

U18 Centenary Shield: England 2-2 Northern Ireland

Tuesday 17 March 2015



England played their second game of this seasons Inspiresport Centenary Shield against their visitors from Northern Ireland at Eastleigh. The first five minutes were as hectic as usual with too many long balls trying to be played. In the 7th minute a free kick was sent into the England box and was mis-headed by Ryan Pryce who was unfortunate enough to see the ball fall to Adam Salley who fired home.

England tried to fight back with Frank Rossenwald and Rob Black combining well in midfield only for Rene Armstrong to shoot wide from the opportunity created. England were being forced into making too many errors and gave the ball away far too often as the Irish lads applied the pressure. After 37 minutes Northern Ireland went very close following an excellent cross from the impressive Mark Sykes when the ball struck the bar of lucky England.

The half ended without further score and Northern Ireland looking good value for their early lead. Surely England could up their game and offer more in the second half. Northern Ireland were looking comfortable and more exciting in front of goal and would undoubtedly be hoping to advance their lead.



England made the one change at half time with Lewis Fogg replacing the injured Jordy Ndozid. The Irish were again fast out of the blocks and began brightly forcing the English defence to be on their toes. England managed the one close effort from Black who sent his shot just wide of the upright. In the 65th minute England brought the game level with a superb back post header from Adam Curry following a well driven free kick. Would this be the fillip England needed? The goodwill feeling was washed away 5 minutes later when a mix up in the England penalty area resulted in 'keeper Michael Papastylianou staying on his line allowing Brad Lyons to nip in and send a soft header into the back of the net.



The lead, however, was short lived and following some solid approach work down the right flank the ball was sent into the Irish penalty area and the resulting melee, which resembled a bagatelle table, saw the ball fall in front of Black who slotted it home with great relief.

When the game finished there were some very relieved players wearing the three lions. The Northern Irish felt they had done enough to gain all three points as they were the brighter side. England were left contemplating what follows the Lord Mayor's show from the week before!



England's next game is away to Scotland on 10th April at Dumbarton.

Match Report by Dave Woollaston

Photographs courtesy of Tony Smith

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