

Ballyclare Comrades 0 - 2 H&W Welders

Friday 7th October – NIFL Championship

Match Sponsor: Abbey Real Estate, Ballyclare

Ball Sponsor: The Mortgage Shop, Ballyclare

Ballyclare Comrades team

Paddy Flood – Curtis Woods, Jason Johnston, Dean Youle, Mark Shannon – Corey McMullan, JB Dobbin – Michael O’Hanlon, Gary Brown, Thomas Robinson - Chris Trussell.

Subs: Adam Gray (58 minutes for Robinson), Adam Irwin (84 minutes for McMullan), Denver Taggart (88 minutes for Brown), Kyle Dillon (not used), Stuart McCullough (not used).

Comrades failed to live up to their recent form, which had taken them to the top of the table, as they fell to a two goal defeat to bogey side H&W Welders, in front a decent sized Friday night crowd at Dixon Park.

With captain Michael McQuitty unavailable, manager Stephen Hughes had to make a change at the back; Jason Johnston moved from his usual midfield position to take up an unfamiliar role as a centre-back and JB Dobbin was restored to the starting line-up in midfield and took the captain’s armband.

After a bright opening from the home side, Welders soon began to settle and look confident. In the 15th minute they were denied by a fine save from Paddy Flood, who turned McKee’s effort wide from the edge of the 6-yard box, after the striker had been played through. However, from the resulting corner, just into the 16th minute, the Comrades ‘keeper could do nothing to prevent the visitors taking the lead. The ball was played to the far post where it fell to McMillan, who did well to make the space to finish from an angle 5 yards out.

The home side were struggling to recreated the fluency of recent performances and were somewhat sloppy with their passing. However, they were unfortunate not to equalise on the half hour, when an excellent shot from the edge of the box, struck by Gary Brown, came back off the post.

In the 41st minute Comrades had a decent chance to level the scores, when a good move ended with Michael O’Hanlon seeing his effort from an angle 7 yards out deflected wide off a defender.

An evenly contested first half ended with the visitors going in with the vital goal scored.

Comrades came out for the second half and pressed immediately for the equaliser, but made no real inroads early on against a well-drilled Welders defence, behind which Johnston was dominant in goal.

As the half progressed the home side began to get in a few efforts. On 63 minutes Chris Trussell hit a shot on the turn from 17 yards, but Johnston was well placed to save with ease. Then, a minute later, Michael O’Hanlon got to the by-line on the left and cut the ball back to substitute Adam Gray, whose effort from 8 yards was blocked by a defender.

Much of the home side's threat came down the left and on 74 minutes a good burst forward by Mark Shannon took him to the edge of the box, where he played a one-two with Corey McMullan and then struck a fierce shot from 14 yards, which forced the 'keeper to make a save under the bar at his near post.

Comrades continued to press, but the clear cut chance never came. The closest they came in the latter stages was in the 78th minute when a crisp low shot from just inside the box from Adam Gray flew just wide of the post.

Welders hadn't threatened that much during the second half, but on 83 minutes they broke away to seal the points with a composed finish from McKee from the edge of the 6-yard box.

On 87 minutes McMillan's red card for an off the ball incident with Adam Irwin reduced the visitors to ten men, but it was too late to have any effect on the result. Comrades' night was summed up two minutes into injury-time, when Adam Irwin's well-struck shot from 16 yards took a deflection, which made the 'keeper's save rather easier than it might otherwise have been.