

# Limavady United 3(0) v. Knockbreda 0(0)

Bluefin Sports Championship, Saturday 27<sup>th</sup> April, The Showgrounds.

Despite securing a fairly routine victory over their visitors, Limavady United were duly relegated from the Championship on Saturday after their rivals P.S.N.I. scored three times in the second half at Ballyclare to finish two points clear of the Roesiders. Despite a recent good run of form, United's wretched mid-season left them too big a mountain to climb, and they return to intermediary football after two relatively undistinguished seasons. In the past seven seasons, the Limavady side has always finished in either the bottom three of the Championship or top three of the P.I.L.

United started as they had to, pressing their visitors and knowing a goal would heap pressure on the police. Early efforts from Pomeroy, who charged down a Toolan clearance, and Doherty, whose 16th minute effort was pushed out by the keeper, but just failed to reach Logue rushing in to the box. The hosts went even closer on 21 minutes, when Logue's teasing cross from deep fizzed just past the far post. But for all their attacking intent, United were hurrying their efforts, and there was always an undercurrent of anxiety to their play.

As United's industry could not produce any result, their visitors began to take control of the midfield, and won a series of corners, which United handled with relative ease. With the break approaching, on 40 minutes, O'Kane fired in another right wing cross but two attackers inside the box both missed the ball. Wells had to be alert to a hanging cross, punching out in the swirling wind, and then Friars had to block a threatening effort. So the half ended with the table showing United ahead on goal difference, as the police were losing, but there was a feeling that control of the game was slipping away.

After the break United finally got the breakthrough goal, and it came on 51 minutes from the man unanimously voted player of the season by supporters earlier that day. Hugh Carlin connected with Friars' knockdown from a long free kick to head home. However, news soon came through of an equaliser at Dixon Park to temper the delight. The distraction of the crowd was clearly communicating itself to the players, yet they stuck to their task, and scored again on 65 minutes, as Pomeroy beat the offside trap, took a couple of touches and dinked the ball past Toolan.

As news filtered through of two more goals for the visitors at Dixon Park, it became obvious that United's grip on survival was weakening. A goal on 89 minutes for substitute Duffy, tapping in after Toolan struggled to cope with a hanging cross into the box, was greeted with almost complete indifference on and off the pitch. Three goals in the second half is a rarity for United, as is a clean sheet, so Sean Friars' youthful side passed their test on Saturday, but the table doesn't lie, and the fewest wins in the league, and the fact that this was only their second home win all season explains how and why United will be playing Intermediate football next season.

Limavady United: Paul Wells, Marcus O'Kane, Gareth McFadden, Hugh Carlin (c.), Emmet Friars, Caoimhin McCallion (Ryan Devine half time), Ryan Logue, Aidan McCauley, Gary McFadden, Ryan Doherty (Nathan Harkin 75), Alex Pomeroy (Stephen Duffy 85).

Substitutes not used: Connor Brown, Shane Boyle.

Knockbreda: Piaras Toolan, Karl Hamill, Patrick Burns, Francis Rice (Robert McNulty 66), Francis Brennan (c.), Daniel Culbert, David Fearon, Ryan Newberry, Darius Roohi, Ciaran Dobbin (Nathan McVeigh 66), Patrick Cafolla.

Substitute not used:

Cautioned: McNulty (72).

Referee: Mr. Barry Monaghan

Roesiders supporters player of the season: Hugh Carlin.