



Centenary Shield Match Report: Republic of Ireland v England

The England Under 18 Schoolboys began their hummel Centenary Shield campaign with a 3-1 win over a strong Republic of Ireland side at Athlone Town FC on Friday 24 March. The first goal of the campaign was scored by England midfielder, Jacob Towns.

The first chance of the game fell to England after a great turn by Rio Joice in the centre of the park and then releasing Sam Johnson over the top who took the ball down in his control, before trying an audacious chip which ended just wide of the goal.

In the 9th minute, England were awarded a corner where Rio put in an inviting cross and Ireland only managed to clear this to the edge of the box, where Jacob Towns ran onto the ball and shot towards goal, beating the goalkeeper after taking a slight deflection.

England did not have long to wait to double their lead as in the 17th minute, after some intricate play inside the Irish box, Oscar Fletcher managed to find Luke Slater who scored in the bottom left corner from a tight angle.

The Republic had a great chance in the 21st minute, after a good ball over the top left the England Captain, Laiith Fairnie running back to his own goal. Republic of Ireland number 9, Brian Cunningham, forced a great save from James Taylor who closed down the gap and made himself look big, keeping the two-goal lead for England.

England defender, Tyrese Hughes received the first yellow card of the campaign, after colliding with Peter Grogan who was through on goal. The resulting free kick on the edge of the box was sent just wide by the Irish number 14, Adam O'Halloran. A let off for England.

The ROI started to apply pressure by moving the ball around the pitch well. A good ball through to Ireland striker, Cunningham was intercepted by Fairnie who was then caught by the striker, which resulted in the first booking for the Republic of Ireland.

Ireland clawed a goal back in the forty-second minute after a good switch of play from the centre of the park to the right winger. He managed to get past Hughes and after an unfortunate slip by Fairnie, left the player 1 v 1 with England goalkeeper, Taylor. The striker came out triumphant after slipping the ball past Taylor at the near post.

At half time the score remained 1-2 to England.

The first chance of the second half fell to England with a free kick just outside the Irish box. Oscar Fletcher put in a good cross, but unfortunately England could not extend their lead, as Fairnie couldn't guide his attempt towards goal.

England Manager, Luke Hampton, made his first substitution in the 61st minute by making a like for like change, replacing Hughes for Jack Bostock.

A good link-up in the middle of the park between Town, Fletcher and Joice created an opportunity for Salter 1v1, however this time the keeper managed to keep the ball out of the net with a good save down to his right-hand side; which was then cleared up the pitch by the Irish defence.

England managed to extend their lead to two goals again through Salter, who scored his second goal of the game. The goal came from a good overlap from Salter with Fraser playing a good pass to find him. Salter cut inside, shot through the crowd and beat the keeper at the near post.

England received a free-kick on the edge of the box, Salter who was on a hat-trick stood over the ball. The freekick beat the wall but unfortunately for Salter the keeper made a good save and the score remained at 1-3.

Luke Hampton looked to bring fresh legs on for the second time of the game, by bringing on Jay Sangha for Fletcher in the 75th minute.

With ten minutes left of normal time, the Republic of Ireland received a corner. A good flick on to the back post left an Irish player with what he thought was an easy tap in. However, James Taylor had a different idea by covering the length of this goal and making an unbelievable save to keep a two-goal lead for England.

Dominic Cupid came on for Fraser in the 84th minute to make his debut and supply some fresh legs for the remaining few minutes.

With six minutes added time, England dug in deep to secure the three points with a hope to carry the momentum on to the next game against Scotland at Broadwood Stadium on the 31st March 2023.

You can watch a replay of the full match [here](#).

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