

MATCH REPORT



HBE UNDER 13YG v Forest Lions
ROUND 7 - 25/05/2025
Lionel Watts Oval, Frenchs Forest

After a torrential downpour in the lead up to this week, havoc was wreaked across the schedules of teams (and also travel plans of some, with Emily C returning for a cameo this week navigating around flooding on the Pacific Highway!). Luckily the team was already scheduled on a synthetic ground so apart from a minor time change to facilitate squeezing other games on to the open ground (and some tighter quarter and half time breaks), the girls got to face their first former Div 1/2 team of the year – the Forest Lions.

Knowing that the Lions had faced tough opponents in the higher division left some of the girls nervous, but those nerves settled quickly once the game started and they weren't overwhelmed. While Forest had some chances in the first quarter, the team held them to just one scoring shot while putting two on themselves later in the first – in a recurring theme however, inaccuracy proved to be a problem with both teams as the scoreline was 0.2.2 vs 0.1.1.

After the first the girls found them squeezing the Lions into their forward half for much of the game, with Sandy in the second quarter and Nya in the fourth giving us enough breathing room to hold off the Lions while a defensive masterclass across the whole team held them to only one goal for the game (in the third quarter) with the girls backing themselves to intercept a forward push and turn it into an attack by us, or to lay a key tackle to give teammates time to get back – even more impressive when it turned out we'd had a player less (15 v 14) for the entire game, and those critical plays were facing the Lions outnumbering us in our own forward line.

Players

- Pippa started the game with a bang bringing some really hard and strong tackling skills - converting a hand on them into dragging them down often, and could have had a number caught holding the ball. She backed that up through the game with plenty of possessions won off the ground in amongst multiple Lions players, and culminating in a game clinching mark in the middle of the field (her second mark in the game from quick reaction speeds, after earlier snagging one in front of the goals).
- Sandy made the large synthetic ground seem like it was built for her. She took a number of great marks with confident hands - especially chopping off Forest Lion kicks, and her run and

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bounce down the wing and long kicks often saw us transition from defense to the forward 50 in a single possession. She even continued to prove dangerous up forward with winning the ball and snapping at goal - scoring one, and almost getting a couple more.

- The coaches decided that Emily C hadn't seen enough countryside in her drive down, so played her in every position they could to make sure she got value for money out of the trip. She started in the ruck with taps out to teammates, moved up forward where she provided a physical presence to stop Lions rebounding the ball, then spent the second half down back to win the ball in the last line of defense by cleaning up either the ball or the Lions player with the ball. The long kicks back up the middle after obtaining the ball one way or another was the cherry on top of her game.
- Like many of the girls, Kira really came fired up to play today. She brought a physicality and toughness in the contest with really willing tackling, and her snap kicks always travel longer than expected (well, than I'd expect off a step or two) and put the Lions on the back foot.
- Isabelle found herself in the wars today - her passion for tackling, multiple full body spoils and shepherding saw her kicked in the leg, scratched, and copping a couple of whacks across the face. She ended up winning Player of the Week for her determination and refusal to break up a strong half-back line to take a rest anywhere else.
- Emily P had an "almost" game this week - she was so close with marks and getting on the end of kicks forward that another week could've seen multiple goals go her way. Even despite that she still worked at it including laying a couple of good tackles against the Lions star they dropped back to try and cut us off.
- Sofia was another with a stellar game. She continued winning plenty of ball and the more predictable bounce on the synthetic ground suited her, allowing her to collect the ball at full speed whenever she could and followed it up with some really good kicking to clear space. This proved a key difference when she rotated through the middle and down back - neutralising Forest attacks even when she was finding herself outnumbered heading to the ball.
- Zahra was a great all round midfield contributor this week. She really ran to any contest she could get to, win the ball or wrap up an opponent, and then follow up with smart short handballs to teammates or kicks to space to keep the team pressing when otherwise we might have been on the back foot.
- Nya started forward for most of the game and worked hard to try and generate chances, before rotating into the middle and showing her opponents how hard she can work by leaving them in her dust to find space to kick our second goal.

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- Maddie was a rock breaking the waves of Forest attacks yet again, but she would then take them on back the other way providing damaging possessions heading forward every time - breaking a tackle or two and sending a long kick into space for the likes of Sandy to continue chaining up.
- Willow rolled on through the midfield like usual. One can get used to her collecting the ball, breaking a tackle or two, finding some space, doubling back to get on her right foot, and launching it forward, but one shouldn't. She's absolutely one of the most reliable players each week with it.
- Lucy started in her usual forward role to begin with but when she moved down back it really played to her advantage as she looked at home this week - she was reading the bounce of the ball well, collecting and kicking it forward even in amongst multiple Lions players.
- Vally provided a much needed physical presence, with her still running and keeping her skills up in the last when teammates were exhausted. Her ability to keep the ball in front of her and not let Lions get their hands on it was crucial to locking the ball in our forward half for so much of the game.
- Olivia epitomised the coaches' instructions this week, demonstrating a fantastic shepherd to release teammates, as well winning the ball repeatedly and getting it away when it came close to the Lions' goals - the most important point, given any mistake would lead to scores in a very close game.

Score

Hornsby-Berowra Eagles 2.8.20 dft Forest Lions 1.5.11

Goals

Sandy Hebblewhite: 1; Nya Nicolson: 1.

Report by Donald Shepherd (Photos available on Teams)