

## Leeds Knights 6-4 Hull Seahawks: Yorkshire derby win for the Knights (9th March 2024)



Back in LS11 on Saturday night, the Morley Glass Leeds Knights hosted Yorkshire rivals Hull Seahawks in the first game of the weekend's double-header. The Knights were coming into the game having had back-to-back wins over the Swindon Wildcats: a 9-7 victory at home followed by a 2-1 win on the road. Ever so close to winning that league title for the second year running, the Knights were hungry for another two points and goals from #91 Jake Witkowski, #11 Matt Haywood, #9 Jordan Buesa and #95 Mac Howlett helped them achieve this at The Castle.

### Last time round

When the Seahawks last visited The Castle on February 22nd, Leeds took the two points with goals from #11 Matt Haywood, #12 Kieran Brown and #9 Jordan Buesa securing the 3-1 victory that saw the home side get their revenge over the Seahawks after the National Cup semi-final.

### First period (1-1)

It was a squad of 19+2 for the Knights with #2 James Archer, #19 Innes Gallacher and #34 Gregor Mills returning, led out once again by #32 Harrison Walker. The Seahawks iced with a squad of 16+2 with #72 Jordan McLaughlin starting in between the pipes.

The Knights' starting six consisted of #54 Noah McMullin, #14 Lewis Baldwin, #12 Kieran Brown, #33 Finn Bradon and #37 Matt Barron and they started on the front foot with early pressure applied to the visitors. #95 Mac Howlett had an early chance to take the lead and the forward managed to get the puck in the back of the net at 4:32 after a well-worked play with #11 Matt Haywood, but the decision was no-goal, and the Seahawks were immediately on the attack with #32 Harrison Walker denying them at the back door.



At 4:46, #6 Ethan Hehir received two-minutes for roughing and two-minutes for cross checking, with #5 Rhys Edwards also sitting two-minutes for roughing as the game was played five-on-four in favour of the Seahawks. Despite the visitors being on the powerplay, it was Leeds with the first chance as #95 Mac Howlett tried to break shorthanded, thundering down the right before pulling the puck back into the slot to the oncoming #11 Matt Haywood, but it was just behind him, and they returned to full strength with the visitors unable to punish them.

#32 Harrison Walker pulled off a double save at 8:13, continuing to deny the Yorkshire rivals a way of opening the scoring. Howlett was back on the attack just seconds later with chance after chance testing #72 Jordan McLaughlin and the Seahawks' defence: he rounded the net before trying to tip the puck past the Hull netminder, only to be denied by the bar with his next effort through McLaughlin's legs going just wide.

The next Knights player to try and cause upset was #12 Kieran Brown with his firing effort at 10:41 met by the chest of #72 Jordan McLaughlin and his next attempt forcing another block from the Hull goalie.

#95 Mac Howlett, #11 Matt Haywood and #91 Jake Witkowski continued to create chances and finally, the home side's offensive pressure paid off - their first goal might've been called off, but this time they were in. #95 Mac Howlett sent the puck across the zone to #91 Jake Witkowski who fired past #72 Jordan McLaughlin, rippling the back of the net at 13:15 with the second assist going to #11 Matt Haywood.

Wanting a quick reaction to conceding, the Seahawks were breaking forwards into the Knights' defensive zone, but #32 Harrison Walker was out to clear, sending the puck back into Leeds' possession.

Another period of intense pressure from the hosts required #72 Jordan McLaughlin to stand tall and deny them a second: #91 Jake Witkowski searched for his second of the night as he waited at the back door to tap the puck beyond #72 Jordan McLaughlin, but his effort was deflected, flying over the goalie followed by #12 Kieran Brown forcing a high glove save.

With three minutes of the period left to play, the Seahawks brought the score level. After a series of blocks by #32 Harrison Walker with the Knights' defence working hard to try and clear their lines, the puck was left in the slot for #96 Owen Sobchak to shoot, assisted by #71 Emil Svec at 17:06.

The end of period buzzer sounded with the score 1-1 at The Castle as the Seahawks fought back from going a goal down to score an equaliser before the break.

### **Second period (3-2)**

The second period began with as much intensity and fight as the first period had, reflective of a Yorkshire derby. Hull were forcing Walker to make important blocks with Howlett and Witkowski combining up the other end once again.

Despite controlling the possession of the puck and having the closer of the chances in the opening few minutes, the visitors took the lead at 23:30 with #96 Owen Sobchak scoring his second of the night from right in front of #32 Harrison Walker.



At 24:17, #94 Declan Balmer sat two-minutes sending the Knights on the powerplay. #91 Jake Witkowski tried to feed the puck to #12 Kieran brown before #96 Owen Sobchak was breaking shorthanded, looking for his hat-trick but the Canadian was denied by Walker.

Leeds were unable to capitalise upon their player advantage with the Seahawks returning to full strength, only to be sent immediately back on the penalty kill as #24 Brock Bartholomew received two-minutes for cross checking.

