

Maghull U11 vs. Leeds B U 11 - Maghull High School, Liverpool

Saturday 5th Feb 2011. 10.30am.

The intense drizzle and grey skies of Merseyside welcomed the Leeds B under 11's as they rolled into Maghull for this much anticipated return fixture. Leeds travelled with high expectation buoyed by a good performance against Bradford in the cup and having previously beaten Maghull at home 8-0. As events unfolded this Maghull team proved to be transformed from the last time both sides met. Leeds appeared complacent in the first half and in the end it turned out to be an extreme examination with Maghull coming out 4-1 winners.

The first half of the game saw all the early pressure coming from Maghull, as their midfield taught Leeds how to control a game using width and attacking football from all positions. The Maghull wingers drove the ball with pace, avoiding being drawn into the midfield battle. As such this meant they could work around the sides of a very narrow Leeds 4-4-2 formation. Matthew Owen the Leeds goalkeeper was called into action virtually straight away having to save the ball at their winger's feet on three occasions in the first five minutes.

Maghull's first goal was not long in coming. They broke through the left hand side and a defensive scramble led to their right winger chipping the ball into the top of the net to make it 1-0. Their second goal came from another left hand flank attack, shooting with power to the bottom right of the net. The key issue for Leeds was the lack of first time tackles going in and closing down of the opposition when they had the ball. It was almost as though the boys were a bit dumbstruck at the pace and power in which Maghull had started the game.

Standout players of the half for Leeds were Matthew Owen with six saves which kept the score down to a respectable 3-0 nil. Devon Ward also looked very lively at left back and had an enormous amount of work throughout the first half cutting out shots and combining well with Ollie Worland at centre back. It's true to say Leeds were found wanting despite some grit from Lewis Firbank and attacking runs from Ned Dry on goal.

The second half of the game brought a change of personnel. Eddie Copeland and Joe Hayton came on in defence and O'Neil Ouinsou with Danny Edwards into the midfield and forward line. Danny Edwards was proving to be quite a handful as the game developed and started to combine and get to the ball first with Sam McDermott.

Back in defence Ollie Worland and Joe Hayton had to dig in and head the Maghull long balls away. Slowly the tide began to turn in Leeds favour as Joe and O'Neill started to gain some possession. Kelan Swales managed to connect and put Leeds on the front foot and so started moves bringing Sam and Danny into the game.

Eddie Copeland showed a great display in adversity. In true right back tradition he attacked and pushed forward, keeping the ball and going very close from Leeds first free kick of the day.

It was this Edwards, McDermott, Copeland combination that led to the Leeds goal. The Maghull keeper did a great save from Sam McDermott some said it went over the line, but Kelan Swales made sure running in to finish the job and make it 3-1.

This was to prove to be the highlight of the afternoon for Leeds. Maghull seemed awakened by the Leeds goal and followed up swiftly with their fourth and match winning shot from their left wing.

Matthew Owen finished the game as he started with two further great saves, one a catch in mid-air which led to a momentary injury and finally a punch over the bar from another strong shot which looked like a certain goal. This was a game of defend, defend, defend for Leeds. For this reporter it was the displays of Devon Ward, Eddie Copeland and Matthew Owen that stood out. Unfortunately Maghull muted Leeds B's usual slick midfield play and as such the boys' chances were very limited.