

Leeds U11 girls v Wirral Girls 13th January 2024

More cup heroics as Leeds girls march on in the cup!

Leeds Schools FA U11's took it the distance in the third round of the English Schools Cup against Wirral, winning on penalties after the match finished 1-1 after extra time in a nail-biting encounter. The girls now progress into the Quarter Finals of the competition. The match was played at an intense pace with Leeds having much the better of the first half but Wirral fighting back strongly in the second to set up a tense finale.

After a 9-0 victory for Wirral in the second round, the Whites knew they'd be in for a tough game and Leeds started strongly, with Orla Trower rattling the crossbar in the opening exchanges and Ava Buchan stinging the palms of the keeper with a powerful shot from distance. Leeds were causing all sorts of problems for Wirral down both flanks with Hollie Anthony and Orla relentlessly winning back possession and pouring forwards. Ava and Olivia Butler were marshalling possession in the centre of the park to control the game, using their range of passing to turn round the Wirral defence and keep them hemmed in. The full backs of Maisie Smith and Seren Colenutt looked composed at the back with good supporting movement and distribution and were able to close down the moments when Wirral looked to break at pace. Leeds then got the goal they deserved with another incisive run and cross from Orla turned in by Hollie at the back post. The first half continued in the same vein with half chances for Sophia Dudley upfront for Leeds being well charged down by the Wirral defence, and they were unfortunate not to come in further ahead at the break.

Wirral came out in the second half rejuvenated and started to press deeper into Leeds half as the match went on. Ruby Burrow at centre back organised the defence well with some strong and decisive tackling, whilst Seren and Anna Joynson worked hard either side as Wirral continued to press for an equalizer putting Ava and Hollie Appleton under more pressure in midfield. The Wirral 9 and 10 were seeing more of the ball now and looked dangerous when in possession, and two freekicks provided further opportunity for Wirral to put the defence under pressure. When Leeds did threaten it was again down the flanks with Georgia Dudley showing strong running to transition the team forward and Darcey Keens holding the ball up well upfront and bringing others into play further up the field. As the clock ticked down though with 5 minutes remaining Wirral pressed forward again with a dangerous cross into the box falling at the feet of the Wirral striker who bundled the ball home for a deserved equalizer. The drama was not over though as Wirral pressed for the winner. They thought they had it with a minute remaining as they again pounced on a loose ball to tap in from close range. The goal was swiftly ruled out for offside though as the Leeds fans breathed a sigh of relief. Extra time ensued and Leeds fought back creating half chances for Darcey and Georgia in the dying moments with some last ditch tackling from the Wirral defence leaving them hanging on as the clock ticked down.

With honours even, in the end it went to penalties which seemed a cruel outcome for either team given the efforts on the pitch. First up was Ruby who after performing a similar role in the last round confidently slotted home the first penalty. Ava Buchan followed with a superbly taken shot into the corner. Emily Hall in goal, no stranger to penalty heroics, made two key saves for Leeds to leave Orla with the decisive penalty to step up and clinch the win to take the girls through to the next round in dramatic fashion.