

U11 Leeds B v Sheffield 1st October 2016 – Match Report

Having seen Sheffield play in the recent tournament at St Theresa's, the Leeds B team were well aware that they were up against a very strong side, and none of the Leeds boys were expecting an easy morning.

The Leeds players arranged themselves in formation and the tension heightened as Sheffield delayed the kick-off for a last-minute team talk.

At last Sheffield kicked off and the Sheffield No 11 soon showed his intent with a strong shoulder barge that sent Michael Walker hurtling to the ground - launching the corner flag in the process.

Sheffield made several early forays into the Leeds box – on the first attempt the Sheffield front man overran the ball, which was gratefully gathered by the ever alert Leeds keeper – Alex McIntyre.

Then the Sheffield striker managed to get past the goalkeeper, only for Alex Carroll to make the first of many excellent tackles to prevent Leeds from going behind early on.

As Leeds settled, Max Lenighan began to boss the midfield, and the defensive trio of Toby Barker-Smith, James Gregory and Alex Carroll shut the visitors out and distributed well from the back.

It was time for Leeds to turn on their attacking flare with great work by Ben Ratcliffe down the left, ghosting past the Sheffield defence and unleashing a shot from a tight angle into the side netting.

Then the accurate boot of James Waters sent 2 balls into the box in quick succession, both of which were almost spilled by the Sheffield stopper - but gathered at the second attempt.

The Leeds midfield were starting to link-up well, with Max, Michael and Ben passing the ball around, closing down the Sheffield lads and creating opportunities of their own – one of which resulted in a cracking shot by Charlie Eastwood that the Sheffield goalie could only just hang onto.

Shortly afterwards James Gregory and Toby Barker-Smith combined to provide a searching ball to Ben who took the ball past 3 defenders on the edge of the box, and picked out Max whose thundered shot was once again saved by the keeper.

Sheffield had several further shots on goal but Alex Mac was equal to them all with some cracking saves and the first third ended with Leeds matching Sheffield in all areas and an optimistic murmur went around the home crowd at the break.

The Leeds coach Callum made 4 changes for the second period and Leeds kicked off.

The new arrivals made an immediate impact with an incisive ball from George Brown down the left that evaded the Sheffield keeper, but was cleared by the last defender.

Some lovely interplay between George and Kyle Astall resulted in Michael fizzing a ball in from the right that flew tantalizingly across the goal, but the Leeds forwards couldn't get the necessary touch to turn it goalwards.

Then on 28 minutes Sheffield were awarded a corner. The in-swinger ricocheted off several players and bulged the back of the net: 1-0 to the visitors.

It seemed the floodgates had opened when Sheffield knocked in another 2 in the next 3 minutes, first with a strike from the edge of the box that looped over the keeper and then the big number 3 ran free and shot past the outstretched glove of Alex Mac.

You wouldn't have blamed Leeds heads for dropping at this stage but Callum rallied his charges from the sideline with shouts of encouragement and instruction, and before long Kyle and Jake Kilbride had shored things up at the back and were playing the ball out well to Max who was once again taking charge in midfield.

Then Michael won a header on the right that was collected by Denelle Godfrey. With a slide-rule pass Denelle picked out Charlie in the box, who coolly rounded the keeper and shot home to give the hosts a lifeline.

The second period ended 3-1 and the stage was set for an exciting climax.

Ben Ratcliffe was back on for the final 3rd and he made an impact after 3 minutes, dancing down the left, past a gaggle of defenders and shooting low to make it 3-2.

Leeds were now in the ascendency with Jake knocking quality balls forward and the midfield passing the ball around neatly.

On another of Ben's runs he was fouled in the area and the referee blew for a penalty to Leeds. The ball was well struck but an athletic dive by the Sheffield keeper saw it saved.

The visitors quickly played the ball down the field and knocked one in at the other end to make the final score 4-2.

Although the Leeds B team were defeated they can take heart from the fact that they came up against a quality side and were close to getting the better of them.

The spirit shown in coming back from 3-0 down when they could have easily capitulated is a credit to all the boys in white and they can look forward to their next home game with confidence.