

Ballyclare Comrades 1(1) v Limavady United 1(1)

Bluefin Sports Championship, Friday 24th August, Dixon Park.

For much of this game, Limavady United were like a boxer on the ropes, constantly pummelled by their opponents, but against all the odds Sean Friars' youthful side somehow ground out a hard-earned point with a classic "rope-a-dope" goal from Emmet Friars giving them an unlikely point against fancied opponents. It was an immensely encouraging performance, full of grit and courage, which will give hope to the Roesiders.

United set up in a 3-5-2 formation, but their plans were in disarray after just 70 seconds, as they fell behind to a close range Crane corner, as Johnston escaped his marker to power home a close range header. It was the worst possible start, and set the tone for half an hour of sustained pressure with United run ragged for long periods.

On 10 minutes, the dangerous Crane broke down the left and got off a stinging shot, which Wells parried. In the next minute he went close again but was off target, and then two minutes later he hit the side netting with another effort.

United were unable to break out, and were being opened up with alarming ease, and Sean Friars rejigged his formation to a traditional 4-4-2, but initially it seemed to make little difference, as Donnelly was completely unmarked, but put a 24th minute header over the bar. It was backs to the wall for the visitors. When they finally got out of their half, after fully half an hour, McCarron failed to get a shot on target, after trapping a long ball over the top.

On 31 minutes, Johnston should have doubled his tally, but though unmarked, he dragged his shot wide of goal. The hosts were punished for their profligacy on 40 minutes, when United scored an unlikely equaliser from Hume's corner, with Friars stealing in at the back post to gleefully tap in. United seized the initiative, and until the break pressed for another goal, but without success.

The second half was much more even, but the clearer chances arguably came the way of the visitors. United might have fallen behind in 65 minutes, when a corner grazed the post before Wells claimed the ball. But the tireless Hume, who had. Been living off scraps, just failed to latch onto a great ball into the box.

The chance of the half fell to Comrades' captain on 78 minutes but his stinging shot was parried by Wells, diving high to his right. United were now scrapping for every ball, and Gary McFadden was playing a captain's part, constantly cleaning up the loose ball.

United's best chance of the half came when Hume was hauled down just outside the box, but he put the resultant free kick wide of the post. Both sides now went toe to toe for a winner, but to no avail, and the game ended with no further goals, but with United's makeshift side taking a point that will seem more like a win.

Ballyclare Comrades: Kyle Rowe, Curtis Woods (Michael McQuitty 61), Christopher Crane, Adam Wright, John Dobbin (c.), Jason Johnston, Jamie Willighan (Jason Tully 81), Thomas Robinson, Gary Brown (Joe McWilliams 81), Dean Youle, Gary Donnelly

Substitutes not used: Samuel McIlveen, Christopher Trussell.

Cautioned: McQuitty (72).

Limavady United: Paul Wells, Marcus O' Kane, Gareth McFadden, Emmet Friars, Stuart McMullan, Shane Boyle (Stephen Duffy 46), Ryan Devine, Gary McFadden (c.), Ryan Doherty, Sean McCarron (Oran McConnell 90&1), Robbie Hume.

Substitutes not used: Conor Brown, Marc Smallwoods, Odhran Scarlett.

Cautioned: Friars (87).

Referee: Mr. Andrew Davy

Roesider Man of the match: Robbie Hume.