

Blues Tickled Pink With Derby Victory



Waterford United's Dylan Mernagh takes the ball out of defence at Ferrycarrig Park.

League of Ireland First Division

Wexford Youths 1
Waterford United 2

Following their opening day draw against Athlone Town at the RSC, Waterford United picked up three points in Ferrycarrig Park on Friday night last in a cracking south east derby.

This was one of the best derby games for a number of years and it was a substitute who was only on the field for two minutes who won the game for this exciting new look Waterford team.

The Blues got off to the worst possible start by falling behind after only six minutes. Johnny Bonner, a player who was linked with Waterford United during the close season cracked in a shot which was deflected out for a corner kick.

Philip Drohan who played with the Blues sent over the resultant flag kick from the left and when the visiting defenders fail to clear the danger Danny Furlong took full advantage by tucking the ball to the net from four yards out.

The hosts tails were up following that early goal and Aidan Keenan tested Waterford goalkeeper Matthew Connor with a low strike from 20 yards on 14 minutes.

Three minutes later Sean Hurley got Waterford's first shot on target but the home custodian Graham Doyle had to difficulty saving Hurley's weak effort. Jack Doherty was taken down on the edge of the box on 25 minutes by Gary Delaney, the tall Wexford defender.

Doherty took the free kick himself but his dipping effort went over the crossbar. Tommy Griffin's outfit did however get back on level terms on 28 minutes.

The impressive Anthony McAlavey floated over a free kick from just outside the left side of the penalty area and central defender Shane Dineen headed to the net from just inside the six yard box.

Wexford Youths squandered two great chances to regain their advantage following that goal. Philip Drohan was allowed to much time and space by the Waterford defence on 35 minutes.

The former Blues player picked out Gary Delaney who had moved forward from his defensive duties but he headed wide from an adventitious position.

Drohan was involved in the action once again three minutes before the break. This time he set up Danny Furlong who was lurking in front of goal but the usually lethal Wexford number nine headed wide when really he should have scored.

Just a minute after the change of ends Furlong raced on to a long ball from midfield but with only Matthew Connor to beat he dragged his shot across the face of the goal from the right side of the 18 yards box.

Shortly afterwards Johnny Bonner struck the side netting with a free kick. Tommy Griffin withdrew Sean Hurley from the action after 68 minutes and replaced him with Anthony O'Donnell and two minutes later the substitute was celebrating his first goal for his new club. Jack Doherty whipped over a corner kick from the right and O'Donnell stole in at the back post to head home from close range.

That goal rocked a Wexford team who had lost their opening fixture against Cabinteely and it almost got worse for Shane Keegan's outfit on 84 minutes when Anthony O'Donnell sliced open the Wexford defence but Jack Doherty who had raced forward to get on to the end of the ball cracked his effort over the crossbar.

The hosts threw everything bar the kitchen sink at Waterford during the remainder of the contest and it took a wonderful stoppage time save by Matthew Connor to secure all three points for the visitors.

Aidan Keenan managed to get a deep cross into the six-yard box and it looked as if Gary Delaney had won a point for the home side but his downward header was superbly held by the Tramore born goalkeeper.

That save brought the curtain down on an action packed 90 plus minutes and now the confident Waterford team look forward to welcoming Finn Harps to the RSC this Friday.

Wexford Youths: Graham Doyle; Conor Whittle, Craig Comerford, Gary Delaney, Lee Grace; Johnny Bonner, Eric Molloy, Craig Wall, Danny Furlong; Philip Drohan, Aidan Keenan.

Substitutes: Andy Mulligan for Drohan (63 mins) and Peter Higgins for Bonner (85).

Waterford United: Matthew Connor; Dylan Mernagh, Shaun Corcoran, Patrick Fitzgerald, Shane Dineen; Anthony McAlavey, Glen Hawe, Brian Nolan, Willie John Kiely; Jack Doherty, Sean Hurley.

Substitutes: Dean Reidy for Mernagh (58 mins), Anthony O'Donnell for Hurley (68) and Thomas Croke for Hawe (85).

Referee: Adriano Reale.

Assistants: Darragh Keegan and Matthew Farrell.

Matt Keane