

## Wirral 2 v Leeds 3..... 11th September 2010

The monsoon season arrived on the M62 corridor and followed the Leeds squad to Wirral for a game played under the shadow of the stand at Prenton Park[Tranmere Rovers] for the first game of the season. The Wirral team buoyed by a 7-1 victory in a pre-season friendly started very brightly and their crisp passing caused problems for the Leeds mid-field but with centre backs Jack Smyth and Oliver Worland in 'stand out' form and resolute full backs Joel Haley and Cameron Dyas both defending stoutly there was no way through. Clifford Konadu was proving a handful up front and his strong running frequently terrorised the Wirral rearguard. It was fitting that he should give Leeds the lead. Lewis Firbank got around the back and pulled the ball back to Nathan Hawkhead whose effort fell to Konadu who hit the post but followed up to drive home. Fletcher Paley in the Leeds goal looked secure and his handling in wet conditions was outstanding.

Rhys Walker, Mark Giddens and Hawkhead in the centre of midfield began to get a toe hold in the game with Walker in particular putting penetrating passes through. He fed Louis Coates and his slide rule pass found Konadu who shrugged off two would be tacklers to fine home. 2-0 to Leeds at half time and it has to be said the score flattered a little but the Leeds team had worked very hard. The second half saw James Shaw Bradley Reynolds and Sam McDermott join the action and the trio settled immediately into the fray with Reynolds very calm in possession. The Leeds team were beginning to tire and Paley pulled out a world class save to deny the Wirral striker but spectators were fearing that a Wirral goal was imminent. Leeds failed to clear a poor corner and allowed it to ricochet around the six yard box and it was forced home. McDermott was helping out the stretched Leeds defence and with the outstanding Walker beginning to tire Leeds needed some breathing space but it was not forthcoming. Konadu was still a livewire up front and when he was felled 20 yards out Coates struck the ball powerfully towards the top corner but the keeper's outstretched hands parried the ball. The Leeds team seemed to be having difficulty coping with the waves of Wirral attacks and Smyth was moved into midfield to give some much needed strength with Days taking over in defence. With seven minutes to go Dyad's innocuous challenge resulted in a free kick just outside the box. The ball was hit hard and true but Paley made a good save only to see the ball hit the bar and spin down and into the net 2-2! This seemed to spur Leeds on and with 5 minutes to go Smyth tried his luck from 30 yards and his sweetly struck shot curled over the keeper and into the net 3-2 to Leeds. There was to be no more scoring as Leeds held on for a notable victory. One could say Wirral were unlucky to lose as they played very well but they too often did not threaten the goal in the crucial areas, but they will be a force I'm sure in the ultra competitive Merseyside league. We must praise the work ethic of the Leeds boys, however, and the delight on their faces at the end was there for all to see. Welcome to District football boys, it's going to get harder too but a great start. Thank you to Wirral for a game played in exactly the right spirit and also for your warm hospitality