

## AFC Waverton U12 Bees v Frodsham Juniors U12s

The Bees began the decade with a game of two halves against Frodsham Juniors.

Playing into the wind, the Bees extended the season of goodwill by beginning in uncharacteristically generous fashion, a succession of “After you”, “No, after you” exchanges seeing Frodsham’s forwards advancing unencumbered on the Waverton goal and more than one player was thankful to goalkeeper Raphi to bale them out with a number of crucial saves. Raphi also claimed a corner and did well to get both hands behind an astonishing 35-yard free kick that was destined to sneak under the bar. However, the team paid the price for their lacklustre initial performance as Frodsham’s striker fired home having run through another gaping hole in Waverton’s defence.

The Bees, fortunately, seemed slightly more interested going forwards than putting tackles in, and Ella and Georgia began to find some joy down the right-hand side, eventually forcing a corner. Georgia crossed from the right and Ella met it with her right foot, leathering a sensational volley into the net from 10 yards to draw the Bees level. A couple of positional changes saw Amelia and Ruby swap places and revert to their normal positions, and the Bees slowly dragged themselves back into the game. At right- and left-back, Millie and Daisy got to grips with their opposing wingers, both showing great awareness to just shepherd wind-assisted through-balls out for goal-kicks. Centre-forward Emma started to disrupt Frodsham’s hitherto untroubled defenders, and more good work from Georgia in the right side of Frodsham’s box saw the ball laid off to Emma to her left, who applied a well-hit finish into the bottom right corner for her fourth goal of the season. Two bits of quality had given the Bees two goals from two shots and a lead they probably didn’t deserve bearing in mind their opponent’s overall dominance of the half, but Frodsham got some reward in finding an equaliser before the break.

If Waverton had not done themselves justice in the first half, they rectified that admirably in the second. A change in formation saw Evie introduced to form a two-girl defence with captain Amelia, and Raphi and Georgia given licence to roam as twin strikers. Elsa, playing her first game since November, came on in left midfield, and as her confidence grew, so did the number of attacks down that side of the pitch. With Raphi in front of her and Millie inside, Elsa kept the Bees going forward with effective throw-ins, and dangerous balls into the channel with her trusty left boot. The consistent Menna dominated the right-hand side and Waverton were dangerous throughout the half. Georgia got to the byline a number of times, only for her final ball to be blocked, and Ruby, Raphi and Daisy were all unlucky not to get their names on the scoresheet as their shots were either saved or just wide.

Amelia, now attuned to the game, won every challenge she needed to with strength, assertiveness and some judicious leaning. Alongside her, Evie snuffed out anything that came down her side of the pitch – and made some good passes having regained possession – but with Waverton almost unrecognisable from the team that played the first half, the ball spent the vast majority of its time in the opposing half. More battering-ram play from Ruby in the centre of the pitch resulted in a free kick in a central position 25 yards from goal: Georgia stepped up and went one better than Frodsham’s first-half effort as her thunderous shot was just too hot for Frodsham’s keeper to handle just underneath the bar and Waverton re-took the lead in the most spectacular fashion.

Frodsham weren’t to be cowed and threw a few more players forward to find an equaliser. Goalkeeper Sarina, thus far untroubled other than fielding a few overhit clearances, first did well to pluck a corner from the air and then ensured three points for her team with a fantastic save with five minutes remaining. As the ball pinged round the Bees’ box following another corner, Sarina showed tremendous bravery to close down a Frodsham player and tip a vicious shot onto the bar to keep the Bees’ second-half clean sheet intact.

The game finished 3-2 to the Bees, their victory probably deserved on their second-half display. Special mention to all the girls that played in defence today as the Bees were awarded six free kicks for catching

Frodsham offside. The high line and ensuing trap being an especially helpful extra defender in both halves of the game: Amelia in particular showed great awareness to step up at the vital second to leave Frodsham's striker just a foot offside towards the end of the game. Speaking of which...

Player of the Match, as selected by Evie, was captain Amelia for her strong and assertive defending in the second half.