

TRUE GRIT sees Woking edge Teddington

To be honest Woking's U13 girls made John Wayne's "True Grit" look more like a rom-com this was True Grit, The Alamo and High Noon (well it was a midday pushback) all rolled into one!

I guess any naive hope that Teddington U14 A's might be caught cold by not taking our U13's seriously enough were scuppered when I arrived a full hour before pushback to find the entire Teddington squad already sat around former Great British captain Jason Laslett discussing tactics for the match.

The Woking girls rolled up, more keen to discuss Downton Abbey than Downing Teddington so I had to play my trump card early on any girl not giving 110% in this match would get a double session with Bru next Friday!! Suddenly minds became focussed.

With our entire side made up of U13's we were lacking the physical strength of the Teddington side and keeper Harriet Sharp was called into action early, saving well as Teddington pushed forward. Woking were not being overwhelmed however and indeed they won the first short corner of the match with Katie Macdonald going close. The rest of the half however was characterised by backs to the wall defending and trying to catch Teddington on the break.

Harriet was soon called into action again making a good initial save before saving and clearing the ball when Teddington smashed the rebound back toward goal. Betty Dempster was defending strongly on the left hand side whilst Lucie Shortland was playing the game of her life on the right to keep Teddington at bay. The Teddington pressure resulted in a short corner and Alice Boneham did well to block the initial shot before Sharp did well to save from the rebound. By now it really was like the last stand of the Alamo with Lily Stracey immense in the centre of defence and Nicole Chapman Hatchet and Katie Moor both dropping back to form a thin wall of blue to keep the insurgent pinks at bay. Another short corner as Woking began to lose their discipline and fail to retreat 5 metres from free hits but the Marmite goalie (untested so often last season) again managed to stick out a leg to deflect the shot wide. A few minutes later and it was Sharp in action again - rushing from her line to save from point blank range.

This was terrific defending by Woking as Teddington upped the pressure winning a series of 4 short corners. What can I say to describe the pace of Ellie Moore running out from the back line I swear that twice she overtook the ball she was going so fast it was like something from the Roadrunner cartoon and I half expected to see a little trail of flames in her wake! With Boneham, Macdonald and Stracey also defending resolutely there was just no way through for the strong Teddington side and Woking (although every single player was exhausted) clung on to keep the score at 0-0 at half time.

Now in the first half we had certainly make a circle of our wagons to protect ourselves from the Teddington shots and at times it was a bit like Custer's last stand but the second half began to see the balance of power change. Sharp was called into action early in the half again to save well from a good Teddington effort but that was to be the last time she was really tested and Woking began to show what they had themselves. Jozefien Rooman Downs picked the ball up in her own half and made a storming dribble through to the Teddington D which was worthy of a goal and the Woking girls suddenly began to wake up to fact that they were equally capable of taking this match. With Tabitha Bowden often running into space on the left and Maddie Marsden showing some great control on the right wing to put the Teddington backs under pressure, Woking forced themselves another short corner. Step up Katie Macdonald I usually count on her scoring 50% of her short corners so having gone close in the first half it was no surprise that she duly tucked this one away although by her own admission the bobbly mis-hit was not what she had originally intended - even if it did find it's way into the corner!

By now it was Woking creating the pressure. Maddie Marsden had a scintillating run down the right and it was unfortunate that her well hit cross evaded everyone as it shot across the face of the goal. Then it was Rooman-Downs in the action again, picking out Marsden who was unfortunate to see her shot well saved.

Ellie Moore and Alice Boneham were now in control of the midfield and Nicole Chapman Hatchet was sent free, running into the D and clear on the keeper until she was cynically fouled as she was about to score. Jon Molloy had no choice but to point to the spot and the Woking girls jostled as to who wanted to take the flick "you take it - no you take it - no I insist you take it..." Eventually it was Chapman Hatchet herself that bravely stepped up. Her flick was excellent for an U14 game and looked to be going high into the net on the keepers left - unfortunately just missing the post.

Dempster went back on as a rolling sub - only to have the ball lifted into her from close range within 30 seconds of getting back on the pitch (first ice pack of the season) and then one of the Teddington girls had the ball run up her own stick into her face (second ice pack and first black eye of the season). Hannah Birchill made a late cameo after arriving to watch the end of the game as, in true western style, the casualties began to mount on both sides.

I've probably mentioned some names more than others but I can't stress enough that this result was a great all round performance with **all** of the Woking girls playing out of their skins. 1-0 at the final whistle and Woking riding off into the sunset with all 3 points in the bag. The girls look over their shoulders as the camera pans in for a final shot "Does that mean we don't have to do a double session with Bru this Friday" "Well OK but you have to repeat this performance next week against Guildford".

Special thanks to Jon Molloy and Suzie Hardingham from the ladies 1A's for umpiring and to all the parents for some strong vocal support.

1-0 the dream is still alive !!!