

U12 Dragons

This was a really tough season for the Dragons, as the highs of last season's promotion year were replaced with the sobering challenge of competing in the Lion's den, or Lions Red league at least.

The reality of that challenge became abundantly clear when the Dragons found themselves three goals down after the first 15 minutes against Amersham. The spirit and commitment of the side was evident as they dragged themselves back with three goals in the last quarter to almost level. No points on the board, but no shortage of effort.

That was in some ways the story of the season for Dragons who recovered from a difficult first half of the season – in which playing only three games over the first three months made it difficult to get going. But after Christmas slowly the performances and results started to come. A cup win Westwood Park, and creditable draw against Amersham and a more disappointing point against Westwood Park – given we were 3-0 up – followed.

Another quirk of the fixture calendar followed meaning four games in a row against the top two sides. These were seriously tough games, where players

had to dig in and accept they would not see much of the ball going forward. But while we lost all those games, the performance levels in these games were high, particularly in the 1-3 defeat against Martin Baker Apollos and the first half at St James Tigers' ground.

Dragons were edged out by one goal in the last two games – games we could just as easily have won - and finished the season propping up the table. But Dragons were competitive in virtually every game.

All players deserve credit across the season; for the way they stuck to the task, put shifts in for the team in unfamiliar defensive positions, and conducted themselves during what could have been a dispiriting season.

Goalkeeper Ben was consistently picked out by opposition managers for his performances, dominated his box superbly and showed great maturity in dealing with waves of pressure.

Callum produced the goal line clearance of the season, David gave 110% and mixed it with the biggest players the league had to offer and Luca's tackling was nothing short of sensational. Alex chased and harried everything all year, no more so than his first

15 mins at Tigers where he set the tone for the performance. Becca continued to confound any opponent who under-estimated as more players found themselves nutmegged.

Nobody covered more ground, again, than Daniel – who showed his maturity in recognising when he was needed in defence rather than further forward. The same is true of Faaris, who against Martin Baker produced both the best defensive and attacking full-back performance in the same game (which shouldn't be possible really).

Felix showed some great hold up play and sharp finishing, Stephen came back from injury to score a fantastic goal against Westwood Park, when I finally relented and let him play up front. Erin showed some really nice touches while she was with us, Will produced moments of real quality going forward right across the front three, and Lewis was real handful for the opposition with an eye for a killer pass.

While it was not easy, the players will have learnt more about the game this season than any other, and hopefully will enjoy the good times even more for having battled through the tough days.

