

Leeds SFA U11 -0 v Hull SFA U11 – 1

St. Theresa's, a bacon sandwich and a large black coffee, it must be Saturday! Yes, we found ourselves relishing the prospect of an exciting cup match this weekend. The low November Sun was trying to shine, as a strong biting wind whipped its way over the crossgates field of dreams. The games are coming thick and fast in these parts and it has to be said this reporter is really enjoying the whole "Leeds City" experience, if not the report writing in at least minus 10! (Wind-chill, it's horrid!)

This Saturday saw Yorkshire rivals Hull roll into town! The burgeoning talent of the Leeds under 11's team (that's what the "B" stands for by the way!) was about to be unleashed with the aim of taming the "tigers" from 'ull. Barry's Hull boys we're unbeaten so far this season and they arrived brimming with confidence, having emphatically beaten York the week before. One did wonder whether anyone had told them they we're playing in the "West Yorkshire Cup"? I later reasoned the diversity of West Yorkshire is renown and they we're clearly happy to be annexed to our county, if only "ff't'day". Irony aside, Hull's unbeaten record was no fluke. It proved to be a tough day at the office for our Leeds lads with Hull winning the battle of the "Wind" one goal to nil. The first half was a story of Hull attack versus Leeds defence. Whilst Leeds had some early pressure in the first ten minutes, it wasn't long before Hull started banging crosses in from the right flank, using the wind to their advantage. Matthew Owen had to make his first save of the morning after a scramble in the Leeds goalmouth and would be called into action as it turned out, rather too much for Mr Tonge's liking. Eddie Copeland did well early doors as he drove the ball forward with menace and both he and O'Neil Quinsou had shot's go wide of the Hull posts, but this was unfortunately the limit of the threat in this half. Leeds struggled to get out of their half for most of the time, as Hull closed the Leeds passing game down and used their presence to get their first tackles in. A large percentage of this Hull squad had played together 15 to 18 times already and as a result they had an innate understanding of each others play that Leeds struggled to match. The Hull pressure did start to make finally impact with 5 minutes to go. One of their shots rebounded off the right hand Leeds post and unfortunately landed right in front of the Hull striker. This gave him just an extra moment to slot a powerful shot home beyond the keeper. It was a cruel blow considering the brave defensive work Leeds had already put in and the amount of saves already made. Alas at the end of the first half it was one nil to Hull. The standout Leeds players at this stage were naturally Matthew Owen and the Leeds defensive unit. Matthew saved eight attempts on goal and enjoyed the pleasure of studs cemented into his head. He soon brushed it off though and got on. Joe Hayton and Ollie Worland had shed loads of work to do heading the long balls away in the high winds and Kelan Swales and Devon Ward battled like Trojan's to constantly repel the invading wingers down the flanks. Mark Giddens and Eddie were running for what seemed like ages, but alas for no reward. Hull just kept getting to the ball first. Leeds we're still in the game, but more importantly the wind was now about to be in Leeds favour. Could the lads turn things around?

The second half arrived with Mr Tonge appearing very animated as he "finalised" the tactics with his now infamous team talks. The "keep them waiting" half-time psychology will no doubt work soon; but on this day Hull were not playing and they attacked immediately from the kick off. Leeds did pick up the pace though. The passing through Lewis Firkbank and Danny Edwards was starting to work as they took a touch and moved the ball wide. James Shaw had come onto the right defence and Sam McDermott had given way for Kelan Swales to push on down the right wing.

Despite the changes on the right most of the Leeds pressure and working of the ball came down the left wing. This was mainly through Devon Ward to Danny Edwards. O'Neil could find no way through the middle of the granite like Hull defence, despite a number of dinking runs around their 18 yard box. Leeds we're passing the ball, but could find no penetration or way onto the Hull goal. When Joseph Gardner and Mason Mail came on with 20 mins left to go the Leeds attack was starting to grind Hull down a bit. Devon Ward provided neat balls down the line for Joe to connect to and feed on with Danny Edwards. The team had 3 or four good chances this half, but didn't connect with the ball and use the longer ball as Hull had managed to do in the first. Despite a free kick and a number of corners, Leeds tried to run the ball into the net, rather than pushing ball over the top. On the few occasions where they did try this O'Neil and later Sam McDermott were in onto the keeper. But by this stage Hull's defence was wise to it and were sweeping up. The final whistle arrived and brought another defeat for Leeds, losing one nil. The Leeds boy's general performance in the second half was good. Danny Edwards and Devon Ward deserved a medal for the amount of running they did and Mason Mail showed confidence in the middle of the field when he came on. James Shaw's defensive kick in front of the Hull strikers probably saved a certain second goal near the end of the match.

Overall everyone appeared frustrated but not totally downbeat. It was a match that on another day Leeds will at least draw and should really have won. The debate about second half tactics and using the wind was on the agenda over coffee after the match, but nonetheless the coaches were pleased with aspects of the performance against a good Hull side. Doc said at the end...." It was tough, Ollie nearly pinched it at the end from that last throw in and on another day we would have beat this Hull team. We certainly had the possession to do that and our defence was excellent. They are unbeaten though and we mustn't lose sight of that fact, so overall the boys performed well; unfortunately we just couldn't quite finish our chances though.... "

It's perhaps a little known fact that St. Theresa of Lisieux, the patron saint of our home venue here in East Leeds, taught the value of simplicity. That was the key lesson Hull provided on Saturday. They played with greater simplicity and as a result they came away with the win. Hull presented nothing for our Leeds lads to fear, they just played with more width, used the conditions better and executed very well. On another day Leeds will take the chances they had on offer. I believe hard work will always be rewarded and as such a good win is just around the corner for this team. No doubt it will be all the sweeter when said victory finally arrives. In the meantime, let us not forget that this weekend is special for bigger reasons other than football. Namely for those who gave their lives fighting for our country so we can live in freedom. We will remember them!