



H&W Welders 3-4 Ballyclare Comrades

Saturday 1st September 2018 – Bluefin Sport Championship

Ballyclare Comrades team (4-4-2)

- 19. Kyle Rowe
- 2. Curtis Woods
- 18. Adam Wright
- 23. Dean Youle
- 11. Adam Gray
- 17. Thomas Robinson 🟦 (41') 🔴 (84')
- 24. Gary Donnelly 🟦 (34') 🔴 (74')
- 8. JB Dobbin
- 7. Joe McWilliams
- 12. Jason Johnston 🟦 (83')
- 16. Jamie Willighan 🟦 (53')

Substitutes:

- 4. Samuel McIlveen 🟢 (84')
- 10. Eoin Kane 🟢 (74')
- 20. Taylor Kirk
- 9. Chris Trussell
- 14. Joe Tully

H&W Welders: Brown, Hamill, Armstrong, McMillan, Spence, Davidson, O'Mahony, Deans, Arthurs, Gwiazda, Rainey. Subs: Robinson, Harris, Morrow, Dornan, McIlmail.

Comrades produced a sensational comeback to turn around a three-goal deficit and take the points home from their trip to east Belfast.

Manager Stephen Hughes had to do without Michael McQuitty, Christopher Crane and Gary Brown for this match. Curtis Woods returned after from a brief injury absence, whilst Joe McWilliams came in for his first start of the season.

The game started badly for the visitors, with Welders hitting the front inside three minutes. Gwiazda got the goal, firing home from 6 yards, after the ball was driven low across the Comrades box.

In the 5th minute Jamie Willighan almost got something out of nothing, when he got his foot to the ball and sent it just the wrong side of the post and into the side-netting from 5 yards, as a defender tried to shepherd it out for a goal-kick.

A minute later, at the other end, Comrades were made to pay for a mix-up between 'keeper and defender, with Arthurs nipping in to slot home from close range.

The visitors looked very unsettled defensively, with Welders posing a serious threat almost every time they came forward. In the 9th minute, it was almost 3-0, when a corner played to the far post found the head of Gwiazda, but his effort from 5 yards went just wide of the post.

Despite the jitters at the back, Comrades were lively enough going forward. In the 15th minute, a good move ended with Thomas Robinson taking on a defender in the box and getting space for a firm strike from 7 yards, which Brown had to keep out at his near post.

Welders however continued to open up Comrades far too easily. On 24 minutes they almost extended their lead, when Rainey was played through one on one with Kyle Rowe, who he tried to lob and the Comrades 'keeper was at full-stretch to prevent a goal.

In the 32nd minute more poor marking by Comrades allowed McMillan to get on the end of a corner, but his header from 4 yards was kept out by a fine reaction save from Kyle Rowe.

Two minutes later, however, the visitors left another Welders man free in the box and this time it led to another goal. The ball was crossed in from the right and veteran striker Rainey was all on his own to head in from 9 yards.

In the 36th minute Comrades got a lifeline in the game when they pulled a goal back. A free-kick was won 30 yards out and Gary Donnelly stepped up to hit a lovely strike into the net.

Five minutes later, the deficit was reduced to only one goal. Thomas Robinson did very well to make space for a shot from just outside the box and the ball crept just inside the post.

Comrades went in a half-time 3-2 down, but with their tails up, as a result of the two goals late in the half. In truth, before getting on the scoresheet they could well have been more than three down, so to go in at the break only one behind was a boost. Comrades came out for the second half looking much more organised than in the first. On 53 minutes they levelled the scores. An out-swinging corner played in by Joe McWilliams found the head of Jamie Willighan, who powered the ball into the net from 11 yards out.

The game then ebbed and flowed from end to end, with both sides looking to hit the front. The home side were still a threat, but Comrades were defending much more solidly now. However, Kyle Rowe had to make a good save on 62 minutes to turn a shot, hit by Deans from the edge of the box, wide of the target.

The visitors however, looked had looked the sharper side in the second half and they completed a super comeback with a goal to put them ahead in the 83rd minute. A ball lobbed into the box found the head of Jason Johnston, who then looped an effort into the net from 15 yards out.

Comrades might have increased their lead on 88 minutes, when Jamie Willighan got free on the edge of the six-yard box in a good position to shoot, but his effort was dragged wide of the far post.

Seconds later, the home side almost got a fortuitous equaliser, when a speculative cross lofted high into the box by Deans saw the ball come off the far post.