



Loughgall 3-5 Ballyclare Comrades

Saturday 26th January 2019 – Bluefin Sport Championship

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

- 19. Jack Hazard
- 2. Curtis Woods
- 5. Adam Wright ⚽ (37')
- 23. Dean Youle ⚽ (23')
- 3. Christopher Crane 🟡 (90+1')
- 4. Samuel McIlveen
- 22. Gary Brown 🟡 (81')
- 24. Gary Donnelly ⚽ (8')
- 10. Eoin Kane 🟡 (61')
- 11. Adam Gray ⚽ (69') 🟡 (73')
- 16. Jamie Willighan ⚽ (8')

Substitutes:

- 6. Michael McQuitty
- 18. Chris Getty
- 8. JB Dobbin 🟢 (61')
- 17. Thomas Robinson 🟢 (73')
- 9. Chris Trussell 🟢 (81')

Loughgall: Acheson, Neill, McVeigh, Upton, Bell, Gibson, McCullough, Ferguson, Mullen, McConnell, Campbell. Subs: Smith, Dallas, Liggett, Hoey.

Comrades shook off the disappointment of missing out on a top-six spot with a win in a goal-fest at Loughgall.

Manager Stephen Hughes named an unchanged starting line-up for this game, played on a heavy pitch. The only changes came on the bench, with Chris Getty and Chris Trussell coming in.

The visitors started the strongest and came close to an opener in the 7th minute, when Jamie Willighan received the ball in the box and showed good feet to fashion some space for a low strike from 10 yards, which went just wide.

A minute later however the Comrades striker got his name on the scoresheet. A good move ended with Gary Donnelly playing Willighan free into the box and he made no mistake with a finish from 9 yards.

The lead didn't last long and on 14 minutes the hosts were back on level terms. A high ball played across the front of the box went over the head of Curtis Woods and

found Campbell, who finished with aplomb, firing low into the far corner of the net from 16 yards.

Comrades reacted well to this setback and continued to fly forward at every opportunity. In the 16th minute Curtis Woods fizzed in a shot from the right side of the box which flew wide of the near post. Then, a minute later, Gary Donnelly got on the end of a through ball, but 'keeper Acheson turned his effort from 8 yards wide of the near post off his legs.

More goals looked very likely, with defences struggling. In the 23rd minute Comrades regained the lead. Adam Gray ran at the home defence forcing a corner, which was then played in by Christopher Crane. The 'keeper looked as if he had caught the ball, but didn't collect and it fell to Dean Youle, who stabbed it into the back of the net from 4 yards, past a player on the line.

Loughgall threatened again two minutes later, when McConnell broke into space on the right side of the box and fired an effort just wide of the far post from 17 yards.

The hosts didn't have long to wait for another equaliser however. On 29 minutes McConnell picked up the ball just outside the box and hit a low shot, which eluded Jack Hazard and found the back of the net.

The action continued from end to end and there was to be another goal before half-time. It fell to Comrades in the 37th minute. A Loughgall player missed the ball in his own half, allowing Gary Brown to get onto it and feed Jamie Willighan in the box. The striker then hit a crisp shot from 13 yards, which Acheson did well to turn wide. From the resulting corner, again played in by Crane, a scramble ensued and Gary Donnelly backheeled an effort on target from inside the 6-yard box, which was cleared off the line. However, the loose ball then fell to Adam Wright, who was able to slot it into the net from 5 yards.

In the 40th minute Loughgall missed a golden opportunity to equalise again, when a cross in from the right found the head of Mullen, 7 yards out, but unmarked he could only head into the arms of Hazard, who was well-placed to save.

The home side opened the second half on the front foot. Two minutes in, Mullen volleyed over under pressure from 9 yards, after getting on the end of a ball into the box.

Comrades managed to survive up to the midway point in the half unscathed, although not always comfortably, as Loughgall strove for an equaliser. In the 63rd minute Jack Hazard had to fly across his goal to make a fine save from a beautifully struck 30 yard free-kick hit by McConnell, which would otherwise have entered the net inside the post.

The game's crucial goal came in the 69th minute and it saw Comrades double their lead. A swift break upfield saw ended with Gary Brown playing a great diagonal ball through to Adam Gray who had burst forward down the middle, outstripping the home defence. Gray then advanced into the box and finished decisively past the advancing 'keeper from 16 yards.

Three minutes later Loughgall came close to reducing the deficit. A scramble in the box saw them almost force the ball over the line, but eventually Jack Hazard was able to dive on the ball.

The cushion of a two-goal lead took some pressure off the visitors and they now were able to replicate their attacking play of the first half and looked like they could extend the lead. On 78 minutes a ball, played into the box by Curtis Woods, broke to

substitute Thomas Robinson, giving himself a chance to get in an effort from 7 yards. However, the ball was deflected wide of the target after a defender got in a good last-ditch block.

Two minutes later Comrades got a fifth goal. Gary Donnelly sent in a curling effort from 20 yards, which Acheson got his hand to, but couldn't stop.

The men in red didn't let up and continued to look for further goals. In the 83rd minute they came close, when a free-kick into the box saw the ball break to Christopher Crane, who sent an excellent overhead effort from 16 yards, which looked set for the top corner, only for Acheson to make a fine save and tip the ball over the bar.

A minute into injury-time two of Comrades substitutes combined, when Thomas Robinson crossed the ball into the box, where Chris Trussell met it with a fierce volley from 11 yards, but the rising shot flew over the bar.

Still pressing forward right to the end, Comrades were caught out at the other end with the last kick of the game, when a ball played to McConnell set him free to run into the right side of the box and the impressive home striker finished from 13 yards for what was only a consolation goal.