

Promotion Dream Crushed



Disappointed: Deise football manager Tom McGlinchey and selector Tony Corcoran.

| Photos: Noel Browne

National Football League Division Four

Longford 1-12
Waterford 1-10

Waterford's promotion aspirations evaporated in Glennon Brothers Pearse Park after a harrowing two-point defeat to Longford on Sunday.

Déise bannisteoir Tom McGlinchey was apoplectic with referee Shane Hehir post-match as the Galway man played just a single minute of injury-time at the end of the game despite a number of lengthy stoppages during the second half.

During those closing minutes the home side were left hanging on for dear life as Waterford mounted a dramatic late surge that if a few further minutes were played may well have earned at least a draw.

McGlinchey who could be clearly seen remonstrating with the referee after the game will surely also regret a poor opening half from his side that made a much needed victory highly unlikely.

Waterford were completely outplayed and at times over run during the opening 35 minutes. Francis McGee and Shane Doyle

had two points on the board inside the first minute as the long journey to the Midlands appeared to have left Waterford drained.

Ballinacourty's Mark Ferncombe opened the scoring for Waterford after four minutes with a fine point after some good approach play.

Longford then hit five points on the trot, including three from the rampant Francis McGee, to lead by 0-7 to 0-1 after a quarter of an hour. Mark Ferncombe added his and Waterford's second point after 20 minutes.

Two minutes later Francis McGee gained possession along the end line and couldn't believe his luck as Waterford defenders retreated as he made his way goal wards and finished the ball to the net with the outside of his right foot from the narrowest of angles to put Longford 1-8 to 0-2 ahead.

With the game in first half injury time and then trailing by 10 points Stradbally's Shane Ahearne attempted for goal from a 14-yard free but his dipping effort was deflected over the bar for a point leaving Longford firmly in command by 1-10 to 0-4 at half time.

Longford were reduced to 14 players after 39 minutes when wing forward Shane Doyle received a black card for a foot trip and as he was already on a yellow, Doyle completed the trio of card colours with the subsequent red.

Barry McKeon's left footed strike swelled the home sides' advantage to 10 points after 45 minutes but they were to register just one further point over the remaining 25 minutes.

Despite the dismissal of Shane Ahearne for a second yellow after he wrestled his marker to the ground after 45 minutes, Waterford stormed into the game.

Four points in a row from Paul Whyte, Mark Ferncombe, Joey Veale and Patrick Hurney reduced the arrears to just six points by the 57th minute, with Sean McCormack's third point of the day interrupting the Déise revival, albeit only momentarily.

Team captain Thomas O'Gorman then set Patrick Hurney up for his second point of the day and after 65 minutes Patrick Hurney threaded a beautiful pass to his fellow club man Mark Ferncombe who finished low to the net. Waterford now only trailed by 1-12 to 1-9.

Paul Whyte registered his second point with three minutes remaining to reduce the deficit to just two points as panic was visible among the home team.

Alas, time elapsed (perhaps prematurely) for Waterford and with it any realistic hope of promotion for another year.

Trailing by nine points at the break you feared Waterford were heading for a right drubbing in this game. Much credit must be afforded for the resilience shown during the second half when they played with far greater urgency and much more accuracy.

With Michael O'Halloran necessitating medical attention lasting over three minutes for a suspected concussion in the second

half you can readily understand Tom McGlinchey's annoyance.

Liam Lawlor was outstanding throughout while Mark Ferncombe and Patrick Hurney both displayed their undoubted class over the 70 minutes.

Waterford face Antrim this Sunday as part of a double header with the hurlers at Walsh Park (throw-in: 2.30pm) with little other than pride left to play for in Division Four. But thoughts must turn to the Munster Championship clash with Tipperary, which is why each remaining fixture will, one suspects, still carry a lot of wait for Tom McGlinchey and his management team.

Longford: Paddy Columb; Fergal Battrim, Barry O'Farrell, Peter Foy; Colm Smith, Diarmaid Materson, Enda Williams; Barry Gilleran, Kevin Diffley; Shane Doyle, Paul McKeon, Ronan McEntire; Barry McKeon, Sean McCormack, Francis McGee.

Substitutes: Aidan Rowan for Peter Foy (21 mins; Black Card), Mickey Quinn for Ronan McEntire (42), Pdraig Gill for Barry McKeon (60) and Mark Hughes for Francis McGee (65).
Sent off: Shane Doyle (39).

Scorers: Francis McGee (1-4; 0-1f), Sean McCormack (0-3), Barry McKeon (0-3; 0-1f), Shane Doyle and Paul McKeon (0-1 each).

Waterford: Stephen Enright; Ray Ó Cealligh, Thomas O'Gorman, Maurice O'Gorman; Tadhg Ó hUallacháin, Liam Lawlor, Conor Phelan; Shane Ahearne, Tommy Prendergast; Liam Ó Lonáin, Michael O'Halloran, Patrick Hurney; Mark Ferncombe, Paul Whyte, JJ Hutchinson.

Substitutes: Oran Keevers for Conor Phelan (17 mins), Shane Briggs for Tadhg Ó hUallacháin (31; Black Card), Joey Veale for Liam Ó Lonáin (HT) and Gavin Nugent for Michael O'Halloran (39).
Sent off: Shane Ahearne (48).

Scorers: Mark Ferncombe (1-3), Patrick Hurney (0-3), Paul Whyte (0-2; 0-1f), Shane Ahearne (0-1f) and Joey Veale (0-1).

Referee: Shane Hehir (Galway)

Brian Flannery at Pearse Park