

## U11 Leeds 3 - Hull 2 5<sup>th</sup> February 2011

Three weeks ago Leeds played Hull and were soundly beaten on the day. Hull were impressive, Leeds were poor and this particular reporter said that next time things would be different. After 15 minutes those comments sounded hollow with Hull knocking the ball around for fun and brimming with confidence due to being 2 up courtesy of two blistering 25 yard shots that gave keeper Fletcher Paley no chance. The nightmare had returned and the pessimists among us were predicting a 4 or 5 nil defeat. The fact that the team turned defeat into glorious victory is testimony to the boys' character and never say die attitude, all 15 players moved up a gear and battled for every ball, none more so than Dom Healey in midfield who turned in a truly inspirational performance. It was Dom's fighting quality that won the ball in the Hull penalty area that allowed Joe Pearson to put Leeds back in contention with a left foot strike, Joe deserved a goal after hitting the bar from a free kick earlier in the game. Hull seemed rattled and Leeds dominated the rest of the half. A key aspect of the victory today was the Leeds defence ability to cope with the Hull centre forward's pace that had destroyed us three weeks ago, apart from the early and later stages when Leeds had made a lot of changes which affected the shape of the team, he was kept in check. Defenders Smyth, Hambleton, Dyas and Gibson all played their part but in Jonathan Kayij and Joel Haley Leeds had two defenders who possessed the qualities of strength and speed to subdue the talented Hull striker and both were outstanding throughout the match half time 1-2.

The second half started as the first ended with Leeds in the ascendancy, the three midfield subs of Walker, Bell and Hawkhead added an injection of energy to the middle of the field. Leeds were monopolising possession and creating chances. Clifford Konadu came the closest to scoring before Leeds eventually drew level when he turned sharply in the box only for the Hull keeper to pull off a spectacularly reflex save. Two minutes later Leeds were level when Nathan Hawkhead and Joe Gibson played a neat one - two in the corner and Nathan's powerful shot come cross evaded everybody and flew into the top right hand corner. Hull were now looking a shadow of the team we'd seen previously and it was no surprise when Leeds went in front after neat combination play between Clifford Konadu and Rhys Walker inside the area ending with Rhys firing home to make it 3-2 to Leeds. Clifford himself nearly made it 4-2 moments later when his shot was parried by the Hull keeper, the ball was trickling goal wards but the Hull defence somehow managed to scramble it clear. The last ten minutes can only be described as the most nerve racking and exciting football we have seen this year, Leeds became disjointed and Hull threw caution to the wind in search of an equaliser. Chris Littlewood became the hero of the hour in the Leeds goal by pulling off three tremendous saves, the first showing great reflexes the other two showing kamikaze style bravery by diving at the feet of the Hull strikers. At the other end Nathan Hawkhead for Leeds seemed to be locked in a personal duel with the Hull keeper as he must have had four or five shots from outside the area which were saved by the impressive Hull number 1. The final whistle was greeted with cheers from spectators, players and coaches alike, indeed when the third goal went in I thought Mr Rossiter was about to do a David Pleat – Luton 1983 or a Bob Stokoe Sunderland 1973 by running onto the pitch to celebrate with the players but he just about managed to contain himself. Doc was more of a Howard Wilkinson he will only celebrate when the final whistle sounds, full time 3-2 Leeds.

By far the best game of the season, Hull played their part in an entertaining game but Leeds were the better team on the day showing a tremendous spirit and no doubt we will need that spirit because we will probably lock horns with Hull again in one of the cup competitions later on in the season