

Much Changed Blues Fall to Champions

League of Ireland, Premier Division

Waterford FC 1 Dundalk 2

Having secured European football for the first time since 1986 on Monday, Waterford FC brought the curtain down on what was a glorious week in rather disappointing fashion at the RSC on Friday night last. Manager Alan Reynolds was forced into six changes from the team which defeated Bohemians 3-1 in Dalymount Park the previous Friday. Dundalk, who were also missing a number of first choice players, took full advantage and dominated most of the 90 minutes. Due to injury and illness Reynolds had to leave out Cory Galvin, Stanley Aborah, Kenny Browne, Paul Keegan, Sander Puri and Noel Hunt from his starting eleven. In came Noe Baba, David Webster, Gavan Holohan, Courtney Duffus, Carlos Wilson and Izzy Akinade but despite fighting hard the home side had no real answer to what the champions threw at them. The Waterford team applauded Dundalk on to the field but then the Co Louth side went on to rule the roost.

Stephen Kenny's side had the first chance on 11 minutes. Michael Duffy sent in a free kick to Patrick Hoban, but his goal-bound effort from inside the area was cleared off the line by Izzy Akinade.

Dylan Barnett had a half chance for the Blues on 18 minutes when he linked up with Courtney Duffus, but after driving into the penalty area his low shot was saved by Dundalk keeper Gary Rogers at his near post.



Waterford FC's Izzy Akinade beats Dundalk's Brian Gartland in the air.

Patrick Hoban carved out a chance for Dundalk on 28 minutes but Blues keeper Niall Corbet made a smart save. Dundalk missed another big opportunity to take the lead seven minutes later when Michael Duffy whipped over a kick that was headed back by Brian Gartland across goal but Dane Massey headed over the bar from close-range. Patrick Hoban opened the scoring with his 27th goal of the season when he got his head on the end of a brilliant Sean Gannon delivery and gave Niall Corbet little chance with a free header from eight yards. The league champions doubled their lead less than three minutes when John Mounthey picked out Ronan Murray inside the penalty area and he slipped a left-footed shot to the left corner of the net past a stranded Corbet. Waterford manager Alan Reynolds made three changes in the hope of getting something out of the game with the introduction of Cory Galvin, Derek Daly and Dessie Hutchinson, but they couldn't carve out an opportunity against a well organised Dundalk defence.

Rory Feely denied the champions a third goal of the game on 80 minutes when he cleared a John Mounthey goalbound effort off the line.

Dessie Hutchinson created a half chance for himself with seven minutes remaining when he latched onto the ball just outside the penalty area, but his right-footed shot cleared the crossbar of Dundalk goalkeeper Gary Rogers. Hutchinson had his fans celebrating as he set up a nervy finish with two minutes remaining when he took a pass from Gavan Holohan and drilled a low first-time shot past keeper Gary Rogers for what turned out to be a mere consolation goal.