

Isle of Wight 1st XI 6 - 1 Southampton Otters

The Isle of Wight secured a comfortable win over visitors Southampton Otters at a cold Smallbrook, but only after what was by their current high standards a poor start.

The game was able to go ahead following a pitch inspection but the cold weather meant the astro turf was bouncier than usual and the Island initially struggled to get any kind of flowing hockey together. Passes too often went astray and it was the visitors who looked more likely to score first.

However, a break in play was to help the Island when, after fifteen minutes, the umpires spoke to the captains to see if they were happy for the game to continue due to the conditions.

Both teams gave a resounding yes to the game carrying on, and the short break meant the Island were able to gather their senses. The side looked completely different and within three minutes had taken the lead through Stephen Woodford's short corner.

The same player benefitted shortly after to double the Island's lead from another penalty corner, before Rob Forrest found the corner of the next following a run.

Colin Simmonds then dinked his way past several challenges to slot home, before Forrest picked up his brace to give the Island a 5 – 0 lead at half time, which was a scoreline that perhaps flattered the home team given their sloppy start.

The second half was played out at a less frantic pace with the Isle of Wight dominating possession but finding further goals hard to come by as the Otters packed their defensive line.

It was the Otters who drew the first blood in the second half when a forward diverted a long-pass into the roof of the net which gave keeper Tom Speer no chance.

Undeterred though, the Island soon restored their five goal cushion as Woodford picked up his hat trick to take his tally to 46 for the season.

Speer ensured Otters failed to score again with a couple of impressive saves, while Woodford saw two further strikes chalked off close to the end.

The win though keeps the Island six points clear of second place Salisbury, while third place Fordingbridge saw their game cancelled meaning the Island are currently 11 points clear of third and well on course for promotion. A win at Fordingbridge in two weeks time would almost certainly guarantee the Island promotion.

This weekend, Fleet & Ewshot visit Smallbrook with a 1pm start.