



Ballyclare Comrades 2-1 Portadown

Saturday 12th January 2019 – Bluefin Sport Championship

Match Sponsor: Simpson Developments Ltd, Ballyclare

Ball Sponsor: Anonymous

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

- 19. Jack Hazard
- 2. Curtis Woods 🟡 (78')
- 5. Adam Wright 🟡 (68')
- 23. Dean Youle
- 3. Christopher Crane
- 4. Samuel McIlveen
- 22. Gary Brown
- 24. Gary Donnelly 🟡 (19') 🔴 (89')
- 10. Eoin Kane
- 11. Adam Gray
- 16. Jamie Willighan 🟡 (87')

Substitutes:

- 20. Taylor Kirk
- 6. Michael McQuitty 🟢 (87')
- 17. Thomas Robinson
- 9. Chris Trussell
- 14. Joe Tully

Portadown: Dunne, McCallum, Larkin, Lavery, Braniff, Duke, Hall, Thompson, Bradley, Wilson, Carmichael. Subs: Murphy, Carson, Neill, Salley, Mackie.

Comrades kept their top-six hopes very much alive with a deserved victory over Portadown at Dixon Park.

There was only one change to the side which had put up such a good performance against Linfield in the Irish Cup a week earlier. JB Dobbin was unavailable, so in came Eoin Kane, who had missed the Linfield game due to work commitments.

The visitors started the game on the front foot and on 6 minutes they had a chance when Aaron Duke got his head to a corner played to the back post, but his effort from 5 yards went over the bar.

Comrades soon hit their stride and looked dangerous going forward. In the 9th minute, Jamie Willighan beat a defender inside the box and laid the ball back to Eoin Kane, who fired over the bar under challenge from 7 yards

Three minutes later, Kane had another effort, when a neat period of passing ended with him firing a shot low just wide of the post from just inside the box.

On 19 minutes the home side struck the front. Jamie Willighan made space for a shot from 10 yards, which 'keeper Dunne couldn't hold on to and Gary Donnelly was on the spot to fire the loose ball into the roof of the net from close range.

The home side continued to impress and had another chance on 35 minutes, when good play from Curtis Woods set up Eoin Kane for strike, which went just over from the edge of the box.

Two minutes into first-half injury-time Kane had was the man in the spot for another chance, when a ball played into the box was headed down by Jamie Willighan and fell to the Comrades midfielder 7 yards from goal, but his effort was thwarted by Dunne who produced an excellent block.

Portadown started the second half with a flurry of attacking, but the Comrades defence coped well and nothing came of it. Indeed, the first chance of the half fell to the home side, when Gary Donnelly set up Kane for strike from 13 yards, but again he couldn't find the back of the net, his effort going over the bar.

In the 63rd minute, Comrades 'keeper Jack Hazard was called into action when he did well to save a Sean Mackle shot, well struck from the edge of the box.

Four minutes later the visitors levelled the scores. A corner, played into the near post by Kyle Neill, was headed in by Ross Larkin from 5 yards out.

Comrades reacted well to this setback and pressed forward, looking the more likely side to grab a winner. On 79 minutes an incisive break forward ended with Gary Donnelly feeding Eoin Kane, but he was unlucky to see his shot from an angle 5 yards out come back off the post.

Then, a minute later, Declan Dunne had to make a stunning save to keep out a free-kick struck from 22 yards by Samuel McIlveen, which seemed destined for the top corner.

Moments later, McIlveen again came close when he struck an effort from just outside the box, which took a deflection and went inches wide of the post.

What proved to be the winner for the home side came in the 87th minute, when a corner caused some chaos in the Portadown box, with Jamie Willighan heading against the post and then being in the right place to bundle the ball in on the line as it came back to him off a defender.