

## 26<sup>th</sup> September 2020: AFC Waverton U13 Bees vs Barnton

Tough day at the office for the Bees in their friendly with Barnton on Saturday lunchtime, finding themselves on the wrong end of 5-1 scoreline that didn't tell the whole story.

Waverton kicked off with the wind behind them, but it was immediately apparent that Barnton were a big, strong team who took control of midfield and spread the play well to their two wingers at the earliest opportunity, putting the Bees under concerted pressure in the opening period. The unflappable Elsa just about had the measure Barnton's right winger, forcing her wide and out of play if she couldn't tackle her the first time, and Amelia began her ding-dong battle with her substantial opposite number. Barnton's left winger used her tidy feet and judicious use of the shoulder however to repeatedly get beyond both midfielders and defenders and cause havoc in the Waverton box. Goalkeeper Lottie, between the posts in a competitive match for the first time, had to have her wits about her more than once to race off her line and claim the ball just inside the area and at the toes of Barnton's striker, and she was unlucky when a well-hit shot just squeezed through her fingers to drop over the line to open the scoring. But this didn't effect her confidence, and she commanded her box thereafter, making one great save to tip a shot inches past her left-hand post.

Going forward, Waverton looked dangerous on the counter attack, with Raphi, Emma and Georgia all playing nicely weighted through balls beyond Barnton's high backline for one of the others to run onto, and Elsa doing the same with her throw-ins. Unfortunately, Barnton's centre-half, who was excellent throughout, more often than not managed to snuff out the danger, although it did lead to a series of corners and a number of half-chances for all three girls that were either blocked, well-saved or just wide. This short period of Waverton pressure also saw Daisy smash a long-range effort over the bar, but Barnton soon reasserted themselves and doubled their lead with a fine strike from outside the area leaving Lottie with no chance.

A half-time discussion about giving no quarter to their opponent's physicality saw the Bees a much fiercer proposition in the second half, the back three in particular being in no mood to see their team bullied. Evie at left back kept up Elsa's good work, reading the game well to attack and intercept the ball on several occasions and also helping out Amelia in flattening Barnton's centre forward a couple of times. Amelia herself, captaining by example as always, otherwise kept her opposite number in check, attacking the ball with purpose and outmuscling her larger opponent time and again. At right back, Daisy found the measure of the previously dangerous left winger, using her strength to win the battle of the shoulder barges and reduce her opponent's effectiveness.

This gave Waverton a more solid base to attack from, and with Lottie now injecting some energy into midfield, and both Sarina and Ella showing some nice touches and composure on the ball as well as some tenacity to win the ball back in the central midfield battleground, Georgia began making repeated progress down the right flank. This progress was often stopped by the excellent centre half, but also by an increasing number of cheeky nibbles at her ankles as she went past a Barnton player. Eventually, after some good close control in the box prompted one nibble too many, the referee pointed to the spot. A determined Georgia stepped up to take the responsibility, but her penalty was well-saved by the goalkeeper to her right. The sucker punch came shortly after with another well-hit Barnton shot from distance squeezing between Amelie's gloves to drop over the line. Amelie also didn't let this faze her, and she used her hands well throughout the half, as well as deploying her ever-lengthening kicks.

The Bees persevered. Ruby and Raphi returned to midfield, and the former ignited her usual game by adding some trademark surging runs to her improving positional discipline and a good corner routine with Georgia, and the latter using her intelligence and touch to find space between larger opponents. Emma, playing up front in the second half, also displayed her improvement with a couple of gorgeous touches that held up play and retained possession on the half-way line before releasing the on-rushing Georgia down the right. The Bees' reward came when another of Georgia's excellent corners from the right was met emphatically with a first-time finish from Emma inside the six yard box.

With the Bees buoyed by positively effecting the scoreline, concerted efforts were made to attack more. Elsa and Daisy continued the throw-in barrage down either flank, Ruby was unlucky to be squeezed out of a shot on the edge of the box, and Amelia and Daisy made forays into midfield after winning possession. With the girl's tiring a little though, the Bees backline found itself slightly outnumbered, and despite Evie's best efforts and two great saves from Amelie, Barnton profited with a couple of tap-ins to give the final scoreline a somewhat distorted look.

Barnton were undoubtedly the better team, but certainly not four goals better: with luck on their side, the game could easily have finished 3-2, or even 2-2. Once again, Waverton Bees showed impressive resilience and determination to not give up in what was a tough game, Barnton's coach praising Waverton's defenders especially after the game.

Player of the Match was Lottie for making an assured goalkeeping debut, as chosen by the equally impressive Georgia.