

Cambridge v Brighton 15/02/2017

By Cristina Gómez

Location: Cambridge University Sports Centre

Final Score: 66-61 (Cambridge)

The Blues' Top Scorers: Paloma Navarro (15), Emily Lees (14), Becky Illingworth (11), Claire Ratican (8), Cristina Gomez (6)

Overall Free Throw Accuracy: 20%

The Blues faced Brighton this past Wednesday, playing for a spot in the quarter finals of the BUCS Trophy. Cambridge was finally able to break the four game losing streak and regain their confidence in a very important game. The team's resilience finally paid off and they were able to finish 5 points ahead, 66-61.

After another loss last week against Nottingham University, the Blues were looking to get a solid win at home. They stepped onto the court with strength and intensity, completely neutralising Brighton's offence, allowing them only 5 points in the first quarter. Meanwhile, point guard Paloma Navarro and forward Emily Lees scored 8 points each. Accompanied on the score board by the rest of the team on the floor, Cambridge added points from players in all 5 positions by the end of the period. With so many options on offence, Brighton's defence was simply unable to keep up and the Blues managed to score 24 points in the first 10 minutes.

However, Brighton did not give up and the Blues' very strong start was followed by a much poorer second quarter. Entering the period with a 19 point lead, the hosts relaxed their defence and were punished for it. Adding to this a lower accuracy on the offensive end and foul trouble, the Blues seemed to have lost their initial momentum. Making the last 2 free-throws of the quarter, Brighton closed the first half only 1 point behind Cambridge.

The 5 minute half-time break allowed the Blues to recompose and refresh their energy. With a renewed determination to win, Cambridge managed to open up their lead again to 7 points for most of the 3rd quarter. Becky Illingworth's and Paloma Navarro's three-pointers provided a much needed confidence boost for the hosts, who demonstrated once more their superiority, with a 19-15 partial.

After Brighton's buzzer-beating three point shot at the end of the 3rd quarter, the Blues entered the final period ahead by only 3 points. 2 quick baskets in response to Brighton's offensive effort increased the lead to 5, and Cristina Gomez' bucket in the 4th minute of the quarter maintained it. However, the Blues suffered a drought and did not score again until the 8th minute of the game. Meanwhile, the visitors had increased defensive pressure and managed to cause a number of turnovers, which translated into an 0-8 partial in their favour, and put them ahead in the scoreboard for the first time. Finally, captain Claire's hard work on the post paid off, and she added 2 more points for Cambridge. She was quickly followed by Becky Illingworth and Carla Ríos, whose shots put the hosts ahead once more. With less than a minute to go, Brighton was unable to finish their possession and the Blues captain sealed the game with one more bucket.

This win has put Cambridge through to the quarter finals of the BUCS Trophy. Captain Claire said she was very proud of the team for showing great character and mental strength, pushing themselves in the toughest moments of the game. Looking ahead to Varsity (Sunday 26th February), this was a very important win which the Blues are hoping to repeat in their regular league game against Loughborough 2nd next week.