

BISHOP'S STORTFORD 1 ST NEOTS TOWN 2

Kevin Watson's side were unlucky not to take a point from this closely fought match after losing to a goal just before the midpoint of the second half. The first half had been evenly matched but Stortford were made to pay for a slow start to the second period. Once the Blues had fallen behind the visitors failed to cause any more problems and they pressured the Saints defence but to no avail. The visitors recorded their eighth match unbeaten with this victory.

Joe Robinson missed the match through suspension after clocking up five cautions this campaign and Dean Ager was included in the starting eleven for the first time. Jason Williams had recovered from the slight hamstring problem that he had suffered a few days earlier against Dunstable Town and was in his usual number nine shirt.

Although Stortford won a corner in the 4th minute that Josh Simpson swung into the six yard box and keeper Mike Emery held under the bar, the visitors had the edge early on and Kyran Wiltshire's 25 yard drive in the 7th minute was held by the diving Tyler McCarthy. Just a minute later, though, Stortford were behind when a Dion Sembie-Ferris cross was only cleared as far as DAVID BRIDGES whose 15 yard effort found the back of the net through the legs of a number of players.

Blues skipper Marvel Ekpiteta headed over the bar from close range following another Simpson corner as the hosts tried to get back on level terms. The dangerous Dipo Akinyemi and Jason Williams were also close to scoring, Akinyemi with an effort from the left that keeper Mike Emery saved for another corner and Williams narrowly past the near upright after receiving a pass from Jordan Westcott. Eventually Stortford equalised a minute after the half-hour when following a build-up in the inside left channel Akinyemi slipped the ball to JORDAN WESTCOTT in space just inside the box and the midfielder's low shot beat Mike Emery's dive.

Nabil Shariff was just over from close range for the Saints while, at the other end, the prominent

Dipo Akinyemi forced Emery into another diving save at the near upright.

After the break the Saints held the upper hand with former Blues favourite Johnny Herd sending an angled drive across the face of the goal in the first couple of minutes. The visitors forced a number of corners and from one of those taken by Jack Bradshaw in the 58th minute striker Lewis Irwin headed on to the roof of the net. Emery was in action again to deny Akinyemi again with a smart save after the striker had cut in from the left but the visitors grabbed the winner shortly afterwards in the 65th minute when Dion Sembie-Ferris flicked the ball on to NABIL SHARIFF who broke from the left wing through a thin defensive line and shot past the advancing McCarthy/

After the goal the visitors were happy to defend in numbers and rarely produced any further attacks in the match. George Casey had a long distance shot pushed round the far post in the 72nd minute by Emery and then seven minutes later Williams was fouled on the edge of the area but unfortunately the Blues leading marksman hit the defensive wall with his strike from the resultant free-kick. Two minutes from the end of normal time a cross from the left by Darren Foxley saw substitute Jack Thomas have an attempt at goal well blocked by a defender and fellow substitute Callum Taylor hit the rebound over the bar.

The Blues other substitute Alfie Mason then had a shot in the first minute of added time held by Emery at his near post and when Stortford won a corner in the third minute of additional time even Tyler McCarthy advanced into the box. The Blues pressed strongly to the end and the last action of the contest saw stopper Emery do well to stretch and catch a Foxley cross into the area from the left.

STORTFORD: Tyler McCarthy; George Casey; Darren Foxley; Josh Simpson (Jack Thomas 73); Marvel Ekpiteta; Alex Rogers; Dean Ager (Callum Taylor 85); Jordan Westcott; Jason Williams; Freddy Moncur (Alfie Mason 85); Dipo Akinyemi.

ST NEOTS TOWN: Mike Emery; Jack Bradshaw; Johnny Herd; Luke Knight; Liam McDevitt; Taylor Parr; Kyran Wiltshire (Ryan Horne 28); Dave Bridges (Harry O'Malley 62); Lewis Irwin; Nabil Shariff; Dion Sembie-Ferris (Tom Wood 80). Unused substitutes: Ronayne Marsh-Marsh and Jonny Butler.

Referee: Jon Burridge

Attendance: 307