

## 18/1/20: AFC Waverton Bees vs Sandbach

The Bees moved up to second in the League after extending their unbeaten run to four games against an under-strength Sandbach at Winsford.

The match started very evenly, Waverton lacking a bit of focus following a 40-minute delay to the kick-off and Sandbach doing a good job of retaining possession with just eight players. Sandbach's imposing right winger was a very useful outlet, with any number of Waverton players being unable to halt several barracking charges towards the Bees' box. Eventually, Waverton's numbers began to tell, and following some great pressing at goal kicks from captain Raphi and left-winger Daisy they were able to get their neat offensive passing going and exert some pressure in and around the Sandbach box. Striker Emma found herself free in the area, and although her initial shot was well-saved, Daisy was able to square the loose ball back to her, and Emma slotted home her second goal in two games.

With the dam broken, Waverton pressed home their advantage. With the front three of Emma, Georgia and Raphi just failing with the final ball two or three times, Daisy and Emma were again involved as the former found the latter with a quick throw-in, and Emma was able to just beat the offside trap to set strike partner Georgia away; Georgia made no mistake to extend the lead. At the back, Amelia and Evie resumed their burgeoning two-player defensive partnership, defending high, passing short, and leaving goalkeeper Sarina a virtual spectator. Sandbach's only shot of the half rolled harmlessly behind, but it at least gave Ruby the opportunity to demonstrate her effective goal-kicks. As the half wore on and Waverton's territorial dominance increased – helped in no small part by Ruby's surging runs and Millie and Sophia making timely interceptions in midfield – captain Raphi capped an impressive performance with a very tidy finish into the bottom corner with her weaker left foot with the last kick of the half.

Being three up, the Bees were a little more relaxed in the second half, and despite a reshuffle to a three-player defence, Sandbach looked the stronger team in the opening minutes. Goalkeeper Amelie – having already showing off her improved kicking from hand – was called into regular action, and made two very good saves before Sandbach's right winger again caused havoc, drawing four or five Bees to her. This left a team-mate unmarked in the middle and she made no mistake when the ball eventually came across to her, firing past a stranded Amelie, a goal Sandbach fully deserved.

Ella, both at right-midfield and during a late cameo in the middle, displayed her customary coolness on the ball, one beautiful turn beating two Sandbach players, and Menna was a revelation playing the second half as a lone striker. A neat turn of her own left her bamboozled marker in a heap as she spun away, and her excellent footwork and runs in behind the defence created a number of chances and corners for Waverton. Millie was unlucky when Menna's excellent layoff on the edge of the box fell to her weaker left side, Sandbach's increasingly desperate defending preventing her from getting it onto her right foot. Eventually though, following good work from Sarina on the left wing, Ruby was able to play Georgia in through the middle and she made no mistake to finally make the game safe for Waverton.

Good communication at the back between Amelia, Daisy and Elsa saw through balls dealt with more assertively, and also saw two of them initiate a positional swap between themselves – Daisy coming over to left back to deal with that right winger, and Elsa now free to strike up a good partnership with Georgia down the right flank: some great short throw-ins and one-twos, as well as some of Elsa's trademark slide-rule passes into space – this week with her right foot. On the other side Daisy was helped immensely by first Sophia, and then her replacement Sarina, really getting stuck in to the right winger, showing great strength and tenacity to either retain possession or win it back.

With Sandbach's heroic efforts taking a toll, the game was over as a contest, but there was still time for Georgia to bag her third hat-trick of the season, smashing home another 25-yard free kick that was even better than the one she bagged last week.

Player of the Week, as selected by Evie, was Georgia for another great attacking display.

Finally, credit to Sandbach and their coaches: the battled womanfully (oh yeah!) with eight players all game, declining the offer of a Waverton sub (even when they were down to seven for five minutes in the first half), and played some really good football right until the end – a very committed and courageous bunch of girls!