

## Match Report: Centenary Shield

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Tuesday 03 April 2018



### Wales U18 1 - 0 England U18

**A rainy night in Cardiff saw England's slim hopes of challenging for this season's Centenary Shield title disappear with a narrow 1-0 defeat to Wales.**

Still without a goal in the competition, England got off to the worst possible start when a Welsh low cross into the box took a deflection and looped into the top corner deceiving keeper Callum Coulter and edging the home side ahead.

The England response was positive and they pushed forward, almost equalising when Noah Smerdon rose high from a corner and headed towards goal but somehow the Welsh keeper pushed it to safety.

A low cross from Emmanuel Ogungrinde created the next opportunity for England as Jack Butler side footed the ball from 12 yards out but he could only watch in frustration as the ball struck the post and the home side scrambled the ball clear.

At the other end the hosts looked dangerous on the break and only a last ditch tackle from Sam McCallum prevented them having a clear strike at goal.

Back at the other end and Butler again came close to drawing England level, a free-kick into the box was dropped by the Welsh keeper under pressure from Adam Crowther and Kyle

O'Connor-Ajayi and the loose ball fell to Butler who lifted the ball back towards goal but narrowly over the bar.

England had penalty claims waved away shortly after when McCallum burst into the area and appeared to be felled as he cut across the defender but the referee waved away the claims.

As the game headed towards the half-time break the Welsh were reduced to ten men following a reckless tackle and despite trailing 1-0 after the opening 45 minutes, England would have another 45 to make their one man advantage pay dividends.



However, a frustrating second half saw the Welsh rearguard stand up to everything England could throw at them - and with some elements of fortune along the way.

King Baidoo was fouled heading into the box almost from the restart and the low cross from the free-kick missed at least four white shirts in the area and the chance was gone.

Sam McCallum came closest to equalising after the break, sliding in to connect with a low cross but seeing his close range effort strike the bar and bounce free from danger.

Despite all their possession the England attack were reduced to long range efforts but they failed to test the Welsh keeper on enough occasions and late claims for a penalty, after what appeared to be a hand ball, were again waved away and the door was slowly closing on their Centenary Shield hopes for the season.

The Welsh were reduced to nine men during injury time when O'Connor-Ajayi was fouled as he surged into the box but there was too little time for England to make their two man advantage pay and, despite Callum Coulter getting up highest for a late free-kick, the header drifted wide and the home side celebrated an unlikely victory.

England will finish their campaign next Friday when they head to Belfast to take on Northern Ireland with both sides searching for their first win of the 2018 Centenary Shield.



Photos available from [353 Photography](#)

