

St James Post

SIMPLY SAM-AZING

The girls claim back-to-back wins to continue their perfect start to the season.

After a successful start to their season with a win over St Joseph's last week, the pressure was on the girls to follow that up with another victory as they took on SSQ in round two. Coach Brenta spoke in his pre-match press conference about the expectation levels in training and how the team have set a standard that he now expects every week.

Coach Brenta also discussed the changes he made to this week's squad: "We have a lot of girls who are all keen to make the team on a Thursday, and it gets harder every week to pick the travelling squad. **Ouardia** has consistently improved in training and got her head down, so we are excited to see what she can do." Estelle was also due to make her first appearance of the season but, due to injury, had to pull out, meaning the team headed to Elephant and Castle with only seven in their party.

The game kicked off and you could see St James' were up for it, chasing down every ball and putting pressure on the SSQ players, causing them to make mistakes. They also seemed to have found their voices – something Coach Brenta has been eager for them to do. You could hear them communicating constantly as they moved the ball and began to show their dominance. It wasn't long before this pressure proved too much for their opponents, as **Samantha** picked up the ball after a brilliant pass from **Scarlett** and slotted it into the bottom corner for her first of the season.

The goal possibly came too early, as St James' took their foot off the gas and allowed SSQ more time on the ball. That time gave SSQ the chance to start getting some shots of their own. Luckily for St James', they had **Oumou** in goal, who pulled off a couple of good saves to keep them out. **Heidi** and **Scarlett** at the back kept most of the SSQ attacks at bay, but a rather innocuous shot somehow managed to squeeze its way past **Oumou** and into the net. Suddenly, out of nowhere, St James' were back where they started: 1-1.



Locked in: The girls ready for the challenge that lay ahead.

This signalled a change for St James', and **Ouardia** replaced **Z'Miyah** who, to be fair, had run herself into the ground for the team and needed a well-earned break. **Ouardia** made an instant impact too. After some clever play from **Samantha**, who was quickly becoming a thorn in SSQ's side, she had a well-placed shot tipped wide by the goalkeeper's fingertips. Not to be deterred, she kept pushing and, less than a minute later, grabbed her first ever goal in St James' colours to restore the lead. 2-1 going into half-time.

The second half started as the first ended, with St James' on top, and **Emilia** clearly wanted to get in on the action as she battled her way past two defenders, only to have her shot saved by the keeper. Fortunately, it fell to the feet of **Samantha**, who simply couldn't miss, giving the girls a more comfortable two-goal lead. **Samantha** could have had a third if not for a triple save by the SSQ keeper, denying her what would have been a deserved hat-trick.

SSQ understandably started to pile on the pressure, but the expert defending of **Heidi**, **Scarlett** and **Emilia** meant it was going to take something special for them to get back into the game. It was something pretty special that did eventually give them some hope: a top-corner finish that gave **Oumou** no chance, and with three minutes to go there was only one goal in it.

As SSQ pressed forward, they left gaps at the back, and as the SSQ keeper tried to get them on the attack, **Z'Miyah** stepped in to recreate her goal from last week, blocking the pass and seeing the ball bounce back into the goal. With the last kick of the game, SSQ did score a third, but it was too little too late, and the referee blew the final whistle.

Final score: St James' 4 – 3 SSQ.

Coach Brenta said after the game: "A win is a win, but we really should have been a lot more comfortable. We had a few chances that we should have scored, and most of their goals came from avoidable mistakes. We are going to need to be on our game a lot more in the matches to come."

Player of the Match goes to the simply unplayable **Samantha**.

Next week, it's the turn of the boys as they start their season with a game against Grange.