

Match Report – Sunday 13th March
Girls U10s Surrey Minis – RUNNERS UP

The Girls U10 had no less of an exciting time on the home pitch at Woking, albeit with fewer goals. For me, the overall highlight of the team's performance is that we played 7 matches, over 90 mins in total, without conceding a single goal - a remarkable achievement against the best that Surrey has to offer. Substantial defensive contributions from Hayley, Isabella, Issy, Kelsey and Laura all deserve special note, with Alice completely dominating the goal behind them (a born natural goalie!).

Somewhat bizarrely, due to the vagaries of the draw, getting through the group games proved to be the team's biggest challenge of the day. The three strongest teams were all in Pool A, and only two would progress to the Supergroup. But what a start. Richmond B had push back, but Zoe C managed to win possession and slammed home what must have been the goal of the tournament from the top of the D. The official timing from the umpire was 12 seconds! We continued to dominate the match and came through 3-0 winners, with Maddie contributing two fantastic goals.

Then came our two tough matches. First up were Surbiton A, who had the edge over us, but couldn't get past our defence. As the game progressed, it looked like we might sneak a last minute goal, but it was not to be - a 0-0 finish. Next up were Wimbledon, who had beaten us at a recent tournament; however, we upped our game and had the better of the match, dominating the midfield, and were unlucky not to come away with a result. Another 0-0 beckoned.

Our final pool match was against Epsom, a game we simply had to win. Other than a couple of breakaways, we camped out in their half, and eventually got our just rewards with a goal from Zoe C. We finished 1-0, and now had a nail-biting few minutes wait and see if we had done enough. We soon discovered that Surbiton A, Wimbledon and Woking all had the same points. Surbiton went through as winners of the group as they had scored one more goal than Wimbledon and Woking, who had identical records. The question "What next?" reverberated around the ground. The answer was a penalty shoot out. We needed three penalty takers, and the team owe huge gratitude to the three brave individuals who stepped up - Zoe C, Hayley and Margot. The scores were level at one goal apiece after the first three penalties. Well done Alice for two great saves, one with the stick to deflect the ball around the post. Now came sudden death - talk about pressure! Up stepped Zoe C, slotted her penalty away with ease and no hint of nerves, and then the oppo missed the goal with theirs. A horrible way to decide things, but we were through!!

In the Supergroup, we first played the winners of Pool B, Spencer, and had another frustrating match as we were comfortably the stronger team, but just couldn't find the net. Another 0-0. Next up Surbiton, and we knew this might decide the result of the tournament. Our girls were fantastic – this

time, there is no doubt that we were the stronger team, but their goalie and solid defence held out for yet another 0-0 draw! On to the final match against Richmond A, and we knew we had to find a goal from somewhere. Yet again, we played all the hockey, and it had all the hallmarks of another 0-0 until, with less than 2 mins to go, Zoe C struck a short corner which deflected into the roof of the net off a Richmond foot. This gave us an essential 1-0 victory, but Surbiton had managed to win their other two games, which meant that we took second place.

After all that, and with our excellent results at recent tournaments, we know that we can compete with the best, and will fear no one at the upcoming regional tournament. Well done girls!!!!

Thanks to everyone at the club who has helped get us through the season, whether in providing parental support, helping with the coaching, or managing the pitches and club house. There is clearly a huge amount of work behind the scenes to make a club of this size a success. Also, thanks to Caroline Bryant for organising the U10 girls through the season.

Finally, Ashley and Gilly Carter deserve special mention for stepping in to manage yesterday's tournament, without which we simply wouldn't have got through it. And Ashley still managed to find time to help me manage/coach the girls! Thanks also to Chris Betts for umpiring yesterday and in other recent tournaments.

Next installment after the regionals.....it's clearly going to be tough, but I have no doubt our girls will be up for the challenge.