

**Inter Regionals 2021**  
**U16 Girls Tournament Report**

This year we had little time to prepare for the tournament and had to quickly set up things under new processes which were introduced during the hiatus. Many thanks to our Team Manager Siobhan Barnes for finding the time and having the resilience to fulfil all the requirements. As ever the parental support was magnificent, so we had good numbers at all the training sessions. Here a big thank you should go to the reserves who trained with us throughout and helped make the sessions more competitive. We even managed a training game against the South East. Without the pressure of the competition, we played well as a team though the opposition did not have the best day.



Having finished 6th in the U14 competition East should have been in Division 2. However, Ireland did not travel so we found ourselves in Division 1. A lot has happened in the intervening 2 years with an enforced protracted spell out of the water; the re-introduction of National Academy training for those selected; a Millfield camp and an EU tournament for the best 06s and the recommencing of the National League.

Apart from Scotland, our other opponents had plenty of girls who had experienced all of the above, some at the highest level. The challenge was on to see if we could match the results of 2019 and to do so our performances had to improve. The team boasted 3 newcomers- Sofia, Maisy, and Kirsten. As we were in the top flight we decided to take a reduced team, even though the matches were longer, as we could not guarantee a worthwhile amount of pool time to all players. On reflection, I feel that decision was justified.

Tournament:

Game 1: North East L 4-12 (Tope 2, Holi 2)

We didn't play the U14 Champions in 2019 though we knew they had players who play in all three divisions of the BWPL. They started very strongly and were 8-1 up at half time and we had one player on 3 majors. After that we settled into the game, defended better, managing to scramble 3 goals to our opponents 4.

#### Game 2: South East L 4-9 (Sofia 3 Ellie 1)

After a long wait we played our second game. We defended our goal well, denying the ball into the centre-forward or allowing any players, ahead of the defender, to drive at the goal. This worked well in our practice scrimmage. However, they managed to find the goal from long range, even half way, this time whilst we frustrated ourselves with poor shot selection in an effort to catch up quickly.

#### Game 3: Scotland D 3-3 (Sofia 3)

This was almost déjà vu with East playing Scotland after our evening team meal and a morning game. Fortunately, we ate earlier and played later so the team were more awake. It was a tussle from the start with only 22 actions recorded in the whole game. Much depended on the referee's interpretation of play. Leading 2-1 at half time and with their best player out of the game we had a chance. However, once again we failed to convert innumerable chances and drew. Scotland's goalkeeper was awarded Best Goalkeeper. East were defeated 9-0 in 2019 so it was a big step forward.

#### Game 4: North West L 11-7 (Sofia 3, Kirtsen 1, Mackenzie 1, Caitlin 1, Holi 1)

NW had beaten NE in their previous game to become this year's champions regardless of our result. This game was our best performance as a team even though at times it was neither pretty or perfect but it was always determined and persistent. We soaked up the early pressure and forced our opponents to defend honestly. 6-4 down at half time, with nothing to lose, we took our chances and managed to draw level midway through the third. Back at full strength the NW scored four unanswered goals through excellent counter-attacks. We drew the last quarter one apiece, scoring the final goal of the game.

East MVP: Eve Barnes

I can't thank Jackie enough for all her support in the campaign and wish her luck with future East teams. I hope that all the players enjoyed the weekend as much as I did. They can be proud of their efforts and in time, hopefully, they will realise how much they have learnt about the game. There is nothing as beneficial as playing tough competitive games in the education of players. I hope they all return to club training with renewed ambition and direction.

It has been my undoubted pleasure to be their coach over the last two months.

Tim Whitwham

6/12/21