

Match Report – Sunday 20th February

Boys Under 18 Mercian League

Haslemere 5 Woking 9

Whatever happened to the 0-0 draw? I looked back to some of my early games with the Club, albeit on grass, and it was not uncommon for teams to have low scoring, but entertaining, matches. The U18's have a different concept, purely knowing that they can outscore their opposition, lead to a highly entertaining if not nail biting performance. Haslemere contributed in equal measure in a high octane game, only to be hit by a whirlwind attack during a stunning eight minutes of the second half, conceding four goals in that time, without reply.

Both teams struggled to put together a full squad during half-term week and with County training at U17 having an impact. Woking started the stronger and were a goal up within two minutes courtesy of a Chris Way clinical strike. The lead was doubled within ten minutes, Tim Ming with his usual smart delivery of a short corner routine. Worries of a rout however were soon dismissed as Haslemere defended out a short corner and quickly counter attacked the Woking defence. A Haslemere short corner fractionally missed the far post. In fact Justus and the rest of the defence were required to be at their very best as Haslemere notched up a succession of short corner attempts.

Tim Downes hit the post and Mike Stone blazed over the top and out of the ground with a reverse effort. Steve Parker enjoyed a number of journeys during the afternoon, retrieving the team's more flamboyant efforts. Another Haslemere shot whistled past the post as defenders Tim Ming, Sam Parker, Fergus Imrie and Will Swain worked overtime to keep the opposition out. The good sportsmanship in this match was highlighted when a Haslemere midfield player twisted a knee and fell awkwardly. The Woking players immediately stopped the game ahead of the umpires allowing the player to safely leave the pitch. On the restart the Haslemere gave the ball back to Woking, not once, but twice, following a false start with the whistle. Andrew Mole went desperately close and another chip sailed over the crossbar. Overworked Haslemere goalkeeper, Alex Aylewood made two outstanding saves and kept the marauding visitors out. As Woking over committed in attack, Haslemere reduced the lead through Luker Signorelli. Within a few minutes Arthur Beaney had equalised for Haslemere and Woking were back to square one. Will Swain then received a yellow card for successive stick tackles and Woking appeared to be on the ropes. Despite this Harry Samuels forced Alex into a superb double save, with Andrew Mole and the two Tim's, (Ming & Downes) both going close.

Cometh the hour – cometh the man and Chris Way again edged Woking ahead 3-2. Luker however had other ideas and just on the stroke of half time got Haslemere back to 3-3.

A dynamic team talk by coach of the day – Ronak Patel – lifted the mood. It has to be said that Woking had played tremendous hockey and Haslemere had matched them, so the team knew they just had to keep to the game plan.

The game was won early in the second half. Mike Stone hit the post before throwing himself full length to meet a Tim Downes cross, with a reverse shot into the net. 4-3. Tim Ming again from a short corner made it 5-3 a couple of minutes later. Chris Way's shot was going just wide of the post only for Mike Stone to tip it in. 6-3. Finally Andrew

Mole scored a quite brilliant individual goal that would have been 'goal of the day' except for a final effort from Haslemere. 7-3. With Tom Leggett, Harry Samuels and Tony Ewins all buzzing around midfield, added further pressure to the already busy Haslemere goalmouth. Alex Aylewood made yet another double save. Justus showed equal resilience saving strongly from Haslemere, before Tim Ming completed his hat trick for an 8-3 lead. Elliott Hall then brought the score back to 8-4 (are you keeping up reader?), before Moley got his second to move the margin to 9-4. Undoubtedly, Alex Henson of Haslemere scored the best 'goal of the day' – from the right hand side of the 'D' he struck a shot with such venom into the far top corner that Justus was completely routed to the spot. Final score was 9-5.

The result means that the team still have an outside chance of making the play-offs.

So a Tim Ming hat trick and a brace apiece from Messrs Mole, Stone and Way means the top gun award is really warming up. As usual a great match and whatever the result the whole team know how to entertain the crowd.

Man of the Match – Will Swain.....Wally of the Week – Will Swain.

Don't ask. I don't know either!! You will have to ask the team.

Thanks to Ronak for stepping up to coach the side and to umpires Chris Burton-Brown and Graeme Dilworth from Haslemere, who both contributed to a great game of hockey.

With very special thanks to Haslemere Hockey Club and their supporters, whose hospitality and bonhomie were evident all day. All rounded off with an unexpected and very welcome hot meal on a cold afternoon.