



Ards 2-2 Ballyclare Comrades

Saturday 11th January 2020 – Bluefin NIFL Championship

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

1. Ben McCauley
2. Curtis Woods
5. Adam McCart
15. Jordan Malone
3. Lee McCune 🟡 (31')
8. JB Dobbin
12. Tom Mathieson 🔴 (67')
11. Ciaran Dobbin 🔴 (75')
10. Gary Donnelly
16. Adam Gray 🔴 (78')
14. Joe Tully 🟦 (20') 🟦 (44')

Substitutes:

23. Jonathon Doey
4. Samuel McIlveen 🟢 (75')
6. Matthew Henry
7. Thomas Robinson 🟢 (67')
9. Fra Nolan 🟢 (78') 🟡 (90+1')

Ards: Neeson, McMillan, Armstrong, Taylor, McGovern, Nelson, Murray, McMillen, E McAllister, D McAllister, McLellan . Subs: Dalzell, Calderwood, Jallow, McConnell, Wilson.

It was honours even at the Bangor Fuels Arena. Comrades travelled home with a well-deserved point but may be disappointed that they didn't take all three, having been in the lead twice in the game.

For this match there two changes to the starting line-up, with Curtis Woods and Tom Mathieson replacing Jonathon Doey and Thomas Robinson.

The home side started strongly. Inside the second minute they had a chance when a free kick played into the box was met by a diving header from Armstrong 6 yards out, but his effort went just wide of the target.

Ards had most of the attacking possession early on, but it was Comrades who opened the scoring. On 20 minutes a free kick was hit from deep into the box by Jordan

Malone and struck the raised arm of Ards defender Armstrong jumping for the ball. The referee pointed to the spot and Joe Tully made no mistake with the penalty kick. In the 34th minute the hosts levelled the scores. A free kick was played high into the box from the left, finding Nelson unmarked to head in from 6 yards.

A minute later the visitors came close to immediately restoring their lead.

A dynamic move ended with Adam Gray getting into the box from the left and firing in a shot from an angle 12 yards out which Neeson blocked. The keeper then had to produce a follow up block from a Ciaran Dobbin header on the rebound.

At the other end on 40 minutes 'keeper Ben McCauley was tested when he had to dive to turn the ball around the post after Eamon McAllister hit a good low effort from just outside the box.

In the 44th minute Comrades grabbed the lead again. Joe Tully got on the end of a long ball played over the Ards defence by Tom Mathieson and produced a delicate lob over the advancing 'keeper from the right side of the box, the ball dropping under the bar and over the line.

This gave the visitors a half time lead, but the hosts came close to levelling inside the second minute after the interval when McLellan struck an effort from 30 yards which skimmed the top of the crossbar.

Comrades however were able to get forward regularly. On 53 minutes a good move saw Tom Mathieson get the chance for a shot from 16 yards, but his effort flew over the bar.

Five minutes later Ards equalised for a second time. Ben McCauley did well to block a fiercely struck shot hit from the left side of the box by David McAllister, but he could do nothing to stop Craig McMillen's effort rifled in from 14 yards after the ball had rebounded out to the Ards midfielder.

The final half hour of the game saw play evenly balanced. In the 78th minute Comrades came close to regaining the lead. Joe Tully's free kick from just outside the box struck the wall and rebounded out to Samuel McIlveen who drilled it back through a crowded box from 25 yards, forcing a good save from Neeson.

In the 83rd minute, having made all three substitutions, Comrades were reduced to ten men when Thomas Robinson had to limp off with a hamstring injury.

Despite their numerical disadvantage the visitors avoided any real scares and held on for a merited point.