



## Ballinamallard United 1-0 Ballyclare Comrades

Saturday 19<sup>th</sup> January 2019 – Bluefin Sport Championship

### Ballyclare Comrades team (4-1-4-1)

- 19. Jack Hazard
- 2. Curtis Woods 🚩 (79')
- 5. Adam Wright
- 23. Dean Youle
- 3. Christopher Crane 🟡 (82')
- 4. Samuel McIlveen
- 22. Gary Brown 🚩 (74')
- 24. Gary Donnelly
- 10. Eoin Kane
- 11. Adam Gray
- 16. Jamie Willighan

### Substitutes:

- 6. Michael McQuitty
- 20. Taylor Kirk
- 8. JB Dobbin
- 17. Thomas Robinson 🟢 (74')
- 14. Joe Tully 🟢 (79')

**Ballinamallard United:** Connolly, Taheny, Smyth, Clarke, Arkinson, Campbell, McCartney, Hume, Cashel, McCann, O'Reilly. Subs: Glynn, Kelly, McIlwaine, Henderson, McBrien.

Comrades lost out in a closely fought game with something of a cup final atmosphere about it, as the host grabbed the available place in the top-six at the split.

Manager Stephen Hughes unsurprisingly stuck with the team which had deservedly defeated Portadown a week before and Comrades supporters travelled with some confidence that the players could do the business and earn at top half spot.

However, the visitors had a disastrous start to the game. Inside three minutes they were behind and from a very avoidable goal. A mix up at the back, between Adam Wright and 'keeper Jack Hazard allowed Cashel to take advantage, as he got his foot to the ball, steering it into the net from the edge of the 6-yard box.

Comrades were rattled for a while after this and in the 8<sup>th</sup> minute they were exposed, when a long diagonal ball set Hume free to run into the box. Fortunately, Hazard did well to block the Mallards striker's resulting effort, hit from 14 yards.

The visitors then began to clear their heads and get into the game, looking a threat going forward. On 14 minutes they came close when Gary Donnelly slipped the ball through to Gary Brown in the box, but his effort from 10 yards was saved well by 'keeper Connolly.

Comrades had increasing amounts of the ball, forcing the home side to defend, which they did well; the final ball being somewhat elusive for the men in red.

At the other end, on 34 minutes, Mallards almost double their lead, when Campbell got his foot to a high ball played into the box, but he couldn't steer his effort on target and it went just wide from 8 yards.

Soon after Comrades had a couple of strikes inside the box. In the 37<sup>th</sup> minute Jamie Willighan got on the end of a through ball, but his fiercely struck effort from 11 yards fizzed over the bar. Then, two minutes later a cross into the box, played in by Christopher Crane, was only headed down by a defender to Adam Gray, but his snap-shot from a bit of an angle, 10 yards out, again went over the bar.

Comrades went in at half-time one behind, but well in the game. However, although they had good spells of possession in the second half, they failed to replicate the threat they had shown in the first half, against a very well organised home defence. Indeed, although defences were generally on top at both ends, it was Mallard who came closest to scoring.

In the 57<sup>th</sup> minute the ball was lost cheaply by Comrades in their own half and played to Campbell, who ran into the box. However, Jack Hazard was alert to the danger and rushed out narrowing the angle and the Mallards striker could only hit the side-netting.

A minute later, another loss of the ball in their own territory almost cost Comrades and provided another chance for Campbell, but his effort from 9 yards was turned wide by a fine save from Hazard.

As time wore on the home supporters grew nervous, as an equaliser for Comrades would have sent them into the top six. However, despite getting into a number of good positions and with a number of dangerous set-pieces, the visitors could not capitalise. Any cross into the box was won by a Mallards defender and Comrades weren't able to test 'keeper Connolly in any serious way.

In the end it was the Mallards crowd which was celebrating at the final whistle, whilst the Comrades supporters left disappointed, but grateful for the effort of their side.