



The U16 squad

U16 school hockey team in national finals

The Canford U16 girls' hockey team have taken part in the West Regional finals. In 2015 they won the equivalent U14 regional competition.

Expectations were high, as the team arrived as one of the pre-tournament favourites amongst a good crop of schools. Wycliffe were the first of the three opponents in the group stages, and after a somewhat nervy beginning, Canford settled into the game with an expertly executed penalty corner by captain Martha Taylor, to give a 1-0 lead and ended the match with a 3-0 win at the whistle.

As the squally showers ebbed and flowed, the Canford team adapted well to the change in playing conditions. Against Redmaids, a devastating six minute counter attack spell saw Canford score three times with more chances in the second half, but with the post and the goalkeeper denying adding to the 3-0 lead. Canford then faced Millfield who drew first blood with a close range finish in the early exchanges, in a rare defensive lapse in concentration, but as the hail lashed down and the pitch briefly turned into a sea of white, the team grew in stature and started to take control of the game. Chances for Canford to win came and went, but even though they finished the match stronger, the game ended 1-1 to leave them runners up in the group on goal difference.

In the semi-final against Marlborough College Canford took the lead and successfully defended a

string of penalty corners before another positive attack saw the team overload the Marlborough defence to pounce on the rebound; 2-0.

The team was buzzing for the fifth and final match of the day; the big one; the final itself against Clifton. A first half penalty corner gave the chance to take the lead, and Canford added a second goal to bring a 2-0 victory at the final whistle, which was met with jubilant scenes of celebration and joy on and off the field. The Canford 13 game unbeaten streak had culminated in the West regional title; as well as a richly deserved place at the National Finals at Lee Valley from 28th February – 1st March, amongst the top eight schools in the country.

Matt Collison, director of hockey, said: "This result was a reflection of the hard work and dedication which makes these types of moments both possible, and forever memorable. To be among the top eight schools in the country is a fantastic achievement and it is a very proud day for all involved."

PEDAL POWER

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