

3rd October 2020: AFC Waverton U13 Bees vs Runcorn Linnets Yellow

The Bees finally kicked off their Dane Division League season a month late in the pouring rain at Moss Farm, and with no parents in attendance. On the plus side, Mums and Dads: you didn't miss a classic.

Runcorn have entered their stronger Yellow team in the Mid-Cheshire League this season, this side bearing no resemblance to the Linnets' White team that the Bees' had two very competitive games with last season. From the off it was obvious that this team was bigger, stronger and a stern test for Waverton's opening game. Runcorn got the ball wide at every opportunity, with good wingers on either flank, and they both looked for their bustling centre forward. Defenders Amelia and Evie had their work cut out covering for each other and nicking balls out for corners, and defensive midfielders Daisy and Ruby also found themselves very busy – with attacking midfielder Millie having to spend more time running back to help out than with the ball at her feet. Waverton looked a little dangerous early on with twin strikers Raphi and Emma linking well with Georgia. Left winger Menna and Millie combined well to create space and play clever balls in behind for striker Emma to run onto, although she unlucky to be pulled up for offside with the most promising of these when played through the middle by Raphi. A good short corner routine between Emma and Daisy led to a scramble in Runcorn's box, Menna hit a first-time effort from distance wide, and Georgia had a couple of her own long-range efforts thwarted by the Linnets' imposing goalkeeper. However, once the goalkeeper had it in her hands, the pressure on Waverton really began.

She launched several monster kicks downfield, forcing more corners and stretching the Bees' defence to breaking point. Goalkeeper Sarina was called upon more than once to scamper off her line, tidy up some dangerous through balls, and relieve pressure with some lengthy kicks of her own, but eventually Runcorn's pressure told and the floodgates opened. Waverton didn't help themselves by failing to deal with either the long airborne clearances or corners landing in the six yard box, and with no-one challenging for bouncing balls, Runcorn helped themselves to four first half goals virtually unopposed. With water raining down and goals raining in, the Bees were a bedraggled bunch when the half-time whistle went.

A positional reshuffle saw Waverton revert to three at the back for the second half, taking a bit of pressure off Millie and Ruby in central midfield. Ella came on on the right wing and gave a good account of herself despite the difference in size between her and her opposite numbers. She also gave the team some much-needed respite with some excellent throw-ins down her side of the pitch. On the other flank, Sophia had the unenviable task of dealing with Runcorn's excellent right winger, and despite her best efforts – left back Evie, central defender Amelia even right back Daisy were called upon more than once to close her down at the last minute or desperately cut out her crosses at the near post. Ruby, with less pressure to defend, added a bit of bite in the middle of the park and managed a couple of her driving runs in the second period, unlucky not to get beyond the last defender with the second of these, and when Raphi came on alongside her, she too put a determined shift in chasing down balls in the corner and putting Runcorn's defenders under a bit of pressure. With Georgia doing an excellent job of holding her position and running the channels as well, Waverton put together one glorious passing move that just lacked a final ball, Raphi and Georgia eventually just getting crowded out by the corner flag, and some more good interplay gave Ella a shooting chance from the edge of the box, but it went just wide.

With the Bees proving a sterner proposition than the first half, and Evie dealing effectively with a couple of the keeper's long clearances, Runcorn sought to reassert themselves physically. This meant a further battering for Amelia, Evie and Daisy – which they more than stood up to – but another corner brought a fifth for Runcorn. Amelia was suffering her own tribulations in goal with Runcorn attempting to disrupt her drop kicks, but she was particularly brave when she closed down the advancing left winger and impressively smothered her shot at point blank range on the corner of the six-yard box. Waverton were unlucky to concede a second goal in the half when a blatant two-handed shove in the back caused Daisy to miscue her attempted clearance into the back of her own net.

Waverton gave a much better account of themselves after the restart, showing a good bit of pride and resilience – as well as fight for their team-mates – to significantly improve in the second half.

Player of the Match was Amelie, as selected by Daisy, for her brave and unflappable goalkeeping under pressure.