

Leeds B U 11 vs. Bradford U11 - (Yorkshire Cup.) Saturday 8th Jan 2011. 10.30am.

This Saturday saw a biting introduction to 2011 for the Leeds B squad with a match against the Bradford Schools U11. Only the night before everyone was thinking the game would be called off due to yet more snow falling across Leeds; however lady luck was on our boys' side. So, it was with relief and a few last minute switches from Barnsley, that saw the whole of the Leeds Schools FA games switched to St Theresa's due to that fact that we have some of the best draining pitches outside Elland Road.

The Team had not played for 6-7 weeks and so the expectation was that the squad was going to be very ring rusty. The Weather certainly didn't help matters, with the low Sun and biting northerly wind, which is now proving to be a bit of a key "feature" of our home games these days.

Anyway the grumpy old men (dads) were well served with coffee and bacon sandwiches as usual and that combined with the fifty layers of clothing seemed to do the trick for most intrepid spectators.

The Leeds U11 B team played in their white kit and the Bradford lads came with a somewhat "Arsenal.. Esque" bright yellow away kit. Indeed the mood of the team matched Bradford's shirts, i.e. very bright! No snow, passion and excitement, this certainly had the potential to be one of those great Yorkshire derbies.

As events unfolded, "great" wasn't really the superlative one would use to describe the result. Like the Arsenal vs. Leeds FA cup match held on the same day, the game ended in a 1-1 draw despite Leeds total dominance of possession and control of the midfield.

Even with another 15 mins (although with the cold wind it felt like days!) of extra time Leeds B couldn't finish all the wonderful opportunities that were being created. So whilst Leeds A team punished Barnsley 7-2 on the other nearby pitch, the B team contrived to only survive with a draw. Our lads are still in the Yorkshire Cup though, but the game now has to be replayed at Bradford's fortress "Silsden."

The First half of the game saw Mr. Tonge start with a 4-4-2 formation with Ned Dry the Leeds No 5 making his first full start of the season after a tough time returning from a broken leg.

The 1st corner of the game to Leeds saw the ball holding up with the strong wind and so it would prove to be a gig factor in this match. It was a game of defence, with some silly basic errors due really to two months of inactivity. An early vital save from Matthew Owen the Leeds keeper from the Bradford striker's feet saved a certain goal.

Marc Giddens first power shot went over the bar, just wide. Marc had loads of shots across the whole match and for our reporting team's view (the old "wise / grumpy" men) was certainly Leeds Man of the half. The men of the half for Leeds were Marc Giddens and Eddie Copeland in attack and Matthew Owen and Ollie Worland in goal and defence respectively.

The team changed a bit at this early stage in the 2nd half with Devon Ward coming into left back, Kelan Swales on to the right and Danny Edwards up front onto the left. Lewis Firbank also moved to centre stage quite literally into an attacking midfield role. The sun came out and started to shine and warm the cockles a bit.

An early Ollie Worland free kick just misses after a strong shot just goes wide

So followed a strong passage of Leeds play, a Marc Giddens shot was saved on the line again. Ned dry's slick run and finish through the Centre was again saved by the Bradford keeper. The right hand channel was proving to be a good outlet, with Kelan swales and Sam McDermott combing and penetrating the defence at will.

Meanwhile on the left wing Danny Edwards was proving to be quite a handful with one particular free kick swinging again tantalizingly close to goal. The suspense was getting palpable as Leeds started to produce some quite fluid attacking football. Sam McDermott had another two shots go wide and again Ned and Kelan were forcing the Bradford keeper to keep alive. The Leeds central defensive unit of Joe Hayton and Ollie Worland were starting to defend through attack in the middle of the field , pushing the defensive line on to such an extent that Bradford were adjusted their tactics to start hitting Leeds on the break.

What followed was one next was probably Bradford's only foray into the Leeds box. Unfortunately in spite of all our attacking prowess, Leeds lost concentration for a moment and Bradford scored to make it one nil.

Being down against the run of play, Leeds needed to change something to turn the pressure into points. The man of the moment was O'Neill who came on for Ned Dry and promptly took an assist from Mason Mail and Devon Ward to attack the left hand side of the box and score on the bottom right of the net.

Being 1-1 and a Yorkshire Cup, this meant "Extra time". But as quick as it came and despite the additional 15 extra time, it passed without event and saw the Leeds and Bradford boys cancel each other out. So the match finished at 1-1.

Doc suggested after the match that .." when the boys click with their striking form we will start to punish teams, but we do need to find that form quickly so we can progress and close the game out in that last third of the pitch"...

Whilst it was a source of much frustration for the crowd of parents that the boys did not score more goals, there was the usual team passion and heart on show, so I think bearing in mind how rusty we assumed the team would be its clear they have not lost their key strength going into 2011.

Looking ahead to the next game the Leeds B team in my view can win the Yorkshire Cup and the more games they play the more chance they have of gaining some form and consistency.