



Larne 3-1 Ballyclare Comrades

Wednesday 26th December 2018 – Bluefin Sport Championship

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

1. Paddy Flood
2. Curtis Woods
5. Adam Wright
3. Christopher Crane
17. Thomas Robinson 🇮🇪 (75')
8. JB Dobbin
4. Samuel McIlveen 🇮🇪 (87')
11. Adam Gray
12. Gary Brown
9. Chris Trussell 🇮🇪 (71')
16. Jamie Willighan

Substitutes:

19. Ross McKnight
18. Taylor Kirk
15. Gary Donnelly
7. Joe McWilliams 🇮🇪 (75')
14. Joe Tully 🇮🇪 (71') 🇮🇪 (79')

Larne: Devlin, Sule, Ramsey, McEleney, Kelly, Scullion, McDaid, Donnelly, Tilney, Cosgrove, Hughes. Subs: Dougherty, Stuart, Hassin, McNally, Gilmour.

A gutsy display from Comrades wasn't enough to prevent runaway league leaders Larne taking the points from the Boxing Day fixture at Inver Park.

For this match manager Stephen Hughes had to do without the suspended Dean Youle and Eoin Kane. However, he was able to select Christopher Crane after his recovery from injury.

Before kick-off a minute's silence was held for Comrades President, Eddie McClintock, who died on Christmas day after a long illness. This was impeccably observed by the large crowd.

The home side did much of the early pressing. The first shot on target came in the 9th minute, when Hughes hit a low effort from distance, but Paddy Flood saved comfortably.

Three minutes later the home supporters were celebrating what they thought was the opening goal, when McDaid finished from a ball played in from the left, but he was adjudged to be offside.

Comrades were forced to defend for long periods and were doing it well. However, on 24 minutes, Scullion might have done better, when picked out by a cross into the box, but his header from 8 yards was too close to 'keeper Flood. In the 27th minute the action switched to the other end as Comrades threatened for the first time. Jamie Willighan headed just wide from 9 yards, after getting on the end of a Samuel McIlveen free-kick. A minute later, McDaid was again denied a goal by an offside call after he got on the end a ball at the far post. Then, on 29 minutes, a Comrades corner was only cleared out to Thomas Robinson, who shot narrowly over from just outside the box. The latter stages of the half saw the disciplined visitors doing well to frustrate the home side, although McDaid did come close in the 34th minute, when he curled an effort just wide of the far post from the left edge of the box. Comrades would have been content with the blank half-time scoresheet, but seven minutes into the second half they fell behind. A free-kick was conceded just outside the box and Donnelly stepped up to send a perfectly flighted ball in, where Ramsey arrived and headed in from 6 yards. To their credit, Comrades didn't allow this setback to lessen their resolve and they continued to keep the potent home attack at arm's length for a considerable period, until the second goal went in in the 74th minute. A ball played through the middle set McDaid free and he then took the ball round 'keeper Flood, before firing into the empty net from 8 yards. On 78 minutes the home side came close to a third goal, when Tilney shot wide of the far post from 9 yards. However, a minute later, Comrades managed to reduce the deficit, when substitute Joe Tully struck a great free-kick past 'keeper Devlin from 25 yards. The travelling supporters were now hoping to salvage an unlikely point from the game, but this hope was to be brief, as on 81 minutes Donnelly fired an equally excellent effort from a free-kick, struck from just outside the box, which went in off the angle of post and bar. Comrades didn't give up, although they had found it hard to penetrate the Larne defence all game. In the 86th minute, Jamie Willighan did manage to test Devlin with a shot through a crowded box from 15 yards, which forced a smart save.