



Loughgall 2-1 Ballyclare Comrades

Saturday 10th December 2016 – NIFL Championship

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

1. Paddy Flood
2. Curtis Woods
5. Michael McQuitty
23. Dean Youle
3. Adam Gray
4. Jason Johnston 🟦 (55')
8. JB Dobbin
10. Denver Taggart
7. Michael O'Hanlon 🟡 (21') 🟢 (85')
11. Thomas Robinson 🟢 (78')
9. Chris Trussell 🟢 (34')

Substitutes:

12. Gary Brown 🟢 (78')
14. Corey McMullan 🟢 (34')
15. Adam Irwin 🟢 (85') 🟡 (90')
16. Mark Shannon

Loughgall: Buchanan, Devlin, Mallon, Copeland, Taylor, Dallas, McConnell, Ferguson, McMaster, Uprichard, Campbell. Subs: Elliott, Hudson, McCann, Stretton.

Comrades received a blow to their title hopes with a defeat in controversial circumstances at Loughgall.

For this match manager Stephen Hughes went with the same starting eleven that had played so well at Institute the previous Saturday. This meant that Corey McMullan and Gary Brown, who had both been suspended for that game, had to be content with a place on the bench.

The home side, in good form under a new management team, started confidently and grabbed an early lead in the 8th minute. A decisive thrust down the left ended with Curtis Woods being adjudged to have fouled a Loughgall player near the by-line inside the box. A penalty was awarded, which was duly dispatched by Uprichard.

Comrades were struggling to get into their stride going forward and when they did get into good positions a couple of times in the first quarter of the game, there was nobody on the end of balls played across the 6-yard box.

In the 34th minute things got worse for the visitors, when Chris Trussell had to be withdrawn from the action after sustaining a head injury going for a ball played into the Loughgall box. He looked to be suffering from concussion and was taken to hospital as a precaution. The loss of the in-form striker necessitated a reshuffle, with Corey McMullan coming on and Jason Johnston being pushed forward to fill in up front.

Comrades hadn't tested the home 'keeper nearly enough in the first half. The only efforts of any note came in quick succession in the 38th and 39th minutes. Firstly, Denver Taggart got on the end of a cross which eluded a Loughgall defender, but his resulting effort from 13 yards was too close to 'keeper Buchanan to unduly worry him. Then, an Adam Gray free-kick from 25 yards out was well struck, forcing Buchanan into a smart, but relatively comfortable, save low just inside the post.

A minute later however the home side doubled their lead. Comrades lost the ball in the midfield area when Thomas Robinson lost his footing. Loughgall took full advantage playing it quickly to McConnell on the right side of the box, who then produced a super half volley strike from a difficult angle 16 yards out, which flew past Paddy Flood and inside the far post.

The early signs in the second half were not particularly encouraging for the travelling supporters, as their side struggled with their passing against a determined home side. However, ten minutes in they had something to cheer when Jason Johnston broke the offside trap and ran through to finish coolly past the 'keeper from 12 yards out.

Four minutes later, Loughgall came close to restoring a two-goal advantage, when Uprichard got to the ball before the advancing Paddy Flood 16 yards from goal, but his effort drifted just wide of the unguarded net.

In the 63rd minute things seemed to have swung towards Comrades when the home side were reduced to ten men, after McMaster was sent-off for a second booking. However, the visitors still looked out of sorts and failed to take capitalise on their numerical advantage. Indeed, the next real chance came to Loughgall on 76 minutes, when the ball was allowed to bounce in the Comrades box and Uprichard got in a fiercely hit shot from an angle 8 yards out, which stung the palms of Paddy Flood, who was able to turn the ball over the bar.

The last ten minutes or so saw Comrades at last exert some sustained pressure, but they were often frustrated by a poor final ball. However, in the 83rd minute they thought they had the equaliser, only to be controversially denied. The ball was played into the box from a free-kick on the right and it took a deflection into the path of Michael McQuitty, who headed in from 4 yards, despite the efforts of man on the line to keep it out. The referee's assistant however had raised his flag for offside, to the bafflement of Comrades players and many in the ground, who failed to understand how McQuitty could possibly have been offside when a defender was on the line. In any case, the goal was disallowed.

The visitors couldn't create another chance against a dogged Loughgall team and they were left to bitterly complain to the officials as the sides left the field after the final whistle.