

## WOKING BOYS UNDER 18'S MATCH REPORT

DATE : 13<sup>th</sup> November 2011  
VENUE : Woking Far Pitch  
OPPONENTS : Trojans  
COMPETITION : Wessex League  
RESULT : 0-3

On a gloriously sunny afternoon, Woking lost 0-3 to a well-drilled Trojans side in the Wessex League. With a squad of 12 and a warm 16 degrees, Woking were going to depend on mid-season fitness to ensure consistency throughout the entire 70 minutes.

The first half concluded as a relatively equal affair. 0-0 with a succession of short corners that Woking failed to finish off. Spirits were good with a series of rolling subs to conserve energy. But with several minutes left, Henry pulled up with a double leg injury leaving him side-lined, iced up, sprayed up, and stretching hard to regain movement. It was during this time that players started to look at the bench signalling for a break – only to learn that a break was not an option. Henry finally found his legs again, and rolling subs continued. The half had seen moments of good one-touch linkage between Will, Paddy, Ed B, Ollie and Jack, plus a number of visionary runs by Tony from right back. The rest of the back line consisting of Fraser, Ed and Mark remained firm.

Team talk by Max at halftime commented on two key aspects of play: communication and keeping the ball. We had heard the constant vocal from the Trojans' bench of 'red to red' (they were playing in red). And that was telling. Max reminded Woking that was a lot less of 'blue to blue' as we were consistently being broken down from lengthier moves – simply because we were too keen to move forward regardless of any structure ready to receive up front. Consequently possession was high on Max's agenda and the need not to always press forward, but let the ball do the work – horizontally or backwards. But not always forward. Secondly, communication. This was proving one of Woking's quietest performances. We wanted to hear a more vocal presence – encouragement, strategic chat, and simple 'I'm here to receive a pass' notification.

Messages taken on board, Trojans restarted the second half with what seemed a lot more purpose in their game. Shouts of 'red to red' reverberated around the still-quiet Woking hockey pitch and it wasn't long before they became busier and busier around the Woking goal. In both halves, Patrick in goal had pulled off some spectacular saves, yet it was in the second half that his role became full-time. Whilst Trojans were keeping possession, Woking continued in their moments of quietness AND our drive to move only forward. Yet, at no point did Woking seem overpowered. Skill sets between both sides were equal. And when we broke, the team looked potent. Early in the second half Henry finally relented to his double injury and the team faced 25 minutes of no subs. So with tiredness setting in, the Woking form eventually gave way as Trojans slotted in three goals. But the Woking team must have credit for their perseverance. They played hard up until the final whistle, even defending a further Trojans short corner successfully once the whistle had blown.

With Max's two key points in the second half, the final team talk mentioned a third – play to the whistle. On several occasions, the team stopped playing and didn't take either the advantage being taken or the foul not being seen.

So, much to learn from this performance. When it worked, the team looked excellent and it's clear to see how the entire U18 squad has strength. But this afternoon, that all-important 'click' didn't happen amongst the 12. On a different day I am convinced that we could have beaten Trojans. But it wasn't to be.

Thanks to the guys for playing so hard. Without exception everyone was totally committed. Thanks to Max for coaching and to Andy Hubbard for umpiring. Trojans' manager commented that this was their best game of the season and that Woking had given them a good run for their money. And once more, that old adage was commented again, but this time from the visiting coach; "A match of two halves!"