



Ballyclare Comrades 2-1 Portadown

Saturday 25th November 2017 – Bluefin Sport Championship

Match Sponsor: Valentino's Pizzeria, Ballyclare

Ball Sponsor: James Adams

Ballyclare Comrades team

1. Paddy Flood
6. Michael McQuitty 📌 (80')
14. Adam McCart
23. Dean Youle
17. Thomas Robinson
4. Samuel McIlveen 📌 (27')
22. Gary Brown 📌 (47')
8. JB Dobbin
11. Adam Gray 📌 (83')
18. Jason Johnston
24. Stewart Nixon 📌 (88')

Substitutes:

2. Curtis Woods 📌 (80')
5. Chris Rodgers
16. Matty Parker 📌 (83')
7. Michael O'Hanlon
20. Zach Barr 📌 (88')

Portadown: McGaughey, Carson, Neill, Larkin, McCallum, N Henderson, Brennan, Wilson, D Henderson, Salley, Balde. Subs: Kilmartin, Lavery, Duffin, Ferris, Holmes.

Comrades complete a double over pre-season title favourites Portadown, with a narrow but deserved win at Dixon Park.

For this match manager Clifford Adams made some changes from the team beaten at Newry the previous Saturday. Mark Kelly was absent with a hamstring injury and he was replaced by Jason Johnston up front. Also coming into the starting line-up were Michael McQuitty and Adam Gray, with Chris Rodgers and Curtis Woods dropping to the bench.

Comrades had the balance of the attacking play in the first half and from the outset caused problems for the Portadown defence.

In the 5th minute Adam Gray had a shot from just inside the box, but it lacked the power to trouble 'keeper McGaughey. Then, on 13 and 15 minutes, Jason Johnston got in headers from corners, but his efforts went over the bar.

On 19 minutes Samuel McIlveen struck an effort from 25 yards, which saw the ball rear up just in front of the 'keeper, forcing him to make an uncomfortable save. Comrades continue to press and on 25 minutes they came close when Stewart Nixon's ball into the box was met by Gary Brown, but under pressure he could only bundle the ball wide from 8 yards.

The breakthrough for the home side came in the 27th minute. A free-kick was won wide on the left and Samuel McIlveen stepped up to whip in a wicked ball, which flew in without a further touch at the far post, after Jason Johnston had jumped over it, helping to deceive the 'keeper.

Portadown did come more into the game later in the half. In the 32nd minute Salley broke through a tackle on the by-line and got in a shot from 8 yards, which Paddy Flood had to parry out at his near post. Then, on 40 minutes, Larkin got on the end of a free-kick from Neill, but Paddy Flood was well-placed to save.

There was an explosive start to the second half. Within the opening minute the visitors were on level terms. A ball through to Salley beat the offside trap and the striker ran clear to score with a shot from 9 yards.

However, a minute later, Comrades were back in front. Gary Brown took advantage of some slack defending to break through a tackle inside the box and fire home from 8 yards out.

The home side then enjoyed a period of further dominance and the Portadown defence was made to work very hard to keep them from scoring again, with several efforts being denied by blocks inside the box.

However, the last quarter of the game saw the visitors press forward looking for the equaliser and Comrades had to defend stoutly.

In the 77th minute a cross whipped in by Killmartin was met by a flicked header from McCallum, but his effort flew a couple of feet over the bar from 12 yards. Two minutes later, a Salley shot from 13 yards was blocked, but not held by Paddy Flood, but the 'keeper did well to keep out Neill's effort after he got to the rebound.

On 82 minutes Flood was again called into action to keep out a drive from Carson, with Neill firing well over on the follow-up.

In the 90th minute Thomas Robinson had a great chance to seal the points, as he broke clear in a counter-attack, but his eventual effort from 7 yards was saved by McGaughey.

This missed chance was however not crucial, and the home side held on to take the points, which was well merited over the 90 minutes.