

Match Report - Sunday 29th November

Boys Under 18 National Cup

Southampton 4 Woking 1

We had another good match against Southampton in the National Under 18 Cup today, and I am still trying to work out how we didn't win, going down by 1-4 in the end. What's more, we played well and, in my view, were the better side, but probably suffered from a few lapses in concentration which were clinically punished by Southampton (except for the 2 penalty strokes that they managed to miss).

Driving conditions were atrocious on the way down - but at least we didn't have to play in that (unlike the U16s who were at Camberley in that torrential rain).

The only time that Southampton dominated the match was the first 5 minutes as we were panned back in our 23 but defended comfortably, including a couple of short corners. After that though, we got on top, with the speed of our forwards always unsettling their defence, and Mike Stone constantly hassling the opposition and forcing errors, in particular when the goalkeeper kicked the ball straight back to him only a few yards out with no defenders around, but Mike couldn't quite force it in. Also, Southampton were lucky to escape 2 yellow cards early on, both for deliberate feet.

After 20 minutes, a defensive 16 was miscontrolled by Tim (with his feet) and a Southampton forward took it straight into the D to fire home and take the lead, but we came back strongly and continued to be on top until half time.

At half time, we talked about building it better through midfield, and that's exactly what we did at the beginning of the 2nd half, and Tim at the bottom of the diamond started seeing a lot of the ball. After 10 minutes of the 2nd half, following a period of sustained pressure, we grabbed an equaliser from a short corner, Tim slipped left to Ollie S whose shot was deflected by LJ past the goalkeeper.

However, we were behind again within 2 minutes, against the run of play, when Southampton converted a drag flick into the top right corner. And then we conceded a flick shortly afterwards when Dec stopped the ball on the line with his shin pad, and Justus saved a soft flick to his left. And then in amongst lots of constructive hockey from Woking, Southampton converted another short to go 3-1 up. Woking continued to pile on the pressure to pull back the deficit. With 5 minutes left, another momentary lapse of concentration saw us give away another flick, which was again saved by Justus. We took off Sam at the back and played with 3 upfront as we went for it (and Dec took himself off as well courtesy of a yellow card), and the last 5 minutes were played in Southampton's 23, except for one last quick break which resulted in a 4th goal.

Strangely after all this, Justus didn't have a great deal to do in the match. Man of the Match for me was Mike Stone who played the best that I have ever seen him, running all over the place, tackling determinedly and creating chances, and was brilliant in the position at the top of the midfield diamond (will Stefan get his place back next week?), with a close runner up being Tom Leggett at right back who was tough in defence and provided an excellent outlet driving down the right.

Thanks to all parents who ventured down in that weather to support.