

Match Report – Sunday 10th April
Boys Under 18 National Plate Semi- Final
Stourport 4 Woking 5

If avid reader, you look back to the first game in this competition, versus Reading, you will note that the writer took the speech by Martin Luther King, to emphasise the fantastic second half performance by Woking, to overturn a two nil halftime deficit, to win in the last minute 3-2. “I have a dream” Read on dear reader, read on.

Having made the epic four hour journey by coach, players and supporters alike, stretched their legs at the picturesque Bowdon Hockey Club. As luck would have it we arrived in time to see the first semi-final between Deeside Ramblers and the City of Peterborough. From 0-2 down Peterborough forced through to a penalty shoot-out and it was clear, that both teams were rich with talented players. Deeside eventually edged out their opponents in a tight sudden death victory.

Woking started their game against Stourport with a series of devastating short corners. Whether they used the ‘Denzil Dolley’ routine, or the ‘Tim Ming’ called by Coach Sam Ellis and Physio Andy Pike, the result was the same. Within eight minutes Woking were 3-0 up courtesy of a double strike from Chris Way and another by Ronak Patel. At this stage Stourport were reeling and with the Woking forwards buzzing around the ‘D’ it seemed just a matter of time before Woking extended their lead. As usual our opposition had not read the script and very much against the run of play reduced the lead 3-1. Further attacks from Woking went unrewarded, when on a rare foray into the Woking area, keeper Patrick Haddad was adjudged to have taken out the player before the ball and conceded a penalty. So marginal on timing, the Umpire decided that Patrick had made a genuine attempt to play the ball, despite the penalty, crucially Patrick remained on the pitch. Stourport converted the penalty and were now showing Woking just why they had progressed so far in this competition. The Stourport keeper then made a brilliant save from yet another Woking short corner. From the resulting break and with just a minute to go before halftime the scores were level, 3-3. Woking were left shell shocked by this recovery and worryingly the balance of the game had swung towards Stourport. The Coaching team were united in thought, “OK its 0-0 with a new 25 minute match ahead. Head Coach Sam Ellis explained the “technicalities” and the way forward, assistant coach and “motivator” said “ I am not going to tell you, you are better than them you need to go out there and prove that to me”.

Woking again started the second half in high drive and as the game wore on Stourport began to defend more robustly and series of green cards were produced against the Midland Team. Eventually, they were down to ten men with the first yellow of the game. Despite this, it took Woking sometime to score their fourth goal with Chris Way completing his hat trick. Woking immediately went to sleep and a rapid Stourport attack

broke through the Woking defence for a quite spectacular goal to be scored from the wide right hand side. Without doubt the goal of the game.

So 4-4 and nerves on edge, the game looked to be going to a penalty shoot-out when Stourport received their second yellow card of the match. The resultant power play allowed Chris Way to net his fourth goal of the match for a 5-4 win.

We had made it to the final!!!!

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Boys Under 18 National Plate Final

Deeside Ramblers 1 Woking 1 (Woking won 6-5 on penalties)

"The U18 Plate Final is about to begin... Let us therefore brace ourselves to our duties, and so bear ourselves that if Woking Hockey Club should last a thousand years, men will still say: This was their finest hour".

What you have to appreciate, that for both teams having already played a long match, in temperatures completely unheard of in April, they were going to have to raise their games in exhausting conditions. It was noticeable that when the cannons were switched on to soak the pitches prior to the start of the game, neither side interrupted their practice routines, preferring to cool down under the fountains of spray.

The game started well for Woking with a long through ball from Fergus Imrie to Tim Downes, who just failed to control with his final touch. An error by the Deeside Keeper, spilled a chance to Chris Way who narrowly shot wide. From a second short corner Ollie Sugg forced a great save from the Deeside Keeper. As usual this season Woking have been at their most vulnerable when pressing and a breakaway move saw Deeside open the scoring 0-1. This seemed to knock Woking out of their stride and for much of the remaining first half they were pressed back, restricting their attacks to fast breakouts, from a Deeside stranglehold.

At the break Sam pointed out 1-0 down was nothing we were still in the match, then Pikey had his say "remember reading when I told you if you don't think we can win, I can save you 35 minutes? Then we were 2-0 down, we can win again and if you don't believe me you can take a seat on the bench or better still, I believe the coach is empty"

The final period started with Deeside trying to finish off their opponents and within a minute a certain goal was saved by a quite brilliant goal line clearance from Fergus Imrie. A second goal for Deeside at this stage would certainly have won them the game, however, it appeared that a change in their tactics was their undoing.

Woking pushed up further into the final third, with Fergus controlling more of the attacking midfield. Deeside seemed content to leave two forwards in remote positions, to catch Woking on the break and kept nine defenders behind the ball. Woking started to tick. Again the short corner routine purred into life, like a fine Rolls Royce engine. The first two short corners produced a series of opportunities without the final result, however the third injected by Mike Stone and following the 'Denzil Dolley' resulted in a series of attempts and blocks by Deeside, before Chris Way scooped the ball into the net, just above the backboard. This proved critical. The goal was given, the teams returned to the centre of the pitch for a restart, only for the Umpire (who had awarded the goal) to approach the non-engaged official. After a short discussion, the goal was disallowed. Now with just eight minutes to go and seemingly a perfectly good goal disallowed, I have seen many a team argue their way into a series of cards – not this team. With a maturity way beyond their years, they bit the bullet and carried on as before. Fourth short corner – no result. Fifth short corner – no result. However with the clock running down and three minutes left, from the sixth short corner, Giles Rozier-Pamplin made no mistake. 1-1. Final whistle.

And so to penalties.....at this point I put my pen down. Whatever the result the team had represented the Club in the finest possible way.

Five Penalties and then sudden death.

Giles took the first 1-0 – Deeside 1-1

Tom Leggett 2-1 – Deeside 2-2

Chris Way 3-2 – Deeside 3-3

Mike Stone 4-3 – Deeside 4-4

Fergus Imrie 5-4 – Deeside 5-5

With sudden death the order changed and Deeside take the sixth penalty – Patrick Haddad who had been the keeper most likely to save and close on two previous occasions, dives full length to his left and SAVES!!!!!!

A calm collected Giles Rozier-Pamplin boldly walked up and fired home the winner 6-5!!!!

Cue the celebrations.....National Plate Champions – WOKING.

“I HAVE A DREAM” and dreams come true!

Roll of Honour – Patrick Haddad – Chris Way – Tim Downes – Will Farrer – Sam Parker – Ronak Patel – Giles Rozier-Pamplin – Ollie Sugg – Fergus Imrie – Tom Leggett – Mike Stone – John Humphries.

The younger half of this team were runners up in the Under sixteen category last year and the older half formed part of the team that won last years, Hampshire County Cup. This was no fluke, ten years of hard work by Coaches and Managers led by Chris Burton-Brown, mean the future is a bright one for our Club.

With thanks to all those previously mentioned especially Sam Ellis for coaching this and previous matches, Andy Pike for motivation and a calming influence and to Manager Rik Farrer whose organisation made it possible