

Match Report – Sunday 17th April
Girls U12s Friendly Tournament – Plate RUNNERS UP

Woking U12's took part in the Surbiton end of season tournament and put up a highly creditable performance given that it was an U13 event.

We knew it was going to be a tough pool with our first match against Surbiton U13 A's. The girls battled bravely with Katie Macdonald and Katie More defending resiliently to protect Harriet Sharp who had been injured by our own side practicing short corners before the event started and was struggling to move. It looked as if the girls were going to hang on for a really hard fought point until Surbiton finally hit home with only 10 seconds left on the clock.

Next up were the Surbiton C side and this time it was Woking's turn to dominate. Floortje Hosman and Alice Boneham were a driving force in midfield, ably supported by the Katie's and Lucie Shortland whilst Jozefiens Rooman-Downs had the Surbiton defence in all sorts of problems. This time however it was Woking that left it late, the only goal again coming in the last 30 seconds of the match with Rooman Downs finally getting the goal she deserved.

The final group game was against the Surrey County U13 side and the girls started the game a little apprehensively, conceding two early goals as the county side threatened to open the floodgates with some excellent play. Having gone behind however the Woking youngsters stepped up a notch and began to match the county girls and when Rooman-Downes scored to bring the match back alive hopes rose that we might force an unexpected result. Unfortunately however a second goal was just beyond us although for our U12's to lose by a single goal to the U13 county side was actually a fantastic result.

With 3rd place in the group secured we therefore went into the Plate semi-finals - and a little bit of time to rest allowed Harriet to lie down with an ice pack to try to regain a little mobility. No such luxury for Katie Macdonald or Alice Boneham however since we discovered that Rupert's side had been playing with only 6 players and were desperate for reinforcements. First Katie helped them out and notched up a couple of goals to see them win and then in the next match Alice Boneham put in another match winning performance and again got on the score sheet to help Rupert's side progress as one of the top sides in their group to the Bowl semi-finals. Lucie Shortland stepped in to help them out in the semi's but unfortunately they fell just short and lost out to Ashford U13's by a single goal in a close contest. (Another sterling Woking performance however as Rupert's side were all U11's so have another couple of years left in this competition!)

Back to our own team - and in the semi final we found ourselves up against Surbiton B (containing a number of the Southern Counties U12 champions from last weekend). It was a close fought contest and Surbiton's early

pressure won them a short corner. They played out a well practiced routine, smashing the ball towards the corner of the goal for what would have been a great strike - the ice pack must have done its job however because Harriet somehow stretched a little leg out to somehow save the shot and earn the cheers of Woking's rowdy supporters. This appeared to give a wakeup call to the whole team and it was suddenly Woking applying the pressure. Hosman and Shortland both made some good runs whilst More and Boneham showed some great dribbling skills as Woking pushed forward. Rooman Downs was very unlucky not to get on the scoresheet again with some great play in the D but when the ball fell to MacDonald she made no mistake, drilling the ball against the backboards to send Woking into the final.

The final was always going to be tough against a very strong Kingston Grammar School side and when playmaker Alice Boneham turned an ankle in the first couple of minutes that restricted her movement we were really up against it. Luckily these Woking girls just don't know when they are beaten and Hosman and Shortland were soon driving forward to put Kingston under pressure whilst Rooman-Downs twisted and turned to leave the Kingston defence in her wake. The Kingston girls were very strong however and made some dazzling runs before finally unleashing a screaming shot that was against destined for the corner until Sharp once more extended her legs to make another stunning save. The game could have gone either way, Boneham was a pillar of strength, playing through the pain barrier to hold Kingston at bay whilst MacDonald continued her impressive form from the earlier games. It looked as if Woking might catch Kingston on the break with More's mazy dribbling just too hot for them to handle but the deadlock could not be broken and the match ended all square meaning 3 minutes of extra time. All we had to do was to hold on for strokes.....having practiced them a lot for the Surrey U12 competition I really would have backed our girls to come out on top but unfortunately we were denied the opportunity. Having blown for an offence outside the Woking D, Kingston failed to take the ball back but instead continued into the D and shot. The umpire failed to call the play back and although Sharp saved the initial shot and the rebound she was left helpless as the ball was bundled into the corner at the third attempt. There was no time to come back. In fairness to Kingston, their coach was apologetic to me that we had suffered from an unfortunate decision but we shouldn't be disheartened, runners up against such tough competition was a great (medal winning) performance and gives us a real springboard to build upon.

So it's back to 11 a side now with the Dutch tournament giving us some very strong competition before the Home Counties U12 final.....and I'm already looking forward to a successful 2011-12 season!!