



Ballyclare Comrades 1-1 Newry City AFC

Thursday 26th December 2019 – Bluefin NIFL Championship

Match Sponsor: The Cornerstone Café, Doagh

Ball Sponsor: AM Gardening

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

1. Ben McCauley
8. JB Dobbin
23. Jonathon Doey
15. Jordan Malone
3. Lee McCune
4. Samuel McIlveen 📌 (75')
7. Thomas Robinson 📌 (71')
24. Gary Donnelly
11. Ciaran Dobbin
21. Adam Gray
26. Lukasz Adamczyk

Substitutes:

19. Tom Hegan
20. Adam McCart
18. Kevin Hagan
10. Jake McNeill 📌 (75')
14. Joe Tully 📌 (71') 📌 (81')

Newry City AFC: Hunter, King, Boyle, McCann, Foley, Hughes, Lavery, McGovern, Moan, McArdle, Taylor. Subs: Healy, Montgomery, McGee, Duffy, Durnin.

Comrades and Newry had to be content with a draw in the Boxing Day fixture at Dixon Park after an evenly fought encounter.

Home manager Paul Harbinson made some changes to his side after a disappointing defeat in the previous game at H&W Welders. With Matthew Henry injured and Curtis Woods unavailable, JB Dobbin was used in an unfamiliar right-back position. Ciaran Dobbin and Lukasz Adamczyk were also brought in, with Jake McNeill and Joe Tully dropping to the bench.

Despite playing on a heavy pitch which had survived a morning inspection, both sides began in enterprising fashion. The first 'keeper to be tested was Ben McCauley in the 14th minute when he had to be alert to block an effort from McGovern after the Newry man had got on the end of a ball to the edge of the 6-yard box.

A minute later the hosts threatened, when good pressing forced a mistake from the visitors' defence allowing Adam Gray to steal the ball and advance to shoot from 9 yards, but his effort lacked the power to really trouble 'keeper Hunter.

On 21 minutes Hunter was tested again when Samuel McIlveen hit a shot on target from 20 yards, but the 'keeper was well-placed to save.

Comrades continued to look lively going forward and in the 24th minute they came close when a good cross in from the right, played in by Thomas Robinson, found the head of Ciaran Dobbin whose glancing effort went just wide from 6 yards.

At the other end Newry had a chance on the half hour, when a ball to the back-post area was picked up by Foley whose resulting shot from an angle 10 yards out was blocked by Ben McCauley.

On 44 minutes Newry hit the front. McArdle cut inside from the right and unleashed an excellent effort from just outside the box which struck the post and rebounded back into the net off the unfortunate Ben McCauley who had dived across goal to try to get his hand to the ball.

Two minutes into the second half there was controversy when Comrades were initially awarded a penalty when a Newry player on the ground handled the ball at the corner of the box, but after consulting his assistant the referee changed the decision to a free-kick inches outside the box. Samuel McIlveen struck the free kick against the defensive wall, but it rebounded back to him and his second effort tested Hunter who again made a solid save.

The home side couldn't continue a strong start to the second half and Newry began to threaten more. On 67 minutes they came close when a free kick played into the box found the head of Boyle whose effort from 6 yards came off the crossbar and out to safety. Then five minutes later Lavery got space for a shot from the right side of the box which flashed just wide of the far post.

Home manager Harbinson made a couple of substitutions to try to freshen things up and this made the desired impact. In the 76th minute Ciaran Dobbin sent in a well flighted free kick which was met by the head of substitute Joe Tully, who headed it on target from 7 yards out, but the Newry 'keeper was again in the right place to save.

On 81 minutes Joe Tully ran in to the box before being brought down. He picked himself up to calmly convert from the resulting penalty and level the scores.

The hosts now looked to get all three points. They were unlucky in the 87th minute when Adam Gray struck from 20 yards through a crowded box only to see his effort come back off the post. The ball rebounded out to Lukasz Adamczyk 7 yards from goal, but he sent his first-time effort over the bar.

In the end neither side could get the winner and the game ended in a draw, which was a fair reflection.