

Spirited Display But No Points for Blues



Blues players mob goalscorer Stephen Grant against Longford Town at the City Calling Stadium on Saturday night last.

Longford Town - 3
Waterford United - 1

Waterford United, on a terrible run at the moment, can take some heart from this gutsy display against the league leaders which ultimately ended in defeat.

Waterford defended well at the City Calling Stadium and were always dangerous on the counter attack but the home side ran out deserved winners with two goals from Gary Shaw and the third from ace marksman David O'Sullivan.

To say the least it was a tough week for Waterford United. They lost head coach Alan Reynolds on Monday night as he moved on to new pastures with St. Pats.

Then on Wednesday centre-back Paddy Barrett informed the club he was also leaving. So the long trip to the league's top team was the last thing manager Tommy Griffin needed.

However, the Blues displayed some real fighting qualities and with seven minutes to go were still in the game.

However, let us not pull any punches here, the Blues are in real trouble both on and off the pitch and the coming weeks will test the metal of the fans, the board and players alike.

Longford had the first attack of the game after four minutes. Winger Don Cowan ran at the Blues defence and it looked to everybody in the ground that Blues full back Shaun Corcoran had taken down the flying winger in the box. To the joy of the handful of Waterford fans in the stand referee Rob Hennessey booked Cowan for diving.

Waterford took control of the game for the next 20 minutes. On 12 minutes Willie John Kiely played the ball into the path of Brian Nolan and his low angled drive was pushed past the far post by keeper Paul Hunt.



Blues striker Willie John Kiely turns the Longford Town defence.

Two minutes later, the Blues took the lead when Jack Doherty's through ball was cut out by Longford defender Pat Flynn but when the ball broke loose to Stephen Grant he hit a glorious shot on the run that flew into the far corner.

With an average age of 21, the Waterford back four of Thomas Croke, Pat Fitzgerald, Gavin O'Donovan and Shuan Corcoran suddenly began to come under severe pressure.

Cowan whipped in a right wing cross and Longford striker David O'Sullivan rose high to send in a bullet header that brought the save of the match from Kevin Burns.

A minute before the half time whistle came the controversial incident that changed the whole game. Jack Doherty skipped past his marker and headed for goal. Willie John Kiely, who was in the box, headed for the near post but he was pulled down by Pat Flynn. However the referee deemed Kiely had fouled first and gave a free out to Longford. From the resulting free came the equaliser, Cowan made ground down right and crossed for Gary Shaw to side foot the ball past Kevin Burns.

Longford were now on the front foot as the second half got under way. It took superb defending from Gavin O'Donovan to keep the Longford strikers at bay. It was all hands to the pump for the Blues as they were forced to defend deep inside their own penalty area. 25 minutes into the second half Longford took the lead when David O'Sullivan drove the ball into the near post and Gary Shaw beat Fitzgerald to the cross to flick the ball past Kevin Burns.

Waterford responded well, but on 83 minutes Longford hit the third goal that put the game beyond Waterford. Lorcan Shannon played the ball down the line for Peter Hynes, he pulled the ball back for David O'Sullivan who fired home his 17th goal of the season. The young Blues side came away pointless from this game after a decent display but must now pick themselves up as they visit Cobh Rambelers next Saturday in St. Coleman Park.

LONGFORD TOWN: Paul Hunt, Jamie Mulhall, Pat Sullivan, Pat Flynn, Noel Haverty, Don Cowan (Etanda Nkololo 71"), Rhys Gorman, Stephen Rice, □ Kevin O'Connor, David O'Sullivan (Lorcan Shannon 90"), Gary Shaw (Peter Hynes 77").

WATERFORD UNITED: Kevin Burns, Thomas Croke, Patrick Fitzgerald, Gavin O'Donoghue, Shuan Corcoran, Brian Nolan, Vinny Sullivan, Kevin O'Connor, Jack Doherty (Andrew O'Connor 88"), Stephen Grant (Conor Coad 81"), Willie John Kiely (Mikey Rowe 81").