

## Sheffield 9 v Leeds 1 - Sept 25<sup>th</sup>

Match day arrived with a sunny, crisp, autumnal morning. There was an air of optimism and an anticipation of free flowing football as the team headed for Sheffield. Like their senior counterparts at Elland Road, the Leeds team rightly expected a strong performance against a tough Sheffield side.

A strong training session on the previous Wednesday, combined with the beautiful carpet-like pitches of Sheffield University surely meant ideal conditions for the Leeds team to showcase their clear talent?

As it turned out, it proved to be a very difficult day for the whole team.

The morning got off to a poor start before a ball had been kicked. Sam McDermott had to withdraw with a pulled muscle in his back during warm-up and his striking skills would soon turn out to be missed as the game progressed. Despite this setback Leeds started well in the first 10 minutes, strong pressure through the midfield followed by early runs down the left wing through Oneil Ouinsou and Louis Coates saw some early chances and gave a large partisan crowd a taste of Leeds strength and agility.

Joseph Pearson was certainly a presence up front for a large part of the first period. He made some dynamic runs, showing good control of the ball as Leeds dominated the middle of the field and pushed on through the wingers Mark Giddens and Louis Coates.

After 15 minutes Sheffield started to drive long balls forward to overcome Leeds midfield and the dominant Joshua Bell. Their forward line looked fast as Sheffield sprinted through the Leeds defence. Matthew Owen the Leeds keeper, repelled the initial onslaught with some brave shot stopping, enabling Leeds to calm things down.

After some continued strong defensive headers by Oliver Worland the Leeds midfield moved the ball swiftly down the left channel and again Joseph Pearson looked strong, but this time scoring a cracking early goal. 1-0 to Leeds.

Sheffield schools continued to bombard the Leeds area with long balls and Jack Smyth and Oliver Worland headed and drove the ball away continuously. A further four big saves by Matthew Owen continued to keep them out and with a skied shot over the cross bar, Sheffield must have wondered what they needed to do to score.

The game was getting tense, and that tension was doubled as a Sheffield penalty appeal fell on deaf ears, Jack Smyth had done enough again to keep them at bay. However, with another strong cross, Sheffield finally broke the deadlock and the teams went into the first break at 1-1. It was certainly anyone's game.

Alas the second period proved to be very costly for Leeds. The wind had picked up as had Sheffield's game. Despite the sunshine on their backs Leeds just could not cope with the inspired pressure from the home side.

Joe Hayton and Mason Mail came on in defence, yet despite our lads gallant efforts, it was true to say the whole team really struggled to cope with the challenge. Sheffield started to control the midfield, Leeds backed off and the game turned. After just 5 minutes and despite another great take by Matthew early on, Sheffield scored. Two minutes later another goal and Leeds confidence took a hit as they fell 3-1 down.

The highlights of the second and third period were the backs to the wall performances of Matthew Owen in goal with a further three great saves and from Joshua Bell who had a strong day in midfield.

Despite runs from Devon, Nathan and Eddie, Sheffield were first to the ball. Leeds were given a lesson in clinical finishing and good defence to close out and win a match. When the whistle finally came the final score stood at 9-1 to Sheffield. After the game Mr Rossiter although very disappointed said "...oh we'll be back, its early days for the lads, but mark my words we will be much better next time in the league"

Whilst the team looked naturally disappointed, they finished with dignity joining Sheffield for post match food at the aptly named Sportsman's pub. That same afternoon Leeds senior side proved at Elland road that Sheffield can be overcome and I've no doubt our Leeds boys will prevail come the rematch