

Capitulation In The Tempest



Waterford's Patrick Hurney and Tommy Prendergast tussle with Carlow's Ed Finnegan (10) and Darragh Foley at Fraher Field on Saturday last. | Photos: Sean Byrne

National Football League Division Four

Waterford 0-9
Carlow 0-11

While the fat lady may not yet have sounded a note, it was difficult to avoid the feeling that she's clearing her throat with respect to Waterford's NFL promotion hopes following defeat to Carlow on Saturday last.

In conditions more conducive to the delivery of a Shakespearean 'mea culpa' as opposed to a decent game of football, Tom McGlinchey's side conceded six points without reply in the closing nine minutes, much to the delight of the vocal travelling support.

Referencing support, only 292 paid through the Fraher Field gate last Saturday night, and it appeared that half in attendance had travelled down the M9 to back a Carlow side that remains undefeated in this section. For me, the lack of home support was even more disheartening than Waterford's late collapse.

With a gale blowing their favour as they attacked the Colligan End of the ground, Waterford knew they'd need a considerable advantage by half-time, and as it transpired, a 0-7 to 0-2 lead at the break proved insufficient.

By the ninth minute, the signs looked good for Waterford, as points from Shane Aherne, a 40-metre strike from Michael O'Halloran (after good support play from Mark Ferncombe and Conor Phelan) and Patrick Hurney sent them three white flags clear.

Four minutes later, corner-back Dean Crowley found himself unusually advanced, and landed his shot into the grasp of Carlow goalkeeper Craig Kearney. As the rain sheeted down to accompany the gale, Carlow wing-back Mark Fitzgerald bounded almost 50 yards upfield, finding centre-forward Ciaran Moran who got the visitors off the mark after 15 minutes. Ninety

seconds later, Shane Aherne's free restored Waterford's three-point advantage, and further points from Aherne (a brace of frees) and Ferncombe doubled that lead.



Waterford's Maurice O'Gorman clears the ball upfield on a heavy Dungarvan sod. | Photos: Sean Byrne

But in a half which featured 10 Deise wides, and concluded with a morale boosting point from Darragh O'Brien for Carlow, a five-point advantage, given the conditions, felt decidedly insecure.

Carlow sprung out of the second half traps thanks to a fine Sean Gannon point just 19 seconds after the restart, as the rain eased off, albeit only temporarily. Two minutes later, Daniel St Ledger fired over another well-struck point to halve Waterford's half-time advantage.

As the rain returned in the 40th minute, Shane Aherne's free tailed wide, and the next score again went to Carlow, this time off the boot of corner-forward Brian Murphy. The few Waterford fans that had made the effort to attend were twitching in their seats by then.

A match dominated by the sound of referee Derek O'Mahoney's whistle struggled to find any rhythm, with the poor weather and heavy pitch (it was testing to even walk across it at full-time) negated the prospect of any quality football. Aherne's 45th minute free would prove to be Waterford's penultimate score, but the next score would again go to the towering Stradbally man 11 minutes later. Fourteen minutes left, four points ahead, and without imposing their will on the contest as they would have wished, Waterford surely possessed the wherewithal to see it through from there? Alas, this didn't prove the case.

Despite dominating possession and winning the lion's share of kick outs and broken ball, Carlow didn't score for 24 second half minutes yet still emerged victorious. After Stephen Enright dived to his right to deny Brendan Murphy a goal on the hour, Brian Murphy's free a minute later injected fresh hope into the Leinstermen's challenge.

With the clock running down, Carlow substitute Jack Murphy landed a fine kick from the 45-metre line inside Enright's uprights, as the overworked Waterford backs began to puff their cheeks. Sean Gannon maintained their momentum with another well-struck point in the 64th minute to leave only the minimum between the sides. Carlow looked re-energised; Waterford looked out their feet.

Three minutes from time, the lively Brian Murphy established parity for the first time in 64 minutes and by then it was clear that only one side was going to emerge victorious.

A minute later, having gathered possession from another Deise kick-out, the ball was brilliantly landed between the posts from distance by the impressive Gannon.

A rare Waterford attack in the closing moments saw Liam Lawlor's shot go skyward and away from danger, as Carlow again swept upfield. The advancing Gannon was impeded by Michael O'Halloran who was black carded for his indiscretion, leaving Brian Murphy with an icing on the cake free which he duly converted.

Whatever shape there had been to the match dissipated in injury time, as further black cards were doled out to Carlow's Brendan Murphy and Deise sub Lorcán Ó Corraoin. Two defeats from their opening three outings means promotion looks a decided tall order now for Waterford, who travel to Longford on Sunday next (throw-in: 2pm).

Waterford: Stephen Enright; Dean Crowley, Ray Ó Ceallaigh, Thomas O'Gorman; Tadhg Ó hUallacháin, Maurice O'Gorman, Conor Phelan; Shane Aherne, Tommy Prendergast; Michael Curry, Patrick Hurney, Michael O'Halloran, Mark Ferncombe, Gavin Nugent, Paul Whyte.

Scorers: Shane Aherne (0-6; 0-5f), Patrick Hurney, Michael O'Halloran and Mark Ferncombe (0-1 each).

Substitutes: Tony Grey for Conor Phelan (21 mins), Liam Lawlor for Gavin Nugent (HT), L Ó Lonáin for Tommy Prendergast (52), Lorcán Ó Corraoin for Michael Curry (58), Oran Keevers for T ÓhUallacháin (62) and JJ Hutchinson for Ray Ó Ceallaigh (66).

Carlow: Craig Kearney; Barry-John Molloy, Shane Redmond, Kieran Nolan; Mark Fitzgerald, Daniel St Ledger, Benny Kavanagh; Sean Gannon, Darragh Foley; Ed Finnegan, Ciaran Moran, David Bambrick; Brian Murphy, Brendan Murphy, Darragh O'Brien.

Scorers: Brian Murphy (0-4; 0-3f), Sean Gannon (0-3), Daniel St Ledger, Ciaran Moran, Darragh O'Brien and John Murphy (0-1 each).

Substitutes: Hugh Gahan for David Bambrick (43 mins), Derek Hayden for Ed Finnegan (53), Eoghan Ruth for Darragh Foley (55), John Murphy for Ciaran Moran (58), Eric McCormack for Darragh O'Brien (67) and Cormac Mullins for Brendan Murphy (70, Black Card).

Referee: Derek O'Mahoney (Tipperary)

Dermot Keyes at Fraher Field