

U12 Girls Whirlwinds-League 11th December 2011

Woking 2 Epsom 0

(Macy 1, Hannah M 1)

With Epsom also unbeaten in the league and with a couple of strong players unavailable this was never going to be a walk in the park for the Woking team and it turned out to be an epic battle. With one of our ladies' team advisors making an unscheduled stop watching on and 2 of our players who've represented the club at the top level umpiring, it was a great time for the girls to show what they were made of and they are made of solid, determined stuff.

Epsom took a few minutes to get themselves going but the Woking girls started alert to the opportunities and quickly got the ball down into the Epsom half winning a penalty corner after only 2 minutes of play. Macy put the ball into play with a firm strike to Hannah at the top of the D-at last, a chance for Macy to put a Macy special into practice and it worked like a dream. The Epsom players certainly weren't expecting such a well worked corner so soon into the match but Hannah quickly got the ball back to the post where Macy was able to decisively bury the ball into the back of the net. A brilliant example of catching the opposition on the back foot as, if anyone had expected an easy ride from having gone ahead so soon Epsom were going to make sure they put a stop to that. Epsom restarted with renewed enthusiasm, they were good players and the shock of going a goal down had obviously woken them up. Having said that, Woking had another penalty corner after 5mins in which they went close to scoring again but the Epsom defence were off the line quickly and the score line was unchanged. There followed another 10mins of play where the Woking girls had to soak up the pressure and Epsom won 2 penalty corners of their own but failed to convert either into goals.

The 2nd 20mins was good end to end stuff but with both teams crowding the ball a little, getting clear passes in was proving difficult. The Woking girls were having trouble moving the ball away from the left hand side of the pitch and down the right channel but the defence and mid-field stood strong and neither team troubled the goalies for the whole of the period. Plenty of individual skills were on show but the final passes were eluding both sides, although it has to be said that with both sides being determined to get the ball and with very few cases of standing back to wait for the ball to come to them, everyone was making it difficult for their opposition.

So, to the final 3rd. Things were still very tense and the game still looked like it could go either way. The Woking girls had been working hard and, given the end to end nature of the game, had put in a lot of running. The question was, which side wanted it more as it was going to mean digging deep into the reserves and testing the fitness. The game continued on the same lines as before although, possibly with some tiredness setting in, spaces started to appear and Woking seemed to have found the existence of the right side of the pitch. Epsom were determined not to give up and piled the pressure on working the defence making it difficult to move the ball over the half way line. Jess in goal was called on to make some key saves and clearances. For half the period, Epsom seemed to be having the better of the game when the ball was struck sweetly from somewhere around the 25yd line. India set off on the chase for the ball and having kept in what looked like a no-hoper earlier in the game the money had to be on her to get to the ball before it went out. She got to the ball just before the keeper who'd come off her line. The keeper did well and prevented the shot from being taken but the break had put Epsom on the back foot and got the ball into their half. The ball went off the side but was quickly put back into play and was worked over to Hannah who'd positioned herself on the edge of the D. Making the most of the small amount of time she'd been given by the defence, she took her chance to wind up a humdinger of a shot which whizzed it's way past everyone and into the back of the net. With only a few minutes left, the Woking support started to feel that it would be difficult for

Epsom to come back from being 2 goals down but neither side gave up and both defensive lines were called on to give their all right up until the final whistle.

Not many name checks in this because with all the girls working hard and with Shaun keeping everyone on their toes by rolling the subs to keep everyone fresh and enable them to give everything they had, it was hard to keep tabs on who was where but; great stick skills and running from our captain Laila who danced around a number of players and put good pressure on the D; Alice, India and Issy A put the pressure on the wings showing determination to get to and keep the ball and always causing trouble for the Epsom defence; Phoebe and Issy C largely playing the Inner roles were making some great progress up the pitch showing both solid tackling and excellent hitting to get some balls through some crowded areas into space; Macy, Paige, Hannah and Suzie playing mostly in as Halves were also tackling solidly with some great interceptions and lots of running to be in action at both ends of the pitch, they had a busy day!; Helena and Jasmine (with other midfielders also taking their turns on occasion) in defence doing solid work at the back to stop the shots being taken and some good channelling being demonstrated to give the rest of the team a chance to get back and defend-or just give the attack no-where to go but off the pitch; Jess in goal, some excellent saves required today in-between long periods of inaction, difficult to keep up the concentration but absolutely essential especially to get the clearances in too. All in all, everyone had to give 100% to get the win today so hopefully they all enjoyed the challenge as they proved they were all up to it.

The girls were heartily and deservedly applauded off the pitch by their appreciative supporters.

Big thanks to Ali and Sarah for umpiring and to the Macdonalds for oranges but also to the girls for allowing me to keep moving up & down the pitch to keep up with the play on a day when it was a bit chilly to be standing still!