



Ballyclare Comrades 2-1 Lurgan Celtic

Saturday 21st January 2017 – NIFL Championship

Match Sponsor: Paul Girvan MLA

Ball Sponsor: Anonymous

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

1. Paddy Flood
2. Curtis Woods 🟡 (88')
5. Jason Johnston
23. Dean Youle 🟡 (18')
3. Adam Gray
4. Corey McMullan
8. JB Dobbin 🟣 (71')
7. Gary Brown 🟣 (58') 🟢 (80')
10. Kevin Lynch 🟢 (46')
11. Thomas Robinson
9. Chris Trussell 🟡 (44')

Substitutes:

12. Samuel McIlveen 🟢 (46')
14. Owen Thompson
15. Denver Taggart 🟢 (80')
16. Michael Haskins
17. Joel Haggan

Lurgan Celtic: McCorry, McVeigh, Adam Rodgers, Noonan, Cochrane, Gibson, Bell, Ryan, Lawless, Hagan, Malone. Subs: Aaron Rodgers, Lavery, Wright.

Comrades promotion chase was boosted with a fine second half performance, which saw them turn the game around to grab a vital three points against Lurgan Celtic.

Manager Stephen Hughes made a couple of changes from the side which had won at H&W Welders a week before. Michael O'Hanlon was unavailable, and was replaced by Gary Brown, whilst Kevin Lynch came in for Samuel McIlveen.

The home side started the stronger. In the 5th minute Thomas Robinson produced a surging run down the middle, beating two men, before firing a low shot just wide of the target from 16 yards.

Comrades early superiority fizzled out as Celtic grew into the game around the midway point of the first half. In the 24th minute the visitors came close when a swift break up-field ended with Lawless attempting to chip the 'keeper from the left edge of the box and seeing his excellent effort hit the top of the bar.

Four minutes later however, Celtic did open the scoring. They won a free-kick midway inside the Comrades half and played the ball into the box, where Ryan rose highest to power in a header from 8 yards.

The rest of the first half saw few efforts of note. The closest Comrades came was in the 41st minute, when a great run forward by right-back Curtis Woods ended with him shooting just over the bar from 25 yards out.

Comrades had much work to do in the second half, but they were up to the task. They pressed forward from the start controlling much of the possession and in the 58th minute they got their reward. A free-kick was won wide on the right. Samuel McIlveen, introduced as a half-time substitute, whipped a superb ball into the box, which was met by a perfect header from Gary Brown, 5 yards from goal, and the ball ended up nestling in the bottom corner of the net.

At the other end, the home defence was largely in control, but in the 63rd minute Paddy Flood had to make a good save to tip the ball over the bar from a 20 yard Malone free-kick.

Comrades however continued to look the more dangerous side. In the 68th minute they came close, when the ever-threatening Thomas Robinson got to the by-line and lifted the ball back into the centre of the box, where it was met by stooping Gary Brown header, the effort going just over the bar from 8 yards out.

In the 71st minute the home side deservedly hit the front. The influential Gary Brown got to the ball in the box and was bundled over by an opponent. The referee pointed to the spot and Corey McMullan stepped up to take the penalty. His effort was well saved by 'keeper McCorry, but JB Dobbin reacted quickest to get onto the loose ball and fire the ball into the roof of the net from 6 yards.

Comrades maintained the momentum, but Celtic still carried the occasional threat. On 81 minutes, they had a chance when Malone struck a volley from 10 yards in a crowded box, but Paddy Flood was well placed to make the save.

The home side had a great chance to increase their lead in the 86th minute. Substitute Denver Taggart did well to get free on the right side of the box and then picked out Thomas Robinson with a ball into the 6-yard box. Robinson looked odds on to score, but his effort was denied by a superb save from McCorry.

However, two goals proved enough for Comrades, who had showed the resolve needed to come back from behind to take all three points.