

Match Report - Sunday 22nd November

Boys Under 18 Wessex Cup

Woking 4 Havant 4 (Won 4-3 on penalties)

This Sunday saw Woking's Under 18 Boys, or should I say Men, take on a talented Havant side in the 1st round of the Wessex (Hampshire) Cup. Not often do we face an opponent with not just its 1st XI, but also its 2nd XI in a higher league than Woking's 1st XI. This did not seem to faze the boys in Blue who made a confident start in a wet and windy affair.

The fixture got underway during a severe down pour. Thankfully this did not have an effect on the ability of both teams to get the game off to a fiery start. With five minutes on the clock, Woking's first half dominance began. A swift passing move between Stefan and LJ, allowed Ollie Greenhalgh to slot away a superb team goal. Five minutes later, the home side doubled their lead. This time, Ollie went from goalscorer to provider with LJ latching on to a far post cross, deflecting the ball into the back of the net. Soon after, it was 3. Another slick move between Steve Wilman and Will Swain, allowed Stefan to break into the D before unleashing a ferocious reverse stick strike passed the hapless keeper.

A short corner from Woking resulted in no goal, as did Havant's next two, however on the stroke of half time, their third was whipped into the top corner to make the half time score 3-1.

After the interval, Havant came out of the blocks firing on all cylinders. Within five minutes, the deficit was reduced to just a single goal after another short corner was converted. Two more short corners later and the scores were level. After the initial strike hit the crossbar, the ball fell to the Havant striker who did not waste any time slotting it into the bottom corner.

With fifteen minutes remaining, Havant took the lead for the first time scoring their fourth goal without reply. A well struck reverse hit beat Justus at the far post, punishing Woking for a poor second half.

This goal, however finally woke the home side up and the next ten minutes of hockey was played in Havant's half. This period of pressure was thankfully not without reward and an equaliser came from a rebound, eventually slotted home by Phil Page.

With the scores tied at 4-4, one last chance fell to the visitors with their 5th short corner of the second half. Thankfully Tim Ming was on hand to clear the ball, taking the game to penalty strokes.

Havant's first stroke was saved by Justus to the delight of the home crowd. The next seven strokes all hit the back of the net, Woking's four by Stefan, LJ, a masterful moment of deception by Tim and a confident 'Stuart Pearce' like stroke from Sam Way. Heroics from Justus then won the match for the hosts as his acrobatic stop denied the Havant captain.

Victory sends Woking passed Havant for the second successive season, again on penalty strokes.

Coach Andy Pike commented: "Well, this really was a game of two halves, a first half littered with moments of brilliance, followed by a second half littered with moments of madness made for a nerve-racking encounter. Our strength eventually proved too much for the visitors and as always, there was only going to be one winner when the game went to penalties."

Thank you for the match report to Jacky and Steve Wilman, colourfully embellished by Andy Pike, and of course to Andy for coaching. And a big thank you to Karel Deeley for umpiring.

The 2nd round of the Wessex Cup is likely to be easier - away to Camberley (probably on 17th January).