

Centenary Shield: England v Scotland

Monday 15 April 2013

ENGLAND SFA U18 3 SCOTLAND SFA U18 1



McDiarmid Park, home of St Johnstone FC

It was a positively balmy evening compared to recent weeks and we were regally entertained by the Perth and District Pipe Band followed by Beth Malcolm who sang out the National Anthems, sadly with little vocal support from the crowd of nearly 2000. Both teams went into the obligatory huddle before the start, holding up the kick off, and the Scots embarrassed England by sprinting away from the huddle to their match positions looking every bit like they meant business this evening.

Sharp into the tackle the Scots won the ball directly from England's kick off and raised an attack, centre forward Thompson escaping the attentions of Josh Poole before being fouled on the top of the box, but the resulting kick struck the wall. Unable to retain the ball Scotland's McDaid was set free down the right and his dangerous cross had to be headed out by Kieran Morris. In the 5th minute England raised their first attack, won a corner on the right, and from the ensuing scramble Shaquille Patrick shot weakly for goal. A minute later Patrick showed more strength and pace bursting through from deep and as the Scots 'keeper approached he shot firmly from 18 yards out, but his effort was pushed passed the post by the custodian diving to his right.

Success came his way at last after 6 minutes when Robert Gilroy was forcibly restrained in the box by Scots number 9. Shaquille took the ensuing penalty and remained cool even though he

had to re-take after encroachment, stroking the ball firmly into the bottom left corner. 1-0 to England.



Action from the game.

Eleven minutes into the game the Scot, McDaid, broke down the left and crossed for Davison to volley home but he was adjudged to be offside, much to the relief of debutant keeper, Tom Gowans. England were rocky at this point, losing control of midfield and giving far too many balls away; thankfully the Scots weren't strong enough to take advantage. The next twenty minutes saw two poor sides slugging it out in the middle of the park with little or no result. Poor decision making was the order of the day, none more than when the ever reliable right back Connor McCormack decided after 33 minutes to back heel the ball from the goal line directly to a Scot whose cross was forced into the net. Fortunately a 'foot up' meant the goal was denied.

England were definitely the better team going forward with Shaquille and Rhys Turner dangerous, but poor passing in midfield regularly gave away possession and opportunity. The pitch was heavy and firmness was needed on every pass if it was to get through. When the ball was given away to McDaid on the right in the 41st minute he raced down the wing, easily through Lewis Binns and into the box. Josh Poole failed to get close enough to him and he drilled the ball into the left corner for 1-1.

It wasn't until the 43rd minute that Ryan Fergany produced one of his trademark crosses but although Morris met it firmly with his head the ball fizzed over the bar to safety.

For the second half Luke Donaldson replaced Fergany and Curtis Gaylor came on for the struggling Bailey. The Scots began again with frantic energy but were ineffective especially down the left where McCormack never missed a tackle, and after 5 minutes England were back in command of the play. In the 54th minute the lead was also restored; Turner's shot was deflected for a corner, Nick Haughton took it and Morris rose like a swan to meet the header, but it deflected down, bobbled around for a while until Shaquille decided enough was enough and blasted the ball home from short range. 2-1 to England and two goals to Shaquille.

The Scots weren't beaten yet and a smart attack on the right gave them a free kick 20 yards out. Left back Wotherspoon took it and curled it just past the post with the wall and keeper helpless. This effort had the crowd on their feet at last.

In the 63rd minute the ever-tricky Haughton danced past a couple of feeble tackles in midfield, exchanged passes with Donaldson and created a good shooting opportunity but once again the outstretched diving 'keeper's hand came to the rescue. Haughton's good work came to fruition just two minutes later when he played a neat one two on the top of the box, then released captain Robert Gilroy who raced directly at the advancing 'keeper and calmly slotted the ball into the bottom corner for a 3-1 lead. The director of football was seen to smile at this juncture - indeed a rarity.

Several subs were used in the last 15 minutes and one of them, Jack Odam, had a good chance when one on one with the goalkeeper only for his shot to pass the wrong side of the post. New cap Duca Ombeni showed pace and skill but had few opportunities to strike at goal.

In the last minutes of the game Shaquille had two chances to complete his hat trick; the first a majestic free kick to the far post had him with a clear header to goal. It looked easier to score than miss but the ball struck his shoulder and went to safety. Then in the very last minute he broke into the box from the right and went for glory with a big blast at goal but it went way over the top into row Z.

On a difficult pitch and in a game which is always a major challenge the English stood up well and were worth their victory. Particularly pleasing performances by debutants Gowans, in goal, and Ombeni made winning the Lloyds TSB trophy a memorable evening for players and management alike. As usual the Scots were delightful hosts and the staff of St. Johnstone FC couldn't have been more helpful.



England lift the TSB Cup

England now have 4 points after 3 games. A win in Cork would leave us with 7 points, not enough to win the Centenary Shield but certainly to be respectfully placed.

For video highlights of the game please [click here](#).

Photos are Courtesy of Martin Hawkins and St Johnstone FC

