

Match Report: Centenary Shield

Monday 09 April 2018



Northern Ireland U18 3 - 1 England U18

England's final Centenary Shield fixture in Belfast ended in the same disappointment as the last two games and continued along a familiar theme with their hosts taking full advantage to record a second successive win against the Three Lions.

A damp pitch at Queen's University, Belfast was given the go ahead by the match referee and, from the start, the Irish side looked hungry and on the front foot taking an early lead in the ninth minute when Adam Carroll sent a looping header over Callum Coulter in the England goal.

The visitors battled back into the game and created space for Emmanuel Ogunrinde who fired in a shot that was blocked by Declan Dunne in the Irish goal but from the rebound Sam McCallum was fouled and a penalty awarded.

However, when it looked like England would break their goal duck, Dunne intervened and saved Cormack Pike's spot kick and smothered the rebound to keep the Irish in front.

They took full advantage of this shortly after when Andrew Scott's corner kick sailed over everyone and into the far corner to double their lead.

England were rocked and were struggling to create many clear cut opportunities while the Irish looked dangerous in attack and Carroll almost scored his second of the game but saw his shot cleared off the line by Noah Smerdon.

Shortly before the break it was 3-0 when Jack O'Mahony skipped through the English defence and slotted home to almost certainly seal the win with 45 minutes still to play.



Credit to England though, they stepped up in the second half and came close to breaking their duck on a number of occasions, Jack Butler seeing his low left footed strike saved and Kyle O'Connor-Ajayi heading over from 10 yards out after great work down the left by Sam McCallum.

Their efforts deserved more than Adam Crowther's late glancing header from a free-kick and they almost added a second with Butler again denied by the home keeper.

The final whistle signaled the end of a disappointing campaign for England, scoring just one goal and finishing at the foot of the table having picked up just one point from their four games.

At the other end of the table the title is up for grabs with Northern Ireland sitting on top having played all four of their games but just two points ahead of Wales in fourth who have one game to play.

The final fixtures see Scotland travel to the Republic of Ireland before hosting Wales in what could be the decisive fixture.

A big thanks to all parents and supporters of this year's squad for their continued support through the trials and the Centenary Shield campaign and we wish the lads well in their future careers both inside and outside of football.

Photos from all Centenary Shield matches can be purchased from official ESFA photographer, [353 Photography](#).

