

Saturday 19th November. Away at Sheffield Schools FA at SGP Graves

Zach, Big Brad, Little Brad, Jack, Sam, Ben, Leo, Jamie, Olly P, Charlie, Jake and Max. (Russell, Alfie and Ian were none travellers due to league rules around the match day squad). Young Bobby made his managerial debut in place of Coach Olly who was making an appearance on Sky TV's Soccer AM (I've always thought he had the perfect face for radio). Big Brad, Little Brad and Jake started on the bench for a game that had a scrappy start with little action of note (although that was a godsend given that my pens were struggling with the cold). The first shot was a powerful drive from Olly P straight into the keepers hands. Both teams were passing well whilst Ben and Leo were both called upon to make defensive blocks before Sheffield had their first shot which was high, wide and handsome but Sheffield soon took the lead as a shot from range was spilled by Zach and a Sheffield forward coolly collected the loose ball before casually stepping around Zach to slot home for 1-0 to Sheffield. Sheffield were busy advancing down the Leeds right and it was on this side that a quick Leeds throw in taken by Jamie found Jake who shimmied and stroked home the equaliser for 1-1.

There was little to report again as both teams seemed to be cancelling each other out but a lovely pass by Sheffield split the centre of Leeds defence and the following shot beat Zach low to his left to make it 2-1 to the home side. There followed some fluid football from Sheffield and Sam made some blocks and Leo was as cool as a cucumber at the back. Sheffield were definitely winning the shot count although some resolute defending ensured that they weren't making Zach work. Ben and Olly P were combining well down one side whilst Sam and Jake were doing the same down the other but Leeds were getting dominated in the centre of the park. As the first period came to an end it gave Leeds a chance to regroup. Jamie, Olly P and Max were the bench warmers for the second period and again the early exchanges were steady but uneventful and Sheffield were caught offside before Charlie shot wide for Leeds. Sam then dribbled past three players and gave the ball to Little Brad who warmed the keepers hands to win a corner for Leeds which was well dealt with by the Sheffield keeper. Sam was then in action at the other end of the pitch with a clearance after Zach failed to hold the ball.

Zach, Ben and Sam defended well next before Ben powered forward but his final ball lacked accuracy. It was proving to be a day for the Leeds defence as Sam made two more excellent tackles before Leeds won a free kick and Charlie curled in a cross that Leo headed over with a solid attempt. Zach then made a save after Sheffield had hit the bar. Another Leeds free kick by Little Brad again found Leo's head but the Sheffield keeper saved well. A good Leeds foray resulted in a shot from Big Brad but once more the keeper stayed strong. The game was swinging back and forth but there was little end result by either team. A speculative Sheffield punt had Zach back peddling and staring into the sun but fortunately it dropped over the bar. Another speculative effort was parried by Zach and Sheffield were quicker to the loose ball and the forward bobbed it over a stranded Zach for 3-1 to the hosts. It was harsh on Leeds who looked good at the back although they had to be as the midfield were getting overrun.

Zach then made a decent save from a free kick just before the whistle ended the second period. Leeds were going to have to make their chances count in the last period if they were to get something out of this game. Charlie, Jake and Olly P sat out the final period as Bobby asked his team if they 'wanted this'. A much brighter start came from Leeds with some great interplay down the left. They won a free kick and Leo spotted Ben in acres of space and his cross was well met by Jamie to win a corner. The corner eventually came out to Sam who launched an Exocet missile with his left boot from outside the box but the Sheffield keeper somehow pushed it wide for another Leeds corner. Jack was next to surge forward beating a couple of Sheffield tackles but the ball ran away from him. At the Leeds end Sheffield had a few corners that Zach dealt with and Sam made another good tackle. Time was running out and Leeds weren't creating many chances. It was nearly four for Sheffield as they had three snaps at goal from inside the six yard box but Zach kept his composure to twice save before Max helped him out. Some more good work down the Leeds left gave Jamie an opportunity but sadly he couldn't make it count. Leeds were still trying to go forward but seemed to lack the cutting edge that had been a feature of their game earlier in the season and the final ball today was below par. With the final kick of the game Sheffield made it 4-1 after a poor clearance from Zach resulted in a corner that found a Sheffield player with more time than he should have been allowed in the Leeds box.

In summary it was a poor day at the office for Leeds who gave away too many free kicks and failed to create any clear cut chances. The defence, despite the score line, acquitted themselves well under a lot of pressure and in fairness the score flattered the home side. Time to regroup and look forward to Wednesday's game against Bradford's Academy team.