#11 Matt Haywood was so close to equalising for the Knights at 27-minutes as he went one-on-one with #72 Jordan McLaughlin, trying to squeeze it past him on the left, but his low effort was blocked by the leg of the Hull goalie who read the play well and denied the Leeds forward.

Continuing to pressurise the Seahawks whilst they were on the penalty kill, #12 Kieran Brown tried to tie the game, but his attempt hit the bar with his next chance denied by the pad of #72 Jordan McLaughlin.

At 27:37, #91 Jake Witkowski scored his second of the night, cancelling out #96 Owen Sobchak's goal that saw the Seahawks take the lead, bringing the game level assisted by #11 Matt Haywood and #12 Kieran Brown.

The Knights were on the penalty kill at 28:59 as #11 Matt Haywood sat two-minutes for tripping, but this didn't falter their rhythm with #9 Jordan Buesa scoring a short-handed goal at 29:59. #95 Mac Howlett played the puck to the Scot for his second assist of the night with Buesa tapping it past #72 Jordan McLaughlin making it three to Leeds.

Trying to utilise their player advantage, the Seahawks worked the puck into their offensive zone and created a few chances to test #32 Harrison Walker, but he stood tall in net for the Knights and denied them an opportunity to equalise once more.



They returned to full strength and the remainder of the period constituted of both sides creating chances, but none dangerous enough to change the scoreline. #6 Ethan Hehir went close before #33 Finn Bradon was denied by the side netting at 33:33.

#71 Emil Svec received two-minutes for hooking at 34:16, but the Knights couldn't find a way past #72 Jordan McLaughlin with #91 Jake Witkowski denied by his pad and #12 Kieran Brown unable to work the puck in at the back door.

Still looking for his hat-trick, #96 Owen Sobchak broke forwards with three minutes of the period to play, but #8 Bow Neely was there to deny him a chance to get a shot off. #32 Harrison Walker made a pad block at 37:51 with the puck rebounding into Hull's possession - the visitors tried to quickly work it to his left, but the Knights goalie got across his goal to collect and the period ended with the home side taking a one-goal advantage into the third period.

### **Third period (6-4)**

The Howlett - Haywood - Witkowski line were at it again as the game restarted with #11 Matt Haywood getting himself on the scoresheet within one minutes and 24 seconds. Howlett started the move before feeding Witkowski who sent it across the crease to Haywood to fire home and give the Knights a two-goal lead.

Not even 20 seconds later, #17 Owen Bruton scored for the Seahawks to get the game within one. #90 Declan Jones had the initial shot with the puck sneaking beyond Walker and into the perfect position for Bruton to help it over the line. The goal was timed at 41:42.

#19 Innes Gallacher was close to restoring the Knights' two-goal lead at 41:56, but he was denied by the post.

Coinciding penalties for #12 Kieran Brown receiving two-minutes for high sticks and #71 Emil Svec sitting two-minutes for misconduct followed at 42:20 but play remained five-on-five.

Leeds were back with the intense pressure at 44:18 as #6 Ethan Hehir fired a shot at #72 Jordan McLaughlin and #11 Matt Haywood tried to sneak one in at the back door, but the Seahawks dealt with the pressure well and had a period of pressure of their own as the game entered the final ten-minutes with Walker having to stand tall to deny them an equaliser.

At 51:24, #9 Jordan Buesa scored a delayed penalty goal - he was given the time and space in front of #72 Jordan McLaughlin to drag the puck back and hit it hard to reinstate the two-goal lead. The goal was assisted by #11 Matt Haywood and #14 Lewis Baldwin.

It was #91 Nathan Salem who received the ten-minute misconduct penalty, but it didn't slow the Seahawks down as they fought back once again - #24 Brock Bartholomew took the puck around the Knights defence and #32 Harrison Walker to reduce the deficit to one again at 51:45.

The Knights goalie made an important save at 52:23 to prevent an equaliser with #37 Matt Barron then trying to feed #12 Kieran Brown at the other end.

#91 Jake Witkowski received two-minutes for hooking at 55:30 alongside two-minutes for misconduct. The Seahawks called time-out with a powerplay in their favour to follow.



Despite being a player down, the Knights did what they do best and scored a short-handed goal. #11 Matt Haywood dispossessed the Hull defenceman to set #95 Mac Howlett up with the forward firing past #72 Jordan McLaughlin at 57:25 to make it 6-4.

Hull increased the intensity as the final few minutes saw them try to fight back from two-goals down, but #32 Harrison Walker made the saves with the defence in front of him working tirelessly to diffuse the Seahawks' pressure, and eventually the full-time buzzer sounded.

Another win, another two points and another step closer to lifting that league title. #9 Jordan Buesa was the man of the match with #91 Jake Witkowski earning Knight of the Night with two goals.

The Morley Glass Leeds Knights are back on the road this evening for the second game of the Yorkshire derby double-header.

*Match report written by Emily Laycock*