

Limavady United .1(0) v. Dergview 4(1)

Bluefin Sports Championship, Saturday 26th January, The Showgrounds.

It is far too early to write Limavady United's obituary as a Championship club, but after falling to the foot of the table following such a demoralising defeat to their relegation rivals, only a brave man would wager much on their survival. The table doesn't lie, and chronic inability to keep out goals, combined with a toothless attack, was comprehensively trumped by a Dergview team brimming with confidence and on a roll. If a case might be made that their humiliating cup exit might have been attributed to misplaced overconfidence three weeks ago, the players can have no excuses for this collapse, as they were simply outplayed by a team that was far more eager for the battle.

Ivan Sproule may be at the end of an illustrious career, but he terrorised the home defence from the start, and as early as the second minute he put over a sumptuous cross that was narrowly missed by McGuckin. United's response was a low drive from long range by Carlin, without whom they may as well have conceded the game by halftime. On 11 minutes, a break which saw the ball carried the full length of the pitch ended with Ryan Logue bursting into the box but he fired wide.

Dergview missed a great chance in the 21st minute, when Duffy sliced the ball straight to McGuckin inside the box, but Wells did well, dashing of his line, to narrow the options and the striker fired wide. In the very next minute, Andrew Sproule chipped the ball over the bar when he was well placed inside the box.

United had a great chance on 29 minutes, as Carlin tigerishly whipped a great cross to Duffy at the back post, but he skied the chance. United were made to pay two minutes later, when a poor defensive header dropped for McGuckin just outside the box, and he caught the ball perfectly to drill it past Wells into the net.

The visitors should have doubled their lead two minutes later. Under pressure, Wells spilled a lofted ball to the feet of an attacker, but with the goal gaping, a poor connection saw Friars back to block the ball on the line. The rest of the half saw a few desultory attempts to fashion an opening at either end, but the nearest was a 41st minute Dergview corner which was dealt with competently.

Needing a big second half, United were hit with an early and highly controversial sucker punch in the 49th minute. A cross from wide on the right was twice blocked inside the box, but, as both sides played on, the linesman took an age to raise his flag, and after lengthy discussions between the officials Andrew Sproule was credited with a goal, even though no Dergview player had appealed that the ball had crossed the line. It was an inexplicable decision, and hard to see how the official could have made the ruling, but the effect was to shatter the hosts' fragile confidence. It was no surprise then, that soon afterwards the veteran player-manager added a third- glancing home a header from Andrew Sproule's cross on the right. Once again, the home defence was ripped open.

Where Dergview were disciplined and focused, United could not string a succession of passes together, and time and again the Roesiders were exposed on the flanks. They were fortunate indeed that the attack which confronted them was relatively modest in exploiting the openings. Not until the 63rd minute did United threaten McElroy's goal, after Logue found space on the right, and although his effort best the goalkeeper, it was a weak shot, and was hacked away with relative ease.

Five minutes later, United's faint hopes of a comeback were almost extinguished. Ivan Sproule belied his years to scamper free and cross to McGuckin perfectly but he blazed over from close range. No matter, as the fourth goal arrived in the 75th minute. Yet again Gareth McFadden was outpaced by Andrew Sproule, who crossed for McGuckin to side foot home his second from five yards out. It was like a goal from the training field, and gifted by United's woeful defending.

United did grab a consolation on 81 minutes, inevitably from Carlin, who kept battling - at times seemingly offering resistance on his own, and he forced home a corner at the back post off the shin of a defender. It was a goal his performance deserved, but scarcely merited by his team mates, who fell away alarmingly after that hugely controversial and potentially season-defining second goal. As for Dergview, they are the team with momentum, and they seem well set to push on and consolidate a remarkable revival.

Limavady United: Paul Wells, Marcus O'Kane, Gareth McFadden, Brian McClean, Emmet Friars, Hugh Carlin (c.), Ryan Logue, Gary McFadden, Stephen Duffy (Sean McCarron), Caoimhin McCallion (Nathan Harkin 70), Alex Pomeroy (Oran McConnell 58).

Substitutes not used: Connor Brown, Aidan McCauley.

Cautioned: Friars (5).

Dergview: Ruairi McElroy, Matthew Buchanan, Garth Falconer, Dale Maxwell, Lee McNulty, Matthew Callaghan, Adam Buchanan, Emmet McGuckin, Matthew Kirk, Andrew Sproule (c.) (Simin McGlynn 77) Ivan Sproule (Lee McCullough).

Substitutes not used: Gareth Doherty, Blaine Burns.

Cautioned:

Referee: Mr. Barry Monaghan.

Roesider Man of the match: Hugh Carlin.