



Sussex U18's vs. Hertfordshire Schools U18's

Date: 14.11.14
Venue: St Albans
Competition: ESFA National Cup R1
Result: 4-0

Match Report:

The Sussex Schools U18's Performance squad made the trip to St Albans to take on Hertfordshire in the ESFA National Cup with a place in the last 16 at stake. Sussex were without Matt Smith (Worthing College) & Lucas Rodrigues (City College Brighton), due to injury and unavailability respectively. In came Jarvis Kelly (Sussex Downs Lewes), Charlie Towning (Hazelwick School) and Jack Whitmore (City College Brighton).

The squad were looking to kick on from their impressive league win at home to Buckinghamshire and knew that a fast start was vital. However the start was a fairly timid affair, with both sets of players giving up possession and passes going astray. Sussex did create the first set of openings with Ben Pope (BHASVIC) firing wide after a Mike Waller (Steyning) cross and Jacob Merrick (St Bedes) having a shot well saved by the Hertfordshire goalkeeper.

The hosts were looking to catch Sussex on the break, however the discipline and defending of Dave Beaney (Worthing College), Pablo Ramos (Buckwood Schools), Nathan Hawker (Felpham Community College) and today's captain Harry Shooman (City College Brighton) meant the goalkeeper Jimmy Punter (Worthing College) kept chances to a premium.

Jack Whitmore made his Sussex debut replacing Mike Waller after 25 minutes, taking a central berth next to Austen Symons (Varndean) and moving Hugo Cowan (Collyers) into a more advanced role with Jarvis Kelly moving wide.

It looked like Sussex were getting wasteful in front of goal. Jarvis Kelly, Merrick & Pope were all guilty of chances going begging. Kelly did have the ball in the net after a Pope strike, however he was denied by the linesman's flag.

Sussex finally broke the deadlock after the half hour. Jacob Merrick, who had looked menacing jinked past three defenders and with his fourth touch found the bottom corner after a deflection. 1-0 Sussex.

This sparked Sussex into life with the team moving higher up the pitch to create more chances against their opponents. Set pieces were looking dangerous with just the final touch eluding a Sussex foot or head. Pablo Ramos had a header saved from a Whitmore corner.

The second came from the more direct route. A Punter delivery was flicked on by Cowan for Merrick to latch onto to calmly claim his second of the game. 2-0 Sussex.

At half time the focus was team discipline, composure in and out of possession and to be clinical in front of goal. However the second half started with Hertfordshire being on the front foot, with their striker and right winger looking especially dangerous. A Sussex slip allowed the Hertfordshire striker through, but Punter made a great stop. This seemed to wake Sussex up and a great piece of forward play from Ben Pope allowed him to nick the ball off his centre half opponent and race clear only to be brought down. Penalty Sussex. Pope took the ball and slammed the ball home. 3-0 Sussex.

This gave Sussex the breathing space needed and now the confidence was there for all to see. One and two touch football was a joy to watch. Nick Richardson (Bexhill College) came on for Kelly and got into the action straight away. A Jacob Merrick strike fell to Richardson, who collected the rebound from a tight angle and fed Merrick again to slam home into the roof of the net to collect his hat trick. 4-0 Sussex.

Austen Symons made way for the returning Charlie Towning and Merrick was replaced by Max Bickell (City College Brighton). The rest of the game was fairly straight forward with Sussex keeping possession and a home tie with Essex at home assured in the last 16.

Man of the match could again have gone to the whole squad as they took on board what was required from the first minute and again rode the storm when Hertfordshire had their spell of pressure. However Jacob Merrick rightfully deserves the plaudits for his selfless display as well as scoring a hat trick. Again another step forward for the squad and looking to take the lessons learned into the next fixture.

Sussex Schools: *Punter; Shooman, Hawker, Ramos, Beaney; Symons (Towning 73), Cowan, Kelly (Richardson 67); Merrick (Bickell 82), Pope, Waller (Whitmore 24)*

Subs not used: *Ross Edwards (Worthing College), Josh Green (BHASVIC)*