



Lurgan Celtic 0-1 Ballyclare Comrades

Saturday 13th January 2018 – Bluefin Sport Championship

Ballyclare Comrades team

1. Paddy Flood
2. Curtis Woods 🟡 (45+3)
5. Chris Rodgers 🇮🇪 (14')
23. Dean Youle
16. Matty Parker
17. Thomas Robinson
8. JB Dobbin
10. Eoin Kane 🇮🇪 (71')
11. Adam Gray 🟠 (69')
24. Stewart Nixon 🟡 (57')
9. Mark Kelly 🇮🇪 (57') 🇮🇪 (88')

Substitutes:

14. Adam McCart 🇮🇪 (14')
12. Chris Middleton
22. Gary Brown 🇮🇪 (71') 🟡 (90+4)
20. Francis Dugan 🇮🇪 (88')
19. Alan Blayney

Lurgan Celtic: McPartlin, J Rogers, Crawford, A Rogers, Grimley, Gibson, Toland, Bell, McAlinden, Farren, McDonald. Subs: Harbinson, Henderson, Partland, Hallissey, Lavery.

Comrades managed to secure three points from their trip to Lurgan Celtic, after a testing game against a side battling against relegation.

Manager Clifford Adams made a couple of changes from the team which won at Portadown in the Cup a week previously. In came new signing Eoin Kane for the suspended Samuel McIlveen, whilst Thomas Robinson came in for Chris Middleton. Comrades started on the front foot but couldn't make the most of their early dominance and soon enough the youthful home side grew in confidence and give the visitors something to think about.

In the 14th minute, from a corner, a dangerous ball was crossed into the Comrades box and in the scramble to get to it Chris Rodgers obtained a head injury that required him to leave the action, to be replaced by Adam McCart in the centre of defence.

Celtic were enjoying a good spell and in the 16th minute they came close to an opener, when a strike from 16 yards by Toland required a fine save from Paddy Flood to turn the ball wide of the target.

A minute later the home side were claiming that the ball was over the line after a shot from McDonald, but the referee waved play on.

Comrades managed to come through this short uncomfortable spell and controlled the play for much of the rest of the first half, but the final ball which could open up the home defence was missing, and they struggled to create chances.

In the 42nd minute the Celtic 'keeper did have to make a decent save. A Matty Parker free-kick, played into the box and driven by the wind, flew through a crowd of players and tested McPartlin's reactions.

On 45 minutes a good run from Adam Gray took him past a couple of opponents, before he got in a strike from the edge of the box, but his effort went low wide of the far post.

The general pattern of the first half continued after the break, with the visitors doing most of the pressing, but struggling to get the better of a tenacious home defence. However, the pressure was building. In the 57th minute Adam Gray cut in from the left and made space for a shot from just outside the box, which was turned wide by the 'keeper.

Seconds later, from the resulting corner, Comrades grabbed the lead. Matty Parker played the ball into the box and found the head of Mark Kelly, who made no mistake from 5 yards.

Comrades continued pressing, looking for another goal to cement their advantage.

On 68 minutes they came close, when Mark Kelly robbed a defender and got into the box near the by-line, before playing it back towards the arriving Eoin Kane, who looked set to score from 7 yards, only to be denied by a fine block by the 'keeper, who had been quick to react to the danger.

A minute later, there was controversy as Comrades were reduced to ten men, when Adam Gray received a straight red card for a tackle on Aaron Rodgers. The Comrades players and management team protested strongly against the decision, with assistant manager Sammy McFadden getting sent from the bench.

Despite being down to ten men, Comrades still looked the more likely side to score. In the 80th minute, Mark Kelly looked set to make it 2-0, after he skipped past a tackle in the box, but his effort from 6 yards was met by a fine block from McPartlin. Three minutes later, the visitors had a great chance to make the points safe when a swift counter-attack ended with Stewart Nixon driving into the box and being brought down by a defender. The referee pointed to the spot and Nixon himself stepped up to take the penalty. However, once again McPartlin was up to the task, saving Nixon's effort.

The travelling supporters had to endure a tense last few minutes, with Celtic getting a couple of free-kicks in dangerous positions. However, nothing came of these and the points went back to Ballyclare.