



Knockbreda 3-2 Ballyclare Comrades

Saturday 17th November 2018 – Bluefin Sport Championship

Ballyclare Comrades team (4-2-3-1)

1. Ben Fry
8. JB Dobbin
12. Jason Johnston
20. Taylor Kirk
3. Christopher Crane 🟡 (88')
10. Eoin Kane 🟡 (27')
4. Samuel McIlveen
17. Thomas Robinson 🟡 (47') 🟡 (80')
22. Gary Brown 🟡 (44')
11. Adam Gray
14. Joe Tully 🟡 (71')

Substitutes:

5. Adam Wright
24. Gary Donnelly
7. Joe McWilliams
9. Chris Trussell 🟢 (71') 🟡 (90+2')
16. Jamie Willighan 🟢 (80')

Knockbreda: Smyth, Drysdale, Pike, McVeigh, Patterson, Copeland, Fearon, Newberry, Bennett, Dobbin, Barr. Subs: McNicholl, Rice, Roohi, Cafolla, McNulty.

Comrades run of games without a league win stretched to five, as they slumped to defeat at Knockbreda, despite their opponents playing for most of the match with ten men.

Manager Stephen Hughes was faced with more selection problems at the back for this game, with 'keeper Paddy Flood suspended and Curtis Woods ill, adding to several other defensive absentees. 17-year old Ben Fry came in between the sticks, with Taylor Kirk getting a rare start in central defence and JB Dobbin being used in an unfamiliar right-back position.

Despite a bright start from the home side, it was Knockbreda who threatened first, when in the 5th minute Fearon flashed a shot just wide of the far post from 13 yards. A minute later Comrades' inability to stop conceding goals, which has blighted their season so far, struck again. The ball was given away unnecessarily near the halfway line. It was then all too easy for it to be played forward to put Fearon through on goal and he made no mistake firing past Fry from 12 yards.

Comrades had a decent share of possession, but they were struggling to get past a rugged home defence. The first real threat from the visitors came in the 18th minute, when a good move ended with Thomas Robinson feeding the ball to Gary Brown in the box and Brown hitting a shot wide of the far post from 9 yards.

The balance of the game seemed to swing towards Comrades in the 20th minute, when their former player Zach Barr was sent off for a rash tackle on Gary Brown. However, there was initially little sign of the numerical advantage being utilised. Indeed, in the 25th minute, Knockbreda came close to adding to their lead, when Christopher Crane was robbed on the edge of the box and the ball played to Bennett, who was only denied by the alert reactions of Ben Fry.

Three minutes later the home side did get a second. A high ball played into the box saw Jason Johnston penalised for a push and a penalty awarded, which Fearon duly converted.

With their two-goal advantage Knockbreda were now content to let Comrades have the ball up to a certain point, but once they got much past the halfway line, there was robust defending to get past. Consequently, the visitors struggled to create chances. On 35 minutes, Samuel McIlveen did get a free-kick on target from 20 yards, but Smyth was well placed to save.

It took a lovely through ball played by JB Dobbin to unlock the home defence on 44 minutes, when he slid the ball into the path of Gary Brown, who made no mistake with a cool finish past the advancing 'keeper from 16 yards.

Comrades came out for the second half with their tails up and soon levelled the scores in the 47th minute. A great long pass from Samuel McIlveen set Eoin Kane free and he then played the ball into the 6-yard box where Thomas Robinson was there to finish from 5 yards.

The men in red now looked to have the momentum, but Knockbreda still looked a threat. On 52 minutes Ben Fry had to tip a header from Fearon over the bar.

Comrades, with the extra man, bossed the possession, but they were largely frustrated by the determined defending of the home side. However, in the 66th minute, there were two close calls. First it was Jason Johnston who came close, when he got his head to a ball played in by Adam Gray, only to see his effort scooped away off the line by Smyth. Then, seconds later, a ball played into the box broke to Joe Tully in a good position, but he dragged his shot wide from 9 yards.

The visitors continued to press, but Knockbreda always posed a threat on the break. In the 82nd minute a long ball played out of defence was knocked on to Bennett who broke into the right side of the box, but was denied by Ben Fry, who came out quickly to touch the ball wide of the goal.

However, two minutes later, there was nothing the young 'keeper could do to stop Knockbreda regaining the lead. Samuel McIlveen was robbed of the ball on the halfway line, with Comrades having committed men forward. Consequently, they were exposed at the back and McNicholl was played in, before producing a cool dinked finish past the young 'keeper from 6 yards.

Comrades couldn't find anything to respond in the remaining minutes and Knockbreda held on for the win.

