

YORK 0 v 1 LEEDS
[West Yorkshire League]

After the long journey to Derbyshire [well almost!] midweek the previous Wednesday to play the WYL fixture against Sheffield the last thing the boys and management needed was a marathon trek at rush hour to an outpost on the other side of York. It wasn't helped that the team arrived in 'dribs and drabs' as we were in possession of the wrong postcode! Sometimes out of adversity comes triumph and this was certainly the case as the Leeds boys produced a performance worthy of the stature of the game. A win would guarantee at least a share of the league title, and eventually the boys got the result their contribution deserved.

The pitch had a close cropped almost bowling green surface in one half and a bobbly uneven surface in the other due to the onset of the Cricket season. Leeds opened brightly with Joe Gibson and Jack Smyth striving to get forward from full back to give the necessary width and support to the mid-field. Louis Coates caused a few scares for the home defence with his delivery from the left wing but it was the agility, pace and power of Clifford Konadu which tested the York rearguard to the full and on more than one occasion he was 'crudely' dealt with, but he's made of stern stuff and picked himself and got on with the game. A fine through ball from Joe Pearson found Coates in a 50-50 with the home keeper and Coates's pace ensured he reached the ball first and his delicate lob trickled agonisingly wide of the upright. Matthew Hambleton and Cameron Dyas provided a resolute barrier in front of Fletcher Paley in goal, and he was only called on to handle long distance efforts. The ever improving Jonathan Kayij was the necessary strength in midfield allowing Nathan Hawkhead to support the forward line. Although Leeds huffed and puffed there was just not enough penetration of the home defence. The coach made a brave or was it reckless decision to make four substitutions at half time and to change the team formation to a completely new and more compact central three of Josh Bell, Dom Healey and Rhys Walker and also bringing on Joel Haley for the reliable Dyas. It proved to be a master stroke as for twenty minutes York were pinned back hardly getting beyond the halfway line. Leeds led by Konadu peppered the goal with shots from every angle. Konadu and Gibson hit the post and bar in quick succession, but in between these efforts Leeds took the lead. A long throw by Joel 'Delap' Haley found the head of Hawkhead who nodded on for Kayij to collect turn and fire home through a crowded goal mouth into the York net. 1-0 and a well deserved lead but more was needed we felt to finish the game off. A sublime pass by Healey found Walker in the clear and his control and strike were excellent but the York keeper produced a magnificent save. Bell's control of the football and link play with Smyth, Konadu and Hawkhead was of the highest order and with Gibson on the other flank probably having one of his best games of the season and playing intricate one/two's with Walker, and Healey the game looked save for Leeds. However every team has a spell of possession and control and York, although fortunate not to have conceded more suddenly began to think that they could snatch a draw. Chris Littlewood in goal had to be alert on a couple of occasions coming out to clear, but with Haley and Hambleton playing like two obelisks in front of him with 'monumental' defending all looked safe. Out of the blue an unnecessary free kick was given for a push [you need to learn boys] and the resultant effort wasn't cleared and was fired home by an ecstatic York forward. Surely not, football couldn't be so cruel could it?[we all know it can be!] The excellent referee spotted an infringement [probably offside] and the goal was struck off, and moments later blew his whistle.

Well done boys, you provided a great performance for the bedraggled spectators except 'Doc' who remained resplendent and dry in his sky blue cagoule. Leeds are the team in form at the moment, dare we hope that the next couple of weeks will bring the reward the dedication deserves? Next step the ¼ final against East Riding, to set up a semi-final against Sheffield.