

## **City of Bristol 2005 team. City of Manchester tournament.**

The young players of the city of Bristol 2005 squad headed to Manchester last weekend for their first taste of competition outside of the local area, indeed only 2 players had played more than a handful of games before this tournament.

So with limited experience and several players unable to make it, we left Bristol very early on Saturday morning with 8 players and a long, tough day ahead.

Our first match was against St Ambrose, a totally unknown opponent to us. The coaches, Craig and Diego tried to build confidence in the nervous team during the warm up and team talk but as we were the first game of the tournament we didn't know what to expect.

The team started brilliantly, all the players worked extremely hard for each other and surpassed expectations, comfortably winning 5-0. Before the game we spoke to Wills and Aaron, the 2 most experienced players and asked them to take responsibility and help the other players. They both did this brilliantly, Wills leading the attack and Aaron managing the defence. A role he is not used to doing as he normally plays up an age group so doesn't spend much time at centre back!

The second game in the group was against Chester. Having watched Chester play the coaches gave the team specific instructions on how to stop their counter attack. Again the team responded. Playing a really solid defensive game, all helping each other as much as possible. Aaron led the way, Archie, Max and Henry all work really hard and we limited the previously high scoring Chester team to 3 goals. We weren't quite as fluid in front of goal but did manage to score 4 resulting in a narrow (but comfortable!) 1 goal win.

Next we took on City of Sheffield. The team was full of confidence now, Hannah and Jodie, our youngest players were able to get plenty of time in the pool. Jake and Wills found their shooting range, Henry, Max and Archie were dominating their opponents and Aaron was once again organising the defence (and dominating their big centre forwards). The game resulted in a comfortable 7-0 win. Played 3, won 3 and we had a place in the quarter finals.

The final group game was against Bridgeport, also undefeated in the group. We were playing for 1<sup>st</sup> place and the chance to gain an easier draw in the quarter final. We started excellently, and the players carried out the coaches instructions to play a drop in order to stop Bridgeport's aggressive centre forward (never practiced it but though we'd give it a go!). We went 4-0 up! Sadly Bridgeport responded well and as tiredness caused the wheels to buckle and then fall off we ended up with a 7-4 loss. Everything that could go wrong went wrong in the second half and we were happy to get a bit of break before a quarter final against a strong Cheltenham team.

Cheltenham, runners up on several occasions in this tournament, and one of the favourites again this year proved to be a bridge too far for the CoB team. We started well and had several chances, then some missed chances and then some inexperience, and we ended up on the receiving end of an 8-1 loss. Although Cheltenham were definitely the better team the scoreline did flatter them slightly.

We were running on fumes! Having already played 5 games in the day our 8 players tried valiantly in the 5<sup>th</sup> – 8<sup>th</sup> playoff game against Northampton. This was by far the biggest team we had played with many boys well over 6ft tall. Although we gave 100% we couldn't match them physically and we lost 7-3. We were now in the 7<sup>th</sup> – 8<sup>th</sup> playoff. An extremely good position considering our inexperience, lack of subs and the 20 teams in the tournament.

The coaches fired the team up for one last effort. The team stepped up to the challenge and produced an excellent performance against Warrington, winning 12-1. All the players worked extremely hard in defence, Wills and Jake scored for fun, Henry scored a screamer and Aaron,

finally released from his defensive duties, did what left handers do. Swam down the wing and scored! All the players were fantastic in the final match and it gave them all a chance to show how much they had developed in just one competition.

It's really hard to single any player out after a monumental performance by all the players who attended. However, the coaches feel that the CoB player of the tournament was Aaron for his selfless defensive work throughout the day.

Thanks to City of Manchester for hosting the event and to Bolton school for 'lending' us their 2<sup>nd</sup> GK for day. Everyone had a great time and gained a huge amount of experience to take with them to their next match.