

# P.S.N.I. 0(0) v. Limavady United (3)4

Bluefin Sports Championship, Saturday 14<sup>th</sup> April, Newforge.

Knowing that anything other than a win would see them relegated, Limavady United produced a performance of courage and character, thoroughly eclipsing their opponents, and in so doing winning at the home of all three of their nearest rivals in their last three matches. If only their home form had been as good, relegation fears would have been banished long ago. So good was this performance, that the feeling after ninety minutes was almost one of disappointment, as they missed a host of chances that would have made the margin even more emphatic.

United knew that a good start was vital, and that was exactly what they got, hitting the front after only five minutes, when the unlikely goal-provider was right back Marcus O'Kane, who crossed low into the danger area from wide on the right, and Ryan Logue was first to react amidst a crowded penalty box, flicking the ball home from close range. The reaction of both sets of players set the tone for the remaining 85 minutes.

On 18 minutes, United nearly added a second, when only a fine instincts save with his feet by McCauley foiled Gary McFadden in the box, after a quick United counter-attack. From the loose ball, United were back on the attack, and had strong appeals for a penalty waved away after McFadden was upended in the box. However, his trickery and intelligent forward play were rewarded on 25 minutes, when he was put in on goal, bore down on goal with the home defence in disarray, and nonchalantly chipped his namesake for a goal of excellent quality.

2-0 is never a comfortable lead, and on 31 minutes the hosts won a free kick twenty five yards out, which Anderson took, beating the wall and forcing Wells to parry the ball out to an unmarked attacker, but his ball across the six yard box missed two in rushing team mates. This miss proved costly four minutes later, when United scored their third. A high free kick into the box was nodded back by Friars to Doherty, who gleefully forced the ball in for 3-0.

United were rampant, and should have scored again soon afterwards when Pomeroy flashed a header over the bar. And they had a lucky escape when Moody was bundled over in the box, but strong appeals for a penalty fell on deaf ears. A bizarre incident saw Wells' goal kick was caught by the wind and he was forced to punch his own ball out, before a series of missed clearances ended with the ball being put behind, as United stood strong. At the other end, Doherty collected a clever Pomeroy knockdown and volleyed just over in the last effort of an enthralling and pulsating half.

Anyone expecting another second half collapse from United - and there have been a few this season-would have been able to relax after only one minute of play, as Pomeroy got the goal his play deserved, pulling down a long ball, before shrugging off his marker and firing the ball low into the far corner. United did not sit on their lead, and should have added to their tally. First McFadden collected Pomeroy's pass on 53 minutes, but frustratingly could not keep his effort on target as the goal beckoned; two minutes later Pomeroy got in behind his marker, and beat McCauley to the ball, but his touch lacked power, and a defender collected the ball as it trickled towards the net. On the hour Cochrane briefly hit back with a powerful volley which cannoned off the bar, but Friars and Carlin were dominant against all attacks.

The wave of United attacks continued without let up. Pomeroy did well to escape his marker again, but he blazed his shot over. However, his contribution was as good as any he has given in a United jersey. The hosts were demoralised now, and their attempts to grab a consolation were easily repulsed, with a precious clean sheet to add to the positives. United have two games left to overhaul their opponents, and will probably have to play as well in both. Although Gary McFadden was outstanding in his advanced role, and in truth there were heroes all over the pitch, special mention must be given to Hugh Carlin, who had come straight from a family funeral to produce a performance of true courage.

P.S.N.I. : Ben McCauley, Chandler Davis, Nathan Riddle, Kyle Crawford, Philip Simpson, David Elliott (Jonathan Wilson 65), Owen Moody, Aaron Cochrane, Tony Tomelty, Jake Moody (Ryan Adair 76), Mark Anderson (c.).  
Substitutes not used: Andrew Ferguson, Sam Stewart, Dean Spence.

Cautioned:

Limavady United: Paul Wells, Marcus O'Kane, Gareth McFadden, Hugh Carlin (c.), Emmet Friars, Caoimhin McCallion (Nathan Harkin 82), Ryan Logue, Aidan McCauley (Ryan Devine 84), Gary McFadden, Ryan Doherty, Alex Pomeroy (Stephen Duffy 79).

Substitutes not used: Ryan McCreadie, Shane Boyle.

Cautioned: Gareth McFadden (29), McCallion (40).

Referee: Mr. Neil Robinson (Belfast).

Roesider Man of the match: Gary McFadden.