

Manor School-based team so close to Wembley

BY DAVE FLETT

dave.flett@thepress.co.uk

A GROUP of talented York school-girl footballers have missed out on a trip to Wembley.

The Manor School-based Pro Coaching Academy's under-14 girls' team came back from the FA People's Cup national finals battered and bruised but with their pride intact following a gutsy showing in Sheffield.

With five of the team's squad a year younger than the age group, the tournament proved a physical test and Alexia Dawson – a scorer of 250 goals over the last three seasons for York RI – was lost for the day just two minutes into the first game when she was left with a cut face and her eye closed up.

Later in the competition, Lucy Dunlop was seeing stars after a nasty bang to the head meant she needed clearance from St John's Ambulance staff before she played on, while Denva Coupland left the South Yorkshire venue with her arm in the sling.

The York team were one of eight regional qualifiers competing for the chance to be presented with the winners' trophy at next month's FA Cup final and suffered agonisingly close defeats in each of their first two group games.

Facing London side Tiger A in their opening match, they fell behind to a quickly-taken free kick before Chloe Jackson rattled the post at the other end.

Bethan Lloyd Hall also pulled off a couple of outstanding saves before Dunlop equalised, winning the ball on the left and driving towards goal before finishing cleverly.

In the very last attack of the game, Lloyd Hall then saved bravely, but her momentum took her out of the area and Tiger scored the resulting penalty.

Pro Coaching again fell behind in the next game after three minutes, but got back on terms when Dunlop won the ball near her own goal and ran through three tackles before sidefooting the ball for a brilliant equaliser.

Great passing and movement then saw Coupland run free down and her perfect cross-field pass left Jackson for a tap in.

But the lead was surrendered a minute from time following a misplaced pass and, then, in a carbon copy of the Tiger game, Lloyd Hall

Schoolgirl side just miss out



LINE-UP: The Pro Coaching Academy under-14 girls before playing in the national finals of the FA People's Cup. Pictured left-to-right are (back row): Chris Collins (director), Alexia Dawson, Bethan Lloyd Hall, Lucy Dunlop, Chloe Hillaby; (front row): Amber Jaram, Denva Coupland (captain), Chloe Jackson

was penalised for straying out of her area after making a save and Caernarfon converted the penalty with the last kick of the match to seal a 3-2 win.

The final contest saw a powerful Doncaster Belles team – who were essentially a Women's Super League academy side – enjoy a 6-0 triumph with Lloyd Hall keeping the score down.

Coach Chris Collins remained proud of the team's efforts, saying: "The physicality and age of the older girls proved to be a major factor in the results but, when we had the chance, we played some fantastic football and looked capable of beating anyone. It was a great learning curve for all the girls."

The Pro Coaching Academy was set up in August 2015 by Chris and

Suzy Collins with an aim to provide high-quality coaching to girls in years seven, eight and nine.

Regular sessions are currently held at Manor School and interest would be welcomed from any new players, especially in years five and six.

For further information, contact Chris Collins at info@procoachingacademy.co.uk