

U12 Girls Teddington 7s Invitational 18th December 2011

Woking Placed 3rd Won 4 Lost 1

Pool B

V Sunbury 1-0

V Surbiton 0-2

V Guildford 2-0

V Canterbury 1-0

3rd/4th Play-off

V Spencer 3-0

(Laila 4, Paige 2, Catie 1)

Squad; Catie, Laila, Paige, Hannah M, Macy, Phoebe W, Suzi, Jasmine

In this pre-Christmas invitational 7s event, 10 teams were pitched against each other in 2 pools of 5 with teams travelling from as far Canterbury to take advantage of the competitive level of hockey that was expected.

With the impressive list of teams, only 10 minutes in each game to score and points incentives for getting goals even if the game ended up as a draw, this was no time to sit back and gauge the opposition before going into full out attack mode.

Shaun drew up a plan of attack that relied on the girls' maturity to take the initiative to position themselves in the right places at the right time and on their fitness and work rate to make sure they were covering all bases. The girls rose to the challenge and on a chilly, slightly icy pitch, set to work straight away as they were first up against Sunbury.

Sunbury (1-0 Paige)

Sunbury started without a goalie as the central timing was taking no account of teams not being quite ready. Unfortunately, it was only after the first attacking move from Woking had gone wide of the goal that we noticed and that was just as the goalie was jogging into position. Woking had the best of the game and were driving lots of balls into the D but with such a short amount of time, there needed to be a good conversion rate to get points on the board. Eventually Catie managed to hit over a cross which went beyond the keeper where Paige was able to firmly bury the ball in the back of the goal. Sunbury didn't bother the ever patient Phoebe in the goal as the girls worked hard to keep any stray balls from reaching our D, but we were unable to convert any more of the pressure into goals.

Surbiton (0-2)

We'd had the benefit of watching all the other teams before we came up against Surbiton and having seen them in action decided on a new tactic. Paige was set the task of marking their star player out of the match. Surbiton did us the honour of keeping their wunderkind on the pitch for the whole match but unfortunately for us the couple of times she slipped away from Paige she also managed to get past Jasmine & Phoebe to put the ball away with pinpoint accuracy. Other than those 2 moments the game was fairly evenly balanced with pressure put on both Ds but with very few shots on goal as both teams were tackling strongly and playing some very good fast paced hockey. There was a little disappointment at having lost this game but the girls never gave up hope and narrowly missed in the last minute & were unlucky not to get a penalty corner in the last seconds of the game so were working to redress the balance right to the end.

Guildford (2-0 Laila, Catie)

Guildford had lost their previous 2 matches and came out determined not to let it happen again. They put up a spirited defence and tried hard to stop the ever nifty Laila and Catie from getting through. It seemed as if they were going to hold the girls out despite some mature strong runs and crosses from Hannah and Paige and good clearances from defence and midfield from Jasmine and Suzi. Macy was getting into some great space on the left but a lot of the traffic was passing down the right. Eventually, a goalmouth scramble saw the ball pop out to Laila who took advantage of the defensive confusion to put the ball past the disappointed keeper. This seemed to break some of the resolve of the Guildford team who, shortly after, were unable to stop Catie driving into the D, round the defence and into the net.

Canterbury (1-0 Laila)

With the possibility of goal difference coming into play between Woking and Sunbury, it was safest to get a win in this game and with Canterbury having lost to all but Guildford it didn't seem like an impossible dream, but with the minutes ticking by and Canterbury determined not to have travelled all that distance without some good results, Woking were again struggling to convert their pressure into goals. With only a few minutes left and with Woking again pushing up, Canterbury hit the ball long and hard (& a little high maybe) out of defence and through the midfield to leave the attack all on Jasmine & Phoebe. Jasmine managed to hold them up a little giving Phoebe a chance to come off her line and make the save and clearance of the tournament, a remarkable feat for someone who'd spent most of the tournament standing in the cold watching the play go on in front of her, she'd managed to keep her concentration to be able to pull off the decisive save and save Woking's position in the table. Still, a win would help and the girls kept up the pressure but it looked like it wasn't going to happen in this game until, with seconds to spare, Hannah put in a strong tackle to come away with the ball. Driving down the right hand side she put through a scything slip to Laila who was waiting the other side of the goalie to bury the ball in the net. As Canterbury were bringing the ball back for the restart, the whistle went for full time so the goal came not a moment too soon.

Playoffs for positions were; top of the pool played for 1st/2nd place and 2nd place in the pool played for 3rd/4th. With Surbiton disposing of all comers in our pool and Woking beating everyone but Surbiton, we were set for a 3rd place play-off with some medals to play for....

Spencer (3-0 Laila 2, Paige)

Spencer were an unknown quantity having been playing in the other pool but the girls were confident having won against them 11 a-side only recently. Having missed that match, it looked to me that the Spencer girls were taller and older and this would be no walkover. The match started evenly balanced with Spencer looking to attack early but it didn't take long for the Woking girls to display their confidence. Hannah put in another strong run down the right, hitting a lovely unstoppable cross into the middle of the D to Catie; with all defensive eyes looking to Catie she took the time to move the ball one more to Laila who was able to slot the ball into the back of the net. The girls were looking energetic and determined as Suzi took a solid hit out to the ever well positioned Macy staying wide and in space; she had bought herself enough space to carry the ball up the pitch and drove on into the D putting through a great pass to Laila, who worked herself into a position to once again hit the ball satisfyingly into the net. It looked like the girls could not be beaten now and they continued to put on the pressure. With a few minutes left in the game the ball was moved over to Paige who carried

the ball a few steps into the D and let fly with a scorching shot which buried itself into the back of the goal. It was a fine way to end the scoring for the day.

The girls collected their well deserved bronze medals in a presentation ceremony outside the Teddington club house. They won against everyone who stood against them with the exception of Surbiton who were the eventual winners of the tournament beating Wimbledon 3-0 in the 1st/2nd place play-off.

7 goals were scored & only 2 conceded in 50 minutes play against the top teams in the area. It was good to see the strength in depth in the team as many of the teams came with a good player or two but the strength ran through the Woking team with different skills and strengths on display. The girls worked hard pushing forward and getting back to defend and with only one sub (to cut down the time standing around freezing), they all had a part to play and with a special mention for Phoebe who had little to do in most of the games but who was ready and waiting to pull out just what was needed at the crucial times, including being in the right place to give the attack no option but to put it straight at her or put it wide, which often meant she didn't get to touch the ball!