

9 November 2019 – U12 Bees v Alex Soccer Centre

The Bees kicked off their participation in the European League against Alex Soccer Centre at Winsford.

The game kicked off after a 40-minute wait, and the delay seemed to effect the Bees' concentration more than their opponents. However, Waverton were on the front foot from kick off and a scramble inside the Alex box led to Millie prodding home from close range for her fourth goal of the season. Menna provided a vital outlet on the right wing for the Bees' and continued her fine form by repeatedly beating her opponent and delivering vital crosses. Centre-forward Raphi showed some real class by dropping off her marker to receive the ball from deep, finding her team-mates with delightful first-time square balls, and she was unlucky to be thwarted by the goalkeeper when surging through the middle. Further fine goalkeeping and last-ditch defending also denied Georgia and two long-range efforts from holding midfielder Emma.

Alex carried a threat of their own with their pacy centre-forward proving a real handful for Waverton's defence. Captain Amelia just about managed to dispossess her in dangerous positions on more than one occasion, and right-back Sophia displayed great concentration and determination with a couple of vital block tackles on the halfway line before Alex's centre-forward could escape.

Sarina was composed and largely untroubled in goal until the collective amnesia that seemed to have effected most of the team due to the long wait before kick-off saw a goal kick go straight to the Alex centre forward, who – unmarked on the edge of the box – duly smashed it beyond the exposed goalkeeper to make it 1-1 at half-time.

The second half saw an improvement in focus and it was great to see the girls take more responsibility for affecting the match by thinking about their play and making their own positive decisions. Left back Daisy demonstrated this with great communication between herself and her fellow defenders to better deal with Alex attacks, as well as pushing herself further forward to contribute to Waverton attacks. Attacking the ball, she made several dangerous forward passes, one of which found Emma, now playing centre-forward, unmarked on the edge of the Alex box. Emma did well to beat the goalkeeper at the second attempt, but unfortunately her effort was disallowed for offside. The Bees' endeavour and positivity went further unrewarded when the referee failed to award what appeared to be a clear penalty after left-winger Georgia was clattered by Alex's goalkeeper after reaching the ball ahead of her when she burst through the middle into the box.

Waverton were also losing the above-the-waist battle, with right-winger Ella in particular frustrated more than once after beating her marker with a lovely piece of skill only to find herself dragged back, pushed or obstructed by the arms of several Alex players. When the referee finally deemed a two-handed shove in the back excessive, Georgia stepped up and the Alex keeper did well to save her well-placed shot. Millie was not to be cowed though, winning the ball back with a couple of particularly unyielding tackles, and defensive midfielder Ruby was as belligerent as ever, keeping up her trademark relentless pressure and being unlucky to see a left-footed shot from the edge of the box fly just wide.

Elsa, moved into the centre of the defence for a period, displayed her improved reading of the game and composure to play the ball out of dangerous positions, Amelie made two or three confident catches in goal, and Amelia foiled quick breaks from Alex' centre-forward with some shrewd positioning and strength. However, the Bees' frustrations were ultimately confirmed as Alex's centre-forward took advantage of some hesitation and slack marking in the Bees' defence to add two more goals. The Bees found themselves on the wrong side of a 3-1 scoreline after what was actually a very even and entertaining match. After the game, co-captain Raphi provided some useful constructive feedback: great determination and skill going forward, but work to be done on assertiveness and focus to help defend as a team – something the girls were mature enough to recognise as a collective.

Player of the Match was Emma, selected by Ella for her determined tackling.