

HEREFORD 2 BISHOP'S STORTFORD 0

Promotion chasing Hereford scoring two second half goals at Edgar Street took the points against a hard working Blues side that had held their own in the first 45 minutes and that had produced several openings and chances to worry the Bulls in the first period.



The key moment of the match came in the 38th minute when Callum Taylor was shown a red card for a challenge on the hosts' central defender Ryan Green that left Stortford down to ten men, an obstacle that was always going to be difficult to overcome.



A number of Kevin Watson's squad were unavailable for the long evening trip including Jordan Westcott. Chad Cruse from the Academy side made his first team debut coming in at left back allowing Darren Foxley to move forward whilst Academy skipper Frankie Oatham also played his first senior game by coming on as a substitute late in contest. Fellow Academy central defender and new signing Jamie Riley was an unused substitute. Neither side made much impression on their opposing defences early on. Joe Robinson cleared up quickly in the 2nd minute as an underpowered headed back pass looked to be falling short of Tyler McCarthy whilst the Bulls' stopper Martin Horsell came out to catch

cleanly a deep free-kick from George Casey four minutes later. Foxley struck an angle effort over the target and then Jamie Cureton almost got on the end of a Mark Hughes hooked pass forward but Horsell came out to block. Then in the 21st minute Cureton nearly benefitted from a miscued clearance by home defender James Bowen. At this stage the Bulls defence looked decidedly uncomfortable and Stortford looked bright on the ball. Although most of the play was in midfield the Blues had a chance to open the scoring in the 28th minute as a long ball downfield by Casey set Dipo Akinyemi clear in the inside right channel but his driven shot from just inside the box was a couple of feet wide of Horsell's left upright.



On the half hour Hereford's Lance Smith headed over the far from a corner and then McCarthy held on to a free-kick from Jamie Bird. Callum Taylor's red card followed a minute later after the incident with Green over by the touch-line and dugouts. In the remaining minutes before the break Keyon Reffell drove straight at McCarthy and then in the five minutes of added time Bird had an effort deflected for a corner.

Hereford had caused few problems for the Blues with leading goalscorer John Mills very quiet however the hosts made a double substitution at half time and this seemed to make a big difference and taking advantage of their extra man quickly scored twice before the hour mark.

They opened their account three minutes after the restart. The Blues cleared the immediate danger from a corner but Bowen picked out Jamie Bird on the left wing and aided by a couple of lucky rebounds off of Jack Thomas

raced into the box before thundering a powerful rising shot over and past McCarthy into the roof of the net from an angle.

Soon afterwards Elliot Richards' curling attempt was close but in the 52nd minute Stortford were very near to equalising. Cureton played the ball across the edge of the box to Akinyemi running in from the right. The Bulls keeper Horsell parried the on loan striker's goalbound drive and then had the luck when he prevented an own goal as he just managed to catch a rebound as the ball came back off of substitute defender Dara O'Shea.



The hosts stepped up a gear and another substitute Rob Purdie had a shot kept out by McCarthy's legs and then George Casey deflected an effort from Lance Smith over the top. However, Hereford doubled their lead in the 58th minute with a scrambled goal. Lance Smith was able to get on the end of a lofted ball forward and then opted to lay it off to Bowen on the left who crossed back into the penalty area where Smith managed somehow to scramble the ball home past some frantic efforts to clear including those of Marvel Ekpiteta near the goal-line.

Reffell nearly added another goal a minute or so later as his near post header from Purdie's corner hit the outside of the upright to go behind for a goal kick.

In the 69th minute Tyler McCarthy was at full stretch to turn a shot from striker John Mills round the post for a corner and for most of the

remaining minutes of the match the Blues were on the back foot and forced to defend resolutely in numbers. Smith broke clear in the 82nd minute but shot straight at McCarthy and then in the last minute of normal time a Reffell shot was blocked and deflected for a corner by Joe Robinson.

Kevin Watson brought off Dipo Akinyemi and Jamie Cureton in the closing minutes to be replaced by youngsters Marcus Crowther and Frankie Oatham.



STORTFORD: Tyler McCarthy; George Casey; Chad Cruse; Mark Hughes; Marvel Ekpiteta; Joe Robinson; Callum Taylor; Jack Thomas; Dipo Akinyemi (Marcus Crowther 77); Jamie Cureton (Frankie Oatham 82); Darren Foxley.

Unused substitute: Jamie Riley.

HEREFORD: Martin Horsell; Jimmy Oates; James Bowen (Cameron Pring 77); Elliot Richards; Ryan Green; Jordan Liburd (Dara O'Shea 46); Garyn Preen (Rob Purdie 46); Jamie Bird; John Mills; Keyon Reffell; Lance Smith.

Unused subss: Mike Symonds and Will Puddy.

Referee: Wayne Barratt Attendance: 1,722

