

07/03/20: AFC Waverton Bees vs Crosfield

In the same week that Liverpool's long unbeaten League run came to an end, so too did the second longest League run as AFC Waverton U12s succumbed to a determined Crosfield at Hartford.

Following the coronavirus-averting pre-match wave, Waverton lined up against an imposing Crosfield team, and it wasn't long before their physicality saw them menacing the Bees' box. Centre-half Lottie was enjoying a good tussle with the opposing centre-forward, with honours roughly even although goalkeeper Amelie had to make a couple of good saves when the Crosfield player did eventually gain the upper hand. Full-backs Sophia and Daisy also had their hands full – Sophia forcing the left winger wide and Daisy going shoulder to shoulder with the right-winger before cutting out a dangerous cross. Ruby, Millie and Ella had their work cut out in midfield having to do more defending than in previous weeks, but when they did get some time with the ball at their feet they reminded everyone why the team has been playing so well in recent weeks. Ruby was unlucky with a couple of efforts, one from long-range and another after bursting into the box, and Ella and Millie were both closed down by good defending. Up front, Georgia also just couldn't quite get away, and when she – or any of team-mates – was able to get a shot off, they found the Crosfield keeper in great form. She made half a dozen good saves, snaffling the loose ball as well to prevent a tap-in on at least one occasion.

Crosfield's strength in the centre of the pitch finally told as they surged through the middle in numbers, with their striker dispatching a fine finish to Amelie's left. 1-0 to Crosfield at half-time probably wasn't an accurate reflection of the number chances created by either side, but Crosfield had made theirs count.

The second half began with a more attacking line-up for the Bees, with Raphi and Daisy forming a new partnership up front. However, with Crosfield's midfield upping the intensity further, opportunities were few and far between with Raphi forced to come very deep to collect the ball. With Emma roaming on the left wing and Georgia and Ella trying to press down the right, the Bees eventually got the ball between two defenders in a dangerous position only for Raphi to have strayed fractionally offside.

At the other end, Amelia and Evie certainly had their work cut out, frequently finding themselves outnumbered against four advancing opponents. Evie was particularly strong and was even able to transition defence to attack with a couple of firm clearances. Behind them Sarina was busier than Amelie had been in the first half, keeping a couple of well-hit long range efforts out with her feet and showing great technique to claim some equally forceful through-balls. With Crosfield again winning the midfield battle, the pressure eventually told as their striker prodded home from short range despite Sarina's brave attempt to close her down.

At 2-0 down, a bit of pride kicked in and a slight re-shuffle saw Emma move up front, swapping with Daisy who slotted in at left midfield. With Ruby and Lottie refusing to let Crosfield have everything their own way, and Georgia linking well down the right, the Bees finished the game the stronger. The goal their determination deserved finally came when quick thinking from Daisy and Raphi saw the former's long throw find the latter five yards goal-side of Crosfield's defensive line; Raphi sprinted clear and kept her composure to slot a finish inside the right-hand upright.

Despite good pressure approaching the final whistle, including good runs down the left by both Emma and Ruby, Waverton couldn't force an equaliser, and Crosfield finished the game deserved victors by two goals to one.

Any disappointment amongst the girls at the end was testament to the high standards they have set themselves during their seven-game unbeaten run, particularly in the games since New Year, but every

team has an 'off' day eventually and they can be proud of both the way they have played since the end of November (when they last lost) and their determination to try and get something from this game.

Player of the Match, as chosen by Lottie, was Raphi for her fine goal that set up a grandstand finish.