



Larne 1-1 Ballyclare Comrades

Saturday 9th September 2017 – Bluefin Sport Championship

Ballyclare Comrades team (4-4-2)

- 26. Geoff McKinty
- 2. Curtis Woods
- 5. Chris Rodgers 🟡 (44')
- 6. Dean Youle 🟡 (27')
- 16. Matty Parker
- 17. Thomas Robinson 🟡 (57')
- 4. Samuel McIlveen
- 8. JB Dobbin 🟡 (38') 🟡 (72')
- 11. Adam Gray 🟡 (44') 🟡 (66')
- 10. Paul Maguire
- 9. Mark Kelly

Substitutes:

- 6. Michael McQuitty
- 7. Michael O'Hanlon 🟢 (66')
- 18. Jason Johnston 🟢 (72')
- 19. Stewart Nixon 🟢 (57')
- 1. Paddy Flood

Larne: McConnell, Bradley, Thompson, Holland, Abe, Downey, Henry, Kottoy, Reynolds, Stuart, McCabe. Subs: Fornah, Chisanga, Scullion, Tolan, McLaren.

Comrades kept their lead at the top of the table, but had to settle for appoint from a feisty derby match with bottom of the table, but rapidly improving, Larne.

For this match Adam Gray and Mark Kelly were both available and returned to the side, with Kyle Mackie and Stewart Nixon dropping out. Geoff McKinty kept his place in goal, with fit again Paddy Flood having to make do with a place on the bench.

The home side, with a few experienced players now added to the mix, looked strong in the first half, getting the ball down and having most of the play. Comrades on the other hand looked rather out of sorts and struggled to find any rhythm.

Despite this, apart from a rather optimistic shout for a handball in the box, when Chris Rodgers blocked an on-target shot, the Comrades defence prevented anything really threatening their goal, although Larne made them work hard.

The visitors were finding it hard to create much, with a motivated home side closing them down quickly. It wasn't until the 23rd minute that Comrades had anything

resembling a threat on goal, when JB Dobbin's speculative effort from 20 yards flew a couple of feet over the bar.

In the 27th minute, Comrades took the lead against the run of play. A Samuel McIlveen corner found the head of Thomas Robinson. He glanced the ball to the far post area, where it fell to Dean Youle, who made no mistake, drilling the ball low into the net from 8 yards out.

The home side weren't thrown out of their stride by this set-back and continued to press, but were largely frustrated by some excellent defending from Comrades.

However, in the 38th minute Geoff McKinty had to get his positioning right to keep out a 20 yard free-kick from Kottoy.

A minute into first-half injury-time however, there was nothing the Comrades 'keeper could do, when Reynolds fired a great free-kick from just outside the box, over the wall and into the net to deservedly level the scores just before the break. The second half opened with a strange incident inside the second minute. A free-kick was played into the Larne box and the 'keeper looked to be well-placed to grab the ball easily. However Dean Youle challenged him and got his head cleanly on the ball, which fell to the feet of Mark Kelly, who stabbed the ball wide from 5 yard, with the goal unguarded.

A minute later, Larne tested Geoff McKinty, who did well to turn over a McCabe effort from the edge of the box.

Comrades were much improved compared to the first half and were the preeminent force in the second half, but again attacking dominance didn't necessarily translate into chances against a tenacious home defence. Although on the hour mix up between the 'keeper and a defender gifted a half chance to Paul Maguire, but the former long-serving Larne player couldn't convert with a hooked effort from 13 yards, which drifted wide of the target.

At the other end the Comrades defence, with Dean Youle and Chris Rodgers dominant in the middle, gave Larne little change, although Tolan did have a decent effort from the edge of the box, which flew just wide of the target.

Comrades continued to press and in the 68th minute two substitutes linked up, with Michael O'Hanlon playing the ball low across the box to Stewart Nixon, but from a difficult angle he blazed the ball high and wide from 6 yards out.

In the 73rd minute Comrades travelling fans were celebrating what they thought was a goal for their side, when from a corner played in by Samuel McIlveen looked to have been either headed in by Mark Kelly or punched into his own goal by McConnell on goal-line. Kelly was off celebrating for a considerable time, before the referee, having consulted with his assistant ruled the goal out.

The visitors continued to have most of the play as the game moved into its final minutes. In the 87th minute the impressive Samuel McIlveen hit a good strike from 20 yards, but McConnell was well placed to save. Then, two minutes into injury-time, McIlveen's well-flighted free-kick found the head of Jason Johnston, unmarked 8 yards out, but his effort flew over the bar.

After the final whistle there was a very unsavoury incident, when Larne's experienced defender Holland appeared to bite Stewart Nixon's face. The referee's attention was drawn to the incident by his assistant and Holland received a red card.