

U16 Girls Inter-regional Tournament, Liverpool, 2023.



**U16 SQUAD: BACK L-R: FLORRIE, ELODIE, SAREENA, AMELIA, ELSIE, SKYE, MEGAN.
FRONT L-R: LILY, CALISTA, ANJELEA, ABI, ZOE.
COACHES: LAUREN HAND AND KATY ROSS. TM: BECCI HENDERSON (NOT PICTURED).**

SOUTH EAST VS SOUTH WEST:

A tough opening match versus a strong south west side saw an edgy, nervy start for the South East girls. A couple of minutes in, Calista scored a belter of a goal. The South East defence was immense, shutting every South West attack down. The score remained 1-0 to SER at half time. The start of the second half was as tetchy as the first. Elsie made life a little more comfortable, giving the SER a 2 goal cushion, but SW pulled a goal back within a few seconds. Anjelea reinstated the two goal cushion with 5 minutes to go. Cue an agonising period of play with both teams cancelling each other out with great defensive work. A fabulous penalty save by GK Amelia kept the score at 3-1, and the SER girls' hard press kept SW at bay until the final whistle. A fabulous result from the whole team!

Goals: Calista, Elsie, Anjelea. Exclusions: Elodie, Elsie, Lily.

SCOTLAND VS SOUTH EAST:

The Scots came out of the traps hard and fast. They played a very physical game and impeded the South East's counters. A few shots from SER ricocheted off the woodwork, and it was the Scottish team who scored first at the midpoint of the half. Both sides continued pressing hard, limiting goal scoring opportunities on both sides, resulting in a 1-0 half time lead to Scotland. Another difficult start for South East as the Scottish physicality seemed to restrict the South East Girls' ability to move the ball around. The Scots doubled their score with 6 minutes to go. South East remained calm, and their swim fitness began to come into play. A strong defence coupled with quick counter-attacks from the starting seven saw Anjelea pull a goal back, with Elsie adding another during a man up play. The Scots pulled ahead again with two minutes to go, but Elsie doubled her tally 20 seconds later, levelling the score at 3-3. Both sides dug in until the end, resulting in a draw against a strong Scottish squad. Once again, it was the defence that kept SER in the game, with well timed tackles, strong blocks, turnovers and some spectacular saves from Amelia.

Goals: Elsie 2, Anjelea. Exclusions: Sareena 2, Meg.

EAST VS SOUTH EAST:

The last match of the group games saw SER take on the East Angels. Confidence in the team was high, particularly defensively, with an in form Amelia in goal, and a strong defensive support. It took 40 seconds for Elsie to open SERs account, doubling her tally a minute later. Calista took some time off from her defensive work to bag herself another goal, before Elsie collected her third of the match, converting a penalty. East Anglia got lucky with a goal, but Elsie cancelled it out with 12 seconds left of half time. At the start of the second half, the SER defence tightened its grip, pressing East out of the game. The SER girls went on a goal scoring rampage, with Florrie bagging herself a second half hattrick, and Elsie adding another to her four first half goals. Such is the depth and strength of talent in the SER side, Abi, Skye and Elodie also got themselves on to the scoresheet. The SER girls supported each other in every inch of the pool. A well-deserved 12-1 victory and the girls topped the table!

Goals: Elsie 5, Florrie 3, Elodie, abi, Skye. Exclusions: Skye, Anjelea, Sareena, Florrie.

SEMI FINALS – SOUTH EAST VS LONDON:

The SER girls know the London squad well, but that didn't stop both teams from giving it a 100%. The format for the semi-finals changed to full length matches, which suited the fit SER squad. In an absolute nail-biter of a first half, SER took an early lead, courtesy of Sareena's opening goal (the irony of her being ex-London region was not lost on anyone!!). Elsie got another in quick succession, before London pulled one back. The two goal cushion was reinstated by centre back, Calista, who took time off from essential defence duties to notch up another. London got a last gasp goal at the end of the first period. The second half saw SER pull away, which frustrated London, evidenced by their increasingly physical tackles. Incredibly, SER had such an array of goalscoring players, that Zoe, Skye, Elsie, Lily and Sareena all made the scoresheet. The defensive work of the SER girls, and some brilliant saves from Amelia, shut London out. The third half was a tight affair, with both sides battling it out. Further goals from Calista and Elsie, with only one in reply from London, left the score at 10-5 going into the final quarter. A brace from Elodie and Elsie's 4th of the game matched London's last quarter efforts. A very, very hard fought victory against an frustrated, rather pugnacious, opponent! The girls were through to the FINAL!!!!!!!

Goals: Elsie 4, Sareena 2, Elodie 2, Calista 2, Zoe, Skye, Lily. Exclusions: Zoe 3, Anjelea 2, Calista, Skye, Sareena.

THE FINAL – SOUTH WEST VS SOUTH EAST:

South West battled in their semi-final to see off North West, setting up a full length rematch of SERs first match. A South West team, rich with National Academy and Talent Centre players, were focused on retribution for their loss against SER in the group stages and came out all guns blazing! They quickly established a 2 goal lead, but were pegged back by another well taken penalty by Elsie. Lily evened the score with 49 seconds to go. The second half started with a SER goal, taken beautifully by Sareena, but then South West scored three in quick succession. If it wasn't for the defensive work of Calista, Elsie and Meg, tracking back and stealing the ball, the game could have run away from SER, but the SER girls didn't panic, and their steadfast defensive play belied the panic the parents were feeling!! Meg pulled a goal back for SER, followed by Elsie, to bring the deficit back to a single goal. A last minute goal from South West reinstated a 2 goal advantage into half time. A quick half time talk from Coach Katy, and a pit stop of Percy Pigs, and the girls were back into play. An exceptional tit-for-tat quarter saw both sides score 5 a piece, with Elsie scoring a hattrick and Calista bagging a brace. Some exceptional penalty and in-play saves from Amelia kept the SER girls in the match, going into the final quarter just 2 goals down (12-10). The girls dug deep, and their speed in the pool saw a whole host of exclusions for the SW team, with two of their playmakers getting wrapped up. The SER took the game to the SW in the most incredible fightback. 3 goals from Elsie, 2 from Anjelea and another Lily had South East 13-14 down with 20 seconds to go. It seemed fitting that

Elsie, voted MVP of the Tournament, was the one to score the goal to level the match and force the game into penalties.

The South East girls were absolutely buzzing. SER had the Goalkeeper of the Tournament, Amelia, in goal for the penalties, and an array of players capable of taking dead shots with confidence and power. Lily, Elsie, Anjelea, Zoe and Florrie bravely stepped up to take penalties. Lily converted hers, Elsie stepped up and converted hers....a couple of misses and saves at the other end meant that Anjelea had to score for SER to win the gold medal, and she did so with such assuredness! SER were crowned IR U16 Champions in the most incredible match. Well done, girls.

It is worth mentioning that every outfield player got on to the scoresheet, but it was the defensive work, which doesn't often get recognised, that won SER the title.

Goals: Elsie 9, Calista 2, Anjelea 2, Lily 2, Sareena. Exclusions: Calista 3, Elsie 2, Skye, Anjelea, Megan, Lily, Sareena.



The Champions!!! Back L-R – Zoe, Skye, Sareena, Florrie, Coach Katy Ross, Meg, Elsie.

Front L-R: Calista, Abi, Anjelea, Elodie, Lily, Amelia.

Below: GK of the tournament, Amelia and MVP of the tournament, Elsie.

