

## Match Report - Sunday 14<sup>th</sup> February

### Boys Under 16 National Plate

#### Maidenhead 1 Woking 4

Team from:

Alexi Yakas, Archie Lipyeat, Fraser Hope, Giles Rozier-Pamplin, Harry Burlinson,, Harry Samuels, Dan Wernberg, John Humphreys, Matt Powell, Paddy McGrath, Patrick Haddad, Ronak Patel (Captain), Sam Launay

In an exciting game, Woking eventually ran out 4-1 winners in this round of the National Cup/plate. We hadn't been expecting much from Maidenhead, and in the first few minutes we were commanding play well. Giles scored from a short corner within the first 8 minutes. But from then on, Maidenhead found cohesion, and whilst fielding a young squad, showed good levels of skill which matched Woking's ability. By half time Maidenhead had pulled back with an open play goal which caught Woking off guard. However, on shots on, or not on goal, Woking would have won the first half by a fair measure. We were unable to convert countless chances, getting too complicated within the D, and then coming up against a highly skilled Maidenhead goalkeeper. Whilst we failed in and around the D, our open play was exceptional. We were moving the ball from side to side, demonstrating how one touch hockey should be played. One special moment 20 minutes in saw us string together a series of passes down the left hand side which showed the levels of skill within Woking at their best.

The half time talk by Whit and Simon, and supported by captain Ronny, highlighted our inadequacies around the goal and the need to link up closer with Giles, who was creating chances but with few options once near goal.

The second half was going to be hard. The boys were up for the fight and despite some very unnecessary comments from the Maidenhead management re umpiring decisions, Woking remained focused on seeking a goal to push back in front. That all important goal came from open play, and involved a vital pass back from the goal line by Dan Wernberg. Slipping back to Harry S who duly slotted it away, Woking were once more in front. This was an important point in the match with our tails now up sensing victory. More excellent open play ensued resulting in a number of short corners. Yet, whatever we threw at the opposition, the prolific Maidenhead goalkeeper gave as good as he got. His saves were spectacular. Tension also rose when we were recipients of a yellow card for questioning an umpiring decision. Losing Giles for 10 minutes created a lot of pressure, but level heads and holding Maidenhead in their own half meant little work for Patrick our goalkeeper. Even with 10 men, we were able to slot a further goal via John Humphreys - what we can only describe as a trickler which, thanks to the eagle eyes of the umpire, confirmed that it had crossed the line. In the closing moments, Woking demonstrated champagne hockey - mainly in open play, with several missed opportunities within the D. We were further rewarded with a guide on how to beat a very good goalkeeper by way of a penalty flick by Alexei. With three goals in the second half, Woking were very worthy winners.

Once more, great team spirit. Whit had reminded the boys of last week's loss, and how this would not be acceptable today. Ronny's captaincy gelled the boys and his encouragement and insightful comments during the game around the pitch played an important role in keeping everybody on

track. Today showed how important mature and encouraging leadership can change a team's spirit from good to excellent. Ronny praised individuals and constructively commented when things weren't going our way. Well done Ronny.

Thank you to all of the supporting parents who tolerated the touchline comments from the opposition's management. We, as managers, are continually telling our guys that the umpires should be respected, even in times of dubious decisions. Today, we had two excellent umpires in Whit and a senior county level lady on behalf of Maidenhead. She made comment about the opposition's management's criticism during the first half and whilst it was curbed in the second half, did leave a sour taste from Woking's perspective. It was somewhat ironic when we heard them praising the sportsmanship of their own team - who were a well-behaved squad in their own right.

A great win and once more a display of how strong a squad we have, even with some of our other stars not present.

Everybody played their part in this victory, but today, I would like to single out captain Ronny for his conduct and words of motivation to every member of the Woking squad.

Finally, thanks to Whit for his strategic input - the boys listened, and responded - taking the ball to the goal line and pulling back to the top of the D... it was just that we forgot to tell them to shoot once we had it... or if we did shoot, make sure that it was between the posts!