNOR VINCENT.

Stortford had the chance to reduce the arrears two minutes after the restart when Alex Rogers delivered a fine pass down the middle from his own half for Jason Williams to collect and advance on goal but the Blues leading scorer shot wide of the left-hand upright.

Just past the midpoint of the half Hitchin's Ben Walster earned himself a straight red card from referee Lee Grimsey after a strong challenge and stamp on Dean Ager on the right touch-line. The Blues' Jason Williams was yellow carded in the melee that ensued and was shown a second yellow to be dismissed a minute or so later when he made physical contact with Dan Webb in the Hitchin box. It was Williams' second sending-off at Hitchin this season.

In the passage of play from then until the final whistle McCarthy made a couple of saves and, at the other end, substitute Dipo Akinyemi finished a fine solo run with a shot narrowly wide from 20 yards.

Five minutes from the end of normal time Town substitute Jimmy Hatley cut in from the left and his strong drive towards the near post forced a smart low save from McCarthy.

STORTFORD: Tyler McCarthy; George Casey; Alex Rogers; Jack Thomas; Max Brassington; Joe Robinson; Alfie Mason (Dipo Akinyemi 62); Joe Ryan (Jordan Westcott 70); Jason Williams; Dean Ager; Callum Taylor.

Unused substitutes: Darren Foxley and Marvel Ekpiteta

HITCHIN TOWN TOWN: Michael Johnson; Toby Syme; Ben Walster; Lewis Rolfe; Dan Webb; Josh Bickerstaff; Tremayne Charles (Jimmy Hartley 83); Lucas Kirkpatrick; Connor Vincent (Kieran Barnes 83); Elliot Bailey (Patrick Tshikala 83); Charlie Smith.

Unused substitutes: None

Referee: Mr Lee Grimsey

Attendance: 143