

Leeds SFA -0 Sheffield SFA - 2 - Saturday 6th November

A glorious Saturday morning at St. Theresa's saw the Leeds Schoolboys take on their Sheffield counterparts. The Barnsley boys had withdrawn only the night before and luckily for the team Jackie was able to source a keen Sheffield at one day's notice. The prior meeting with Sheffield had not been one wrapped in glory as the boys had lost nine goals to one, with Sheffield demonstrating their clinical finishing. However, a lot of water had passed under the bridge since that experience. The squad gelled on the "Walsall tour" as the boys got used to each other with three good wins and a draw under their belts. Confidence was high, despite requests for "Leeds brickies" to build metaphorical walls. Sheffield arrived and looked sharp, warming up as a squad, were well drilled and started with passion. Leeds, whilst clearly under a lot of pressure matched Sheffield toe to toe and in the second half managed to create a lot of chances. However on the day Sheffield's frontline proved too much of a handful for the Leeds Defence and they won with a flattering score line of 2-0.

The first half was a story of strong tackling from Leeds, but strong attack from Sheffield as well. They pinned Leeds into their own half for a large percentage of the thirty minutes, which meant Joe Hayton and James Shaw, Ollie Worland and Devon Ward had a real early battle keeping the Sheffield attackers at bay. A scramble in the Leeds box midway through saw Matthew Owen get his finger tips to the ball, but alas the power was too great from their No18 and Leeds went 1-0 down. The Sheffield pressure was too great as they continued to dominate the early territory. Unfazed the boys rallied. Joe and Kelan, connecting well down the right led to a corner won by Sam McDermott. The ball was whipped in by Mark Giddens and was only just kept out by a determined Sheffield keeper. Leeds deserved an equaliser after yet another big scramble, but despite looking vulnerable at the back Sheffield managed to soak up the pressure from Leeds as they went to half time.

For this reporter the key Leeds players in the half were Eddie Copeland with some battling runs and hard tackles. Joe Hayton heading strongly out of defence and Matthew Owen in goal who was forced to make some early saves. Devon Ward was a highlight with some powerful "Ashley Cole" style runs down the left hand side. Devon connected well with Danny Edwards and Joe Gardner who likewise attacked with panache and guile, despite not managing to hit the back of the net. At the end of the 1st Half it was 1-0 to Sheffield with all to play for.

The second half brought a lively start to proceedings and early attacks from Leeds. The sunshine was clearly starting to take effect (or maybe it was the team talk?) as Sam McDermott challenged hard and won 2 corners on the bounce. Sheffield quickly retorted with 2 shots wide, their number 9 showing good balance and flair for some challenging runs. Four major chances then followed for Leeds and any other day the boys would surely have taken them. The Sheffield cussedness in defence was still in evidence.

From the last corner in this period, Ollie Worland shot and all "the mothers" went wild in the crowd, but alas the celebration was premature, his shot had gone wide to the right. It was looking more and more like it was not going to be Leeds's day. Further attack moments later saw Sheffield break away down the left; Devon tracked across and made an awesome tackle on their number 9 in the penalty box. He stopped the ball dead and somehow managed to avoid bringing the man down. From our vantage point on the sidelines it was clearly a great tackle. So much so that even the referee stopped in his tracks on the pitch to applaud. As the match progressed Leeds continued the attack through Joe Gardner and Danny Edwards. They won three further corners and more scrambling resulted in the Sheffield goal mouth, but yet again no result. Matthew Owen was then called upon to make 3 further brave saves at the Sheffield striker's feet. The game was really ebbing and flowing from one end of the pitch to the other. At this juncture everyone felt despite Sheffield's clear strength, Leeds would breakthrough as the boys had created so many openings. However with a few minutes to go, the referee made his one and only error of the day and missed a handball in the Sheffield half. From the ensuing clearance Sheffield mounted another raid down the right flank and despite a good attempted save from Matthew, the power from their number 16's shot was too great. The ball travelled like a bullet into the Leeds hearts and the lads went down two-nil. The great passing and possession had come to nothing for Leeds and they would rue the six or seven missed chances as the game slipped away.

The critical performances in the second half came from Lewis Firbank attacking down the right flank, with his strong crosses. O'Neil Ouinsou as the midfield dynamo, tracking back, was connecting the defence with the attack. A special mention must go to Sam McDermott who found his "Fizz" in this game with some exceptional heading against the Sheffield number 10. Joe Gardner and Danny Edwards showed the chances can easily be created and Eddie Copeland and Mark Giddens won over the crowd with their tenacity. The match ended 2-0 to Sheffield with loud appreciative applause for the effort shown by both teams. The Leeds boys had tried their best but not come up trumps this time.

Mr Rossiter said at the end...."the lads played and performed really well against a tough side, I believe we deserved a draw and on another day I'm sure we will take our chances and win...let's hope for a better result in the cup next week"

For the record, the Leeds team and coaches were very grateful for Sheffield stepping in to help out at the last minute. Ultimately win or lose the boys just want to have fun and play football. So whilst losing was not nice, the teams ate lunch and spent some time together afterwards as usual. I've no doubt this Leeds team developed and learnt a lot from this 2-0 loss and I'm sure next time the boys will do enough to catch Sheffield on the hop.