



North Armagh Country boys square cup series in epic encounter

North Armagh Country 2-15

North Armagh Town 1-16

GREAT scores, fantastic passages of play and determination were all in abundance in Father Dan McGeown Park in Derrytrasna last Sunday.

New Armagh boss Paddy O'Rourke watched as a committed Country outfit squared the Town v Country Cup series.

Last season in the inaugural game, the 'Townies' were a lot slicker, but this time around, it was the boys from 'the sticks' who were in uncompromising mood and pulled out all the stops to secure a hard-pushed victory.

The St Vincent de Paul Society are now £1130 the richer thanks to the kind donations from supporters who travelled to the 'Trasna venue in brisk Autumn sunshine.

The game itself ebbed and flowed before reaching its climax when Country goalkeeper Kieran Murray, from Wolfe Tones, got across to stop a well-struck Ryan Henderson penalty just four minutes from time.

The save rallied the winners who shot the last two scores of the game from the on-fire Johnny Reynolds and 'Man of the Match