

Tuesday 15 April 2008
U10s Representative Match
South Chiltern Minor League 2 v 5 Reading F C

This report is brought to you by Cookie Liu using his pen & Colin Blythe using his satellite phone with one hand on his keypad & another on his champagne cocktail somewhere continental, hot & dry ...



It was a game of four quarters and we say this literally.

The SCML team held their own in three but lost their head in a manic third quarter of four. Still, the team has developed significantly in resilience and character since their previous and first competitive encounter a month ago against the same confident and very well-organised Reading Academy squad. The only difference this time was that the SCML team lost its captain (Laura Palfrey) who was playing for the opposition.

The game kicked off with Reading attacking with plenty of verve and their adventure was giving the SCML defence a torrid time. On the minute mark, another swift flank attack from the left by Reading was cut in sharply from 12 yard to beat Beccy to her near-post for Reading's first goal. SCML composed themselves after the shock of conceding an early goal and began to play some good passing football from defence to midfield and attack.

Half way through the first period, Ella Kirton of Reading broke through from the right and fired a low shot from just inside the area. Beccy made a fine block but lost sight of the ball, which was finally kicked into touch for a corner by Shannon. The goalmouth scramble continued and Beccy had to make an instinctive left-footed save on a close-range shot to keep SCML in the game. The second goal inevitably came from the same striker who was in fine form in a déjà vu slicing volley from the left to give Reading a two-goal advantage.

In midfield Jenna and Courtney were instrumental in breaking down the Reading passes. The pair progressively got further forward and served notice to the Academy of the dangers to come. The closest that SCML got to a goal was an on-target Lydia shot from the right, having first controlled a pass from Courtney.

- **1st Quarter: SCML U10 Girls 0-2 Reading F C**

On came new personnel for both sides brought new impetus to the game. SCML kicked off the second quarter with new found self-confidence in the middle, supported by some solid defending at the back. Reading were forced into uncharacteristic panic measures as the Rep team got hold of the game. Abigail sent our strikers free with an inch-perfect searching pass.

The one-two passes between Katie and Kirsty caught Reading flat-footed and without needing further invitations from Reading, Kirsty dinked it from 10 yards beyond the Reading keeper, Alice East, to open the SCML account. Kirsty could hardly be more buoyant. After eight minutes of the period played, Shannon released Kirsty once again on the left, who had time to gather her thought, look up and launch an unstoppable howitzer on the volley past Alice to bring the game on even terms.

Danger was still plentiful in the SCML half with Reading's Charley Evans prancing on the occasional loose ball from the right. Sophie tussled with Charley and cut off the latter to keep Hollie's goal well-protected. Izzy joined in the action to move the ball from the right and we were beginning to see a Rep team that was playing the width of the pitch.

With Katie at the front of the Rep team's fountain of inspiration and Lydia a roving terror, SCML were rewarded with positive and superior territorial display, deservedly so.

- **2nd Quarter: SCML U10 Girls 2-2 Reading F C**

The SCML spectators were in fine voice and spirit despite a sudden worsening of weather in the third quarter that made it a wet and chilly experience for most. Even our reporter pen froze up. The scoreline belied much of what was happening on the pitch. It was not a stroll in the park for Reading.

The third quarter began as it ended from the previous: fast and action-packed. SCML players' confidence was sky-high and that was shown through the defenders' willingness to press forward to reinforce the Rep team attack. There were chances for SCML to go in front when Katie released Lydia for the forward surges with her services.



Then came a brisk counter-offensive on the right flank from Reading that saw a low cross beating Beccy and sailing towards a hapless back-peddling Issy, who could not get her trail leg out of the way in time and the ball ended up in the back of the net.

Sensing a positive swing in mood among their players and a chance to regain the initiative, the Academy team pressed to land the knock-out blows. There were several minutes of sustained pressure in front of the SCML goal when Reading sent in the heavy artilleries. But shot after shot was either blocked or taken out of harm's way by a stubborn defence led by Beccy in goal and it was beginning to frustrate the players of the dominant Academy.

Two quick goals from close-range in the final minute wrapped up the period for Reading, who might have otherwise clocked up a hatful more against a less determined side than the SCML Rep team.

- **3rd Quarter: SCML U10 Girls 2-5 Reading F C**

The final session was a strange affair: both sides played some delightful football with good passes and tackles thrown in, but it ended evenly poised and goalless. It was still good value for money for the spectators.

Sophie found Kirsty who in turn laid the ball on for Lydia for a shot on goal. Hollie had a quieter afternoon but collected the ball and fly-kicked confidently throughout the last period. Courtney and Jenna ran the show at times in middle of the park with some deft touches and slide-rule precision passes.

Both Beccy and Hollie cut fine figures and neither was overwhelmed by the penetrative Academy attacks and made some first class saves to deny a few of the most potent strikers in Berkshire. There were fine performances from Izzy, Abigail, Shannon and Sophie as they took control of whatever was thrown at them in the numerous Reading offensives.

Putting aside the aberration of the third quarter where SCML went down by three goals to the supremely fluent Reading with panache, the Rep team held their nerve and gave the Academy their money's worth in a highly entertaining game of football.

Chris Evans, SCML manager, nicely summed up the encounter, "[We made] marked improvement from last game, moved well, tackled with confidence ... and scored two very good goals." Throughout the match, Chris was vocal but measured and concise with his instructions from the technical area. But how long do we, the spectators, have to wait to see an apoplectic Chris?

The ultimate question for the girls is: Can this Rep team continue to improve on that progressive and committed display of football with flare and width that they have shown against a talented and well-organised Reading side today?

- **Final Score: SCML U10 Girls 2-5 Reading F C**

Here's a bunch of exhausted but smiling Rep team players.



Squad: (back row l-r) Kirsty Matthews, Hollie McGreevy, Izzy Morrin, Shannon Lee, Jenna Mason, Beccy Collins, Abigail Dow
(front row l-r) Courtney Hughes-Boyne (Capt), Sophie Liu, Katie Hayes, Lydia Blythe