



Ballyclare Comrades 4-3 H&W Welders

Friday 20th October 2017 – Bluefin Sport Championship

Match Sponsor: Ian Fleck Signs & Graphics

Ball Sponsor: Alan's Burger Van @ Dixon Park

Ballyclare Comrades team

(3-5-2)

1. Paddy Flood 🏠 (55')
5. Chris Rodgers
14. Adam McCart
23. Dean Youle 🏠 (79')
17. Thomas Robinson
4. Samuel McIlveen
22. Gary Brown 🏠 (6')
8. JB Dobbin
11. Adam Gray 🏠 (71')
24. Stewart Nixon 🏠 (28')
9. Mark Kelly 🏠 (11') 🏠 (90')

Substitutes:

2. Curtis Woods
10. Paul Maguire 🏠 (71')
18. Jason Johnston 🏠 (79')
20. Zach Barr
26. Geoff McKinty 🏠 (55')

H&W Welders: Robinson, Middleton, Armstrong, McMillan, McMurray, Harris, Deans, Nelson, Malone, Arthurs, Rainey. Subs: Bonnes, Gwiazda, Withers, Boyd, Spence.

Comrades maintained their position at the top of the Championship table, with a late goal winning them all three points, after they had been stunned by a Welders fightback.

Unsurprisingly manager Clifford Adams stuck with the same starting line-up which had brought the points home from their last game at Portadown.

The visitors opened in lively fashion, showing the confidence going forward of a team in form and creating a few early half chances. However they were rocked in the 6th minute when Comrades grabbed the lead. Gary Brown got on the end of the ball

when it was cleared from the Welders box and fired a great first-time effort from 27 yards, which was always going away from the 'keeper as it flew into the net. Welders reacted well to this set-back and in the 9th minute a great passing move ended with the ball being played across the box, where Rainey arrived at the far post to fire the ball in just under the bar from the edge of the 6-yard box. The pulsating start to the game continued and in the 11th minute the home side's lead was restored, when Mark Kelly got in front of his marker to head in from 4 yards from a Samuel McIlveen corner.

More goals threatened to come at either end, with neither side finding it too easy to defend in the wet and windy conditions.

Veteran striker David Rainey, 20 years after his heroics in Comrades Ulster Cup winning team, was showing he was still a serious threat, giving the home defence a lot to think about.

At the other end Comrades also looked very capable of adding to their goal tally as well, with some incisive attacking play.

In the 25th minute Welders were very unfortunate not to level the scores, when a great free-kick from Nelson, hit from 25 yards, came back off the inside of the post and out, allowing the ball to be cleared.

On 28 minutes Comrades increased their lead. Great work by Adam Gray set up Stewart Nixon for a chance from 14 yards out on the left side of the box and he made no mistake drilling the ball low wide of the 'keeper and in off the far post. Comrades came close to adding a fourth goal five minutes later. Stewart Nixon did very well to get a cross in from the left, despite having his shirt tugged by a defender. His ball into the box found the head of Mark Kelly, who got in a great powerful header from 10 yards, which forced a fine save from 'keeper Robert Robinson, who spectacularly tipped the ball over the bar.

In the 45th minute Comrades were grateful to 'keeper Paddy Flood. A high ball caused problems in the wind for Dean Youle, who could only head it back into the path of Middleton. He looked set to score, only to be denied as Flood came out quickly to block at the edge of the 6-yard box.

After a bright start to the second half by the home side, Welders began to rack up some pressure, forcing a series of corners. Around this time Comrades had to make a change in between the sticks, with Paddy Flood going off injured to be replaced by Geoff McKinty in the 55th minute.

Comrades were finding it more difficult to make chances than they had in the first half, but in the 63rd minute they had an opportunity when Stewart Nixon set up Mark Kelly for a shot from 15 yards, but his effort went well over the bar.

On 67 minutes Welders were denied by the woodwork again. This time a wind-assisted free-kick, played high into the box from deep by Nelson, went straight through to hit the post as a couple of striker closed in.

The visitors continued to press and a number of dangerous balls into the Comrades box were just lacking the finish. It looked as if time was running out for Gary Smyth's side, but in the 83rd minute they sensationally hit two goals to wipe out the deficit. First, a high ball played from deep eluded both Chris Rodgers and Adam McCart, allowing Rainey in. He got in a shot from 16 yards, which was blocked well by the out-rushing Geoff McKinty. However, the ball rebounded out and came back off the unfortunate Jason Johnston and into the empty net.

Less than a minute later, the home support were stunned as their side conceded again. A corner was cleverly pulled back to the edge of the box by Withers, for Deans to strike a shot, which went through the crowded box and crept in just inside the post and past the despairing dive of McKinty.

There was still drama to come in the game, as Comrades grabbed a very late winner in the 90th minute. A long ball played down the middle by Samuel McIlveen caused confusion in the Welders defence, as Mark Kelly tried to get to it. Robinson rushed out from his goal and bundled the Comrades striker over outside the box. From the resulting free-kick McIlveen hit a lovely effort from 25 yards, which came back off the post, but Mark Kelly was in the right spot to knock the ball into the unguarded net from close range and send the home supporters wild.