



St Edmund's Prep Under 11 Football Team Crowned Hertfordshire County Champions

On Saturday 27th January, the St Edmund's Prep U11A football team travelled to Parmiters School in Watford to represent East Hertfordshire in the ESFA County Cup Finals. Our side were representing the East Herts District after winning that competition in November. There are ten districts in Hertfordshire and seven had representatives at the County Finals.

Our first match was against **Samuel Lucas** (*a team from Hitchin representing the district of North Herts*). This game was extremely competitive, but with the last attack of the game St Edmund's Prep managed to score the winner after converting a low cross. We won this game, 1-0.

The second match was against **Westbrook Hay** (*a team from Hemel Hempstead representing the district of Dacorum*) and we knew this would be an extremely tough game. Westbrook Hay recently won the national IAPS finals at Millfield, being crowned the top Under 11 Independent School football side in the country. We were spurred on by having been the only team to have beaten them earlier in the season. We knew that this had caused them to become more aware of our own team too. This game was extremely tight with both sides playing attractive football. As the game was reaching its final stages we scored one of the goals of the tournament from long-range, sending the ball flying over their goalkeeper's head and into the net for a 1-0 victory.

By this time we were really starting to hit our stride and were playing some extremely good football. Our side had attracted the attention of three scouts who had come over to observe our team – from Tottenham Hotspur, Chelsea and Watford FC. In the third match, we played **St Mary's** (*a team from Baldock representing the district of Welwyn and Hatfield*) and won by, 5-0. The boys were looking very confident in front of goal and were linking up to devastating effect. We won our fourth match, 3-2 against **Knebworth** (*who were representing the district of Stevenage*). After going three goals up, we appeared to take our foot off the pedal a little and conceded two late goals. Following consecutive clean sheets in our first three matches, these were the first goals that we had conceded all tournament and served as a timely reminder of the quality of opposition that were at this tournament. Our fifth match was against **Garden Fields** (*a team representing the city of St Albans*) who had been going strong and scoring a lot of goals themselves. The highlight of this game was a thunderous shot from our team that struck against the crossbar and bounced down against the line, but unluckily for us it did not cross. This game ended up in a goalless, 0-0 draw.

Our final match of the group stage was against **Haberdasher Aske's Boys' School** (*a team from Elstree representing the district of Hertsmere*). This team had an almost identical record to us, so we knew that we had to come away with at least a draw. When the opposition scored late into the match, this became a real test of our resolve as we knew that if we did not equalise we were going out of the competition. In yet another remarkable display of character, in our final attack, we managed to score a goal to draw the match. This match ended, 1-1.

Afterwards, Haberdasher Aske's Boys' School had one final game to play. They needed to win by two goals to equal our record. To add to the incredible drama of the afternoon, this is exactly what they did! This meant that both Haberdasher Aske's Boys' School and St Edmunds Prep finished the tournament on 14 points apiece and with the same goal difference and goals scored records. The only way to settle the tournament was with a head-to-head final match which was to be five minutes straight through and then penalties!



St Edmund's Prep gathered themselves for this final showdown against **Haberdasher Aske's Boys' School**, knowing exactly what was at stake. Around halfway through the match, St Edmund's Prep were awarded a freekick which we smashed straight into the back of the net. The crowd went wild on the sidelines and at this point it was clearly evident that St Edmund's Prep had amassed by far the greatest following and the celebrations could be heard all around. St Edmunds Prep changed their formation to see out the game, with the final two minutes seeming to last forever. However, when the final whistle went to signal victory for St Edmunds Prep, the same roar could be heard again. The players ran around the pitch in jubilation and their parents all flooded on to greet them too. St Edmund's Prep won the game, 1-0.

The St Edmunds Prep Under 11 Football Team will now go on to represent Hertfordshire in the **ESFA South-East England Finals**. This will be played towards the end of March, where the top two teams will go on to the National Finals. Hertfordshire will be one of 12 different counties competing at this event in Greenwich, including *Bedfordshire, Buckinghamshire, Cambridgeshire, Norfolk, Suffolk, Essex, Inner London, Kent, Middlesex, Surrey and Sussex*.



St Edmund's Prep U11A Football Team- Hertfordshire County Champions 2024