

UYSWC ladies slip to agonising defeat in opening fixture

The first fixture of the season for the women's water polo team ended in a tense 7-8 defeat to Leeds University in a match played out in some testing conditions.

York had a shaky start, losing possession early on before conceding on the counterattack. This seemed to focus the girls, and some excellent attacking play saw captain Fiona Whiting firing home to level her team shortly afterwards. Despite strong defending by Louise Highton and Laura O'Regan, Leeds found a way through and edged ahead again. An evenly matched first quarter ended with Beth Richards finding the net to bring the score level at 2-2.

Issues with the chemical levels in the pool had players from both sides struggling into the second quarter. Player of the match Sarah Peacop held strong in her first outing at centre back, putting up a good defence against continuous pressure. Smooth attacking play by Emily Sutcliffe led to York's third goal and the girls were growing in confidence. Excellent contributions from Ellie Roche, Jenny Worrell and Richards set up several chances, and Highton capitalised on one of these to make it four for York. A lapse at the back let the visitors back in before Highton added her second of the match to extend York's lead back to two. Keeper Fran Falcini pulled some quality saves but Leeds managed to find a way past to bring the score to 5-4 to York at the halfway point.

The third quarter was a closely contended battle, with end-to-end play and neither team capitalising on goal scoring opportunities. Leeds failed to draw level with a missed penalty, but made up for their mistake shortly afterwards. The final quarter started scrappily at 5-5, both teams knowing that victory could hang in the smallest of margins. York's defence broke first, with Leeds scoring two goals in quick succession. Jenny Worrell was then rewarded for a hard game's tussling in the pit with her first goal, and, after a series of agonisingly close attempts, Whiting hammered home the goal to bring York level, much to the delight of the crowd. Sadly it was not York's day, and a long distance attempt found its way past Falcini in the dying moments to hand victory to Leeds.

After the match, captain Whiting said: "it is the first game of the season so to play so well together is really encouraging. We fought hard throughout the whole game and never gave up, which gives an amazing indication of what is to come for the rest of the season. We will pick ourselves up and as a team work towards our BUCS tournament next week. We are playing Leeds again and we now know what it will take to beat them next time, and it won't be by a close margin".

YORK: Falcini, Richards, Highton, Whiting (C), Worrell, Sutcliffe, O'Regan, Peacop, Roche, Newton, Hall, Chidwick, How

PLAYER OF THE MATCH: Sarah Peacop

