

Leeds Knights vs Hull Seahawks 22.12.23

The Morley Glass Leeds Knights faced the Hull Seahawks in the 1st Yorkshire derby of the season on Friday night, seeing the visitors claim a 2-4 victory. The Knights iced with a squad of 19+2, including new signing Innes Gallacher from Widnes Wild and Kilmarnock Thunder who made his home debut. Meanwhile, the Seahawks lined up with the maximum of 20+2, featuring #7 Tom Barry who was set to play his former side for the first time. Leeds opted for #31 Sam Gospel in net, whilst #72 Jordan McLaughlin stood in-between the pipes for Hull.

The physicality level presented itself just 11 seconds in, after Leeds captain #12 Kieran Brown checked #81 Bobby Young into the boards behind the Seahawks goal. The Knights were handed 2 power-play opportunities in the opening few minutes as Towner and Young sat 2 minutes each, but they failed to punish the Seahawks early. Leeds continued to maintain puck possession and were given another PP opportunity when #94 Declan Balmer sat at 09:22 for roughing. Hull prevented the Knights' offence from capitalising once more and they quickly applied the pressure after they returned to full-strength.

Hull were the ones to open the scoring, after #11 Finlay Ulrick fired the puck top-corner past Gospel at 15:41, assisted by #71 Emil Svec and #7 Tom Barry to give the Seahawks edge. #7 Bailey Conger quickly attempted to level the game when he skated in on the Seahawks' goal alone, but he was poke checked by Jordan McLaughlin and the rebound failed to find the back of the net. The biggest chance for Leeds came in the final 2 minutes of the 1st period after Kieran Brown pinged the pipes from a 2 on 1 breakaway. McLaughlin handled the pressure well to end the 1st period with a 1 goal lead to the Seahawks.

Gospel was quickly tested in the 2nd period as Svec looked to extend Hull's lead with a slap shot. Tensions continued to rise in the Yorkshire derby when a passage of play saw several sticks go flying across the ice. Hull took advantage of the physical play and doubled their lead to 0-2 through #91 Nathan Salem with a bar-down goal, assisted by Ulrick and Barry at 29:09. Just seconds later at 29:31, Seahawks claimed a third goal, scored by #21 Bobby Chamberlain after the Leeds defence lost sight of the puck in the crease, assisted by Young and Bonner.

The Knights then called a time-out to discuss tactics. Shortly after the break in play, #95 Mac Howlett reduced the deficit, firing the puck past McLaughlin at 33:38, assisted by Conger and Haywood. Leeds continued on the attack and Bailey Conger clawed back another at 36:08, skating in alone from the left-wing to send the puck flying past McLaughlin unassisted. The Knights arguably controlled the second half of the period and fought in-front of the Hull goal in the final seconds to equalise, but Seahawks held onto their single goal lead after 40 minutes.

Leeds returned to the ice determined to level the score in the final period, claiming early possession of the puck. The Knights created 2 major chances 2 on 1 with McLaughlin close range, but neither Endicott nor Barron could capitalise. Both sets of defenders were heavily tested throughout the 3rd and prevented every opportunity for their rivals. The narrow

scoreline caused an electric atmosphere across the castle and it soon reflected on the ice. Conger found himself on the breakaway twice, but his dekes close-range failed to fool McLaughlin who was on top form.

Leeds Knights pulled their netminder Sam Gospel inside the final 2 minutes, in favour of an extra attacker to find a 3rd goal. A scramble at the Hull net saw both #24 Brock Bartholemew and #9 Jordan Buesa headed to the box for roughing at 59:03. Bobby Young tapped the puck into the empty net at 59:29, but officials called off the goal and instead gave him a slashing penalty as the Knights defence chased him down. Despite being 6 on 4, Leeds eventually conceded an empty netter in the dying moments of the match at 59:52 from Fin Ulrick, assisted by his captain Sam Towner to leave the final score at 2-4 to Hull Seahawks.

The Thermos sponsored MVPs were awarded to defenceman #14 Lewis Baldwin for the Leeds Knights after a brilliant performance on the blue line and forward #11 Finlay Ulrick for the Hull Seahawks following his 2 goals.

Officials: Brown, Emmerson, Hesslewood, Smith

STATS -

Leeds Knights: Bailey Conger 1+1, Mac Howlett 1+0, Matt Haywood 0+1

Hull Seahawks: Finlay Ulrick 2+1, Nathan Salem 1+0, Bobby Chamberlain 1+0, Tom Barry 0+2, Emil Svec 0+1, Bobby Young 0+1, Lee Bonner 0+1, Sam Towner 0+1

Article written by Fleur Tobin