

Rotherham U11 Girls v Leeds U11 Girls in the ESFA Championship Knock out Cup

24.11.23

On a bitterly cold evening, Leeds Schools FA U11's girls travelled to Rotherham on Friday night in the first round of the National Cup. This was the first meeting between the two form teams in the region with both unbeaten. After only a few minutes into the game it was clearly evident why both teams had made impressive starts to their season.

The pacey, feisty opening minutes warmed an expectant crowd as both teams tried to achieve a foothold in the game. Leeds were combative in the tackle and quick in possession, constantly probing and creating width for Heidi Partington and Orla Trowler. Chances were at premium but Ava Buchan twisted and turned to get the first shot on target from the edge of the box that warmed the hands of the Rotherham goalkeeper.

Despite dominating possession, it was Leeds who fell behind. Rotherham whipped in a free kick behind a static Leeds defence and the Rotherham striker planted a superb header into the roof of the net. Leeds were unfazed and coach Phil Joynson urged his players to continue to play their way. Full backs Maisie Smith and Anna Joynson began to venture forward with intelligent passes and Darcey Keens battled with the Rotherham defence.

Battles were being had in every corner of the pitch but Rotherham held on for a 1-0 lead at half-time.

As changes were made, the relentless pace to the game continued and it was Leeds who went ahead as Sophia Dudley reacted sharply as the ball broke in the box and her shot nestled into the corner of the net. Rotherham reacted strongly and the Leeds defence, marshalled superbly by Ruby Burrow, stood resolute as Rotherham picked up constant second balls to apply pressure. However, it was Leeds turn to lead as Ava Buchan found the back of the net with a tidy finish from the edge of the box. Yet again, Rotherham responded Rotherham's combative midfielder then managed to get a shot away which left Leeds keeper Emily Hall unsighted and trickled in off the post.

Leeds responded once more as wide players Hollie Anthony and Georgia Dudley showed great pace to put the pressure back on Rotherham and Sophia Dudley managed to sprint away from the Rotherham defence only to see the Rotherham keeper stand tall to make a fantastic save. Despite momentum with Leeds, it was Rotherham who took the lead as Rotherham were awarded a penalty that they put away to make it 3-2. With time running out Leeds, built pressure yet again and a through ball from Seren Colenutt was chased down by Sophia Dudley and Orla Trowler causing panic in the Rotherham defence and the latter rifled the ball into the corner from a tight angle to tie the game at 3-3.

Extra time was required to try to separate these two fantastic sides. Rotherham found a second wind and managed to fashion a crossing opportunity that was blocked by the Leeds defender. The referee however harshly judged there to be handball to block the cross and awarded a penalty to Rotherham. Following the nature of the game, Emily Hall made a superb save to keep the scores level. Leeds could sense a winner with a flurry of corners in the final minutes causing chaos in Rotherham defence but still a winning goal couldn't be found.

Full Time 3-3

Penalties had to be taken and successful penalties from Sophia, Olivia and Ruby and two misses from Rotherham meant Leeds were jubilant and Rotherham crestfallen as the full time whistle went.

This was a superb advert for schools' representative football with high quality football from both teams. Leeds remains unbeaten and excitement is building to what the girls could achieve this season!