

## Match Report - Friday 5<sup>th</sup> March

### Girls Under 16 Friendly

#### Berkshire 1 Woking 0

This fixture was organised at very short notice and with only 5 of the regular U16 side available we were indebted to Charlotte Daly, Laura Palmer, Joy Thornton Brown and Katie Tuttle for stepping into the breach and agreeing to turn out in Slough on a rather chilly Friday evening. The more astute mathematicians will notice that that adds up to 9 players, with Berkshire offering us 3 of their squad to ensure we had a full side (plus a substitute). Ex Woking player Nicky Campling was in the Berkshire side and I think they really fancied their chances against us.

Let's get the important bits out of the way ..... Woking won the fashion stakes hands down with several of the Berkshire fashionistas giving their seal of approval to our kit ..... nevertheless, Berkshire then asked us if we could play in white, kindly providing us with their set of away shirts. Perhaps they were concerned that the discussions on hockey fashion amongst their own girls would detract them during the match because purple and light blue is just so "in"!

An accident on the M25 ensured that both sides had players who arrived slightly later than planned (almost half of the Woking girls in my car!) but we were able to get the match underway fairly swiftly with Woking taking the early initiative. In fact the first five minutes were a joy to watch as Woking demonstrated possession hockey, stroking the ball around and not letting Berkshire get a sniff of the ball. One of the Berkshire subs commented "Hey you guys are really good" and I think they were a little stunned that this was not going to be the easy warm-up match they had expected.

Katy Davidson continued her excellent season at sweeper, with Berkshire just unable to pass her, whilst Katie Tuttle settled neatly into the right back berth with an assured performance that ensured that Berkshire were kept very quiet down that flank throughout. Pheobe Bryant must have liked the Slough surface because I think she covered every single inch of it with a typical hard tackling, terrier like performance that never let Berkshire settle on the ball.

The best chance of the first half probably fell to Charlotte Daly who ended one of several long runs at speed down the right wing by cutting into the D and unleashing a shot from a very tight angle into the side netting. Given that our team had been pulled together at such short notice, the passing and movement were exceptional, with Lucy Collier and Laura Palmer impressing in midfield and Woking were unlucky to end the half level.

Berkshire began the second half much stronger and Joy Thornton Brown had to make a couple of good saves to keep Woking in the game but overall we continued to give Berkshire problems with Emma Sharp, showing great composure on a number of mazy dribbles out of defence, and Kirsty Lazer having the Berkshire coaches salivating on the sidelines (I hope they mopped it all up). In particular Kirsty put in a typically skilful performance throughout, keeping ball and stick together as she controlled the match from the middle.

Then heartbreak for Woking as Berkshire broke into the D. The umpire blew his whistle for an infringement and although Berkshire continued the move to put the ball in the net he called for a 16. Then as Woking prepared to take it, he reversed the decision and awarded the goal, belatedly deciding (after discussion with Joy - who was very honest) that the ball had struck a Woking foot rather than a Berkshire one. I think we can consider ourselves very unlucky that he changed his decision to award the goal (scored after the whistle) rather than a short - life can

be cruel. To the credit of the Woking girls they fought back even stronger, refusing to let their heads drop and might easily have snatched an equaliser at the death as the team really began to gel together and we certainly finished the stronger team.

Losing by a single goal to a county side (boasting a mixture of stars from Teddington and Reading) is no disgrace and it is a credit to the whole side that we actually felt disappointed with the final score ..... another day and a little more notice so that we could have had a few more players available and I'm sure we would have all been coming home from Slough like Cheshire Cats!