



Armagh City 3-1 Ballyclare Comrades

Saturday 11th February 2017 – NIFL Championship

Ballyclare Comrades team (4-2-3-1)

1. Paddy Flood
2. Owen Thompson 🟢🔴 (72')
5. Jason Johnston
23. Dean Youle
3. Adam Gray 🟡 (90+4')
4. Corey McMullan
8. JB Dobbin
7. Gary Brown
10. Michael O'Hanlon
11. Denver Taggart 🟢🔴 (63')
9. Chris Trussell

Substitutes:

12. Adam McCart 🟢🔴 (72')
14. Samuel McIlveen
15. Kevin Lynch 🟢🔴 (63')
16. Johnny McClurg

Armagh City: Connolly, Campbell, Hutchinson, Lennon, Montgomery, McSorley, Hynds, Grimley, Blevins, Mullen, Rushe. Subs: Boyle, Kerr, McQuaid, Rice.

A disastrous five-minute spell in the second half, in which they conceded three goals, brought a disappointing defeat for Comrades at Armagh City; a ground where they have struggled at in recent years.

For this game manager Stephen Hughes had to make enforced changes. Right-back Curtis Woods was suspended and winger Thomas Robinson injured. In to replace them came Owen Thompson, for his debut, and Denver Taggart.

The first half saw both sides struggle to cope with a biting wind, which made play difficult. However, the home side had a great chance to take the lead in the 12th minute, when Blevins got in behind the Comrades defence, but his shot from 9 yards was off target.

Comrades gradually began to build some attacking momentum, but found the Armagh defence hard to get past. In the 16th minute, Chris Trussell did get into a good position, having got on the end of a flick on from a high ball, but his eventual effort from 16 yards was blasted well over the bar.

In the 21st minute a rare mistake from Armagh 'keeper Connolly saw him scuff a clearance to Denver Taggart, who then tried to send the ball back into the net from 35 yards, but Connolly got back in time to make a fairly comfortable save.

On 29 minutes Comrades came close to opening the scoring, when a long free-kick played into the box was headed towards goal from 15 yards out by Chris Trussell, Wind-assisted, the

effort had enough pace to pose real problems for the 'keeper, who had to touch the ball onto the bar.

The home side created a chance in the 40th minute, when Rushe did well to beat two opponents on the left whilst cutting inside to hit a shot from 16 yards, but Paddy Flood had the effort well covered.

The early stages of the second half didn't give much sign of what was to come, with chances at a premium. Indeed, it was Comrades who tested the Armagh 'keeper on 56 minutes, when Gary Brown headed a good effort from 9 yards on target, after getting on the end of a Denver Taggart cross.

Paddy Flood had been having a quiet game, but he was soon to be picking the ball out of his net three times in a five-minute spell which took the game away from Comrades.

In the 61st minute Armagh opened the scoring, when McSorley struck a great half-volley from the edge of the box, which flew into the top corner of the net, giving the 'keeper no chance.

Three minutes later it was 2-0. McSorley was again on target. Comrades didn't clear their lines and the ball fell to the young Armagh midfielder just inside the box. This time his effort took a big deflection which wrong-footed the 'keeper and sailed into the net.

The visitors were shell-shocked and hadn't time to clear their heads before they were three goals down. In the 66th minute they again failed to clear the ball properly, allowing a chance for Blevins and he made no mistake with a clinical finish from 14 yards out.

Comrades pressed to try to mount a comeback, but they didn't seem to have the spark to open up a resolute Armagh defence.

In the 76th minute however they did come when successive corners saw headers from Jason Johnston and then Adam McCart cleared from just in front of the goal-line.

With time running out and any goal now likely to be only a consolation, Comrades did have a decent chance in the 87th minute, when Adam McCart got on the end of a ball over the Armagh defence, but he dragged his shot from 12 yards wide of the far post.

A minute later, at the other end, Paddy Flood had to make a smart save from a 25-yard free-kick fired in by Mullen.

Three minutes into injury-time, Comrades should have scored, but Kevin Lynch hit an air-shot in front of goal, when any kind of contact would have got him on the scoresheet.

However, a minute later, and with almost the last kick of the game, they did find the net, when Adam Gray produced a good finish, wide of the 'keeper and into the bottom corner of the net, from 8 yards.