



Newry City AFC 2-1 Ballyclare Comrades

Saturday 10th February 2018 – Bluefin Sport Championship

Ballyclare Comrades team

1. Paddy Flood
2. Curtis Woods
5. Chris Rodgers 🟦 (11') 🟥 (81')
23. Dean Youle
16. Matty Parker 🟡 (36')
12. Chris Middleton 🟥 (81')
8. JB Dobbin 🟡 (43')
10. Eoin Kane 🟡 (47')
17. Thomas Robinson 🟥 (67')
22. Gary Brown
9. Mark Kelly

Substitutes:

18. Jason Johnston 🟢 (81')
4. Samuel McIlveen 🟢 (81')
7. Joe McWilliams
20. Francis Dugan
24. Stewart Nixon 🟢 (67')

Newry City AFC: Maguire, McArdle, Mooney, King, Boyle, McCann, Walker, M Hughes, McCabe, S Hughes, Carville. Subs: Johnston, Havern, Mullen, McMahan, Cunningham.

Comrades suffered late heartache at Newry and, after leading for most of the game, came away with nothing.

Manager Clifford Adams was faced with a goalkeeping crisis for this game, with Alan Blayney missing due to the recent death of his father and Paddy Flood struggling with a broken finger. Flood had to pressed into action earlier than hoped. Other changes saw Chris Middleton come into the side and Dean Youle return at centre-back.

The teams came into this game in very different form, with the home side flying and the visitors struggling, but it was Comrades who were to start the better and who should really have been out of sight at the break.

After an encouraging opening to the game for the men in red, they opened the scoring in the 11th minute. Chris Middleton sent in a free-kick from the left to the back post, where Chris Rodgers got to the ball to head it in from 5 yards.

Comrades were playing confident, buoyant football, belying their recent run of poor results. Two minutes after hitting the front, only a great intervention by a defender prevented Mark Kelly getting on the end of a teasing ball across the box, played in by Gary Brown.

The livewire Brown was in the centre of the action again in the 15th minute when his super run saw him set up Mark Kelly for a great chance 8 yards out, but the striker uncharacteristically dragged his shot wide of the target, with only the 'keeper to beat.

On 20 minutes Kelly did well to bring the ball down inside the box and beat his marker before getting in a shot from 7 yards, which was met by a fine save from Maguire. The loose ball rebounded out towards Thomas Robinson on the left edge of the 6-yard box and he got in a well-struck effort from an angle, which Maguire had to turn past the near post.

Two minutes later, a corner was only cleared out to Eoin Kane at the edge of the box and he fired in a good half-volleyed effort which looked set for the bottom corner of the net, if it hadn't taken a slight deflection of the leg of a defender.

Comrades had been dominant, but they almost conceded a goal from a quick break by the home side. McCabe got free on the by-line inside the box and played the ball in towards Stephen Hughes. Chris Middleton managed to get his foot to the ball, but it then rebounded back off Hughes and looked to be looping into the goal from 7 yards, only to be kept out by an acrobatic clearance from JB Dobbin.

On 28 minutes Comrades had another good chance, when a run down the centre from Thomas Robinson ended with him playing in Chris Middleton, He looked set to strike on goal from 13 yards, only to be denied after defender Mooney threw himself at the ball to deflect it wide.

A minute later, Newry had a great chance to level the scores when Carville was played into space 13 yards from goal, but he blasted his effort high over the bar.

The visitors continued to threaten going forward and Chris Middleton nearly topped a fine first half performance with a goal on 39 minutes, when a great run ended with a shot from 15 yards, which was deflected just wide of the far post.

Comrades had to be content with a one goal lead at the break, and the travelling support, although delighted with the overall performance, may have had an uncomfortable feeling that they could regret not taking more of their chances.

The second half was a very different affair from the first, with the home side having most of the play. Having said that, for the most part, Comrades defended solidly and Newry struggled to create chances.

Comrades were much less active going forward than they had been in the first half, but on 66 minutes it took a great tackle from Boyle to deny Mark Kelly a strike from 5 yards, after he had got free a looked set to score.

Despite Newry pressing, Comrades were defending doggedly and looked to be set to hold on to gain a morale boosting win. However, in the dying minutes they were to have it all taken away from them.

On 89 minutes Walker got a good strike in from the edge of the box, which forced a save from Paddy Flood. However, Mullen was first to react to the loose ball, turning it in from 6 yards.

There was worse to come for Comrades a minute into injury-time, when Newry struck again. A long ball pumped forward by 'keeper Maguire was flicked on to find Johnston free in the box and he converted from 9 yards. Comrades threw players forward in the remaining few minutes to try to rescue a point, but it wasn't to be and they fell to a gutting defeat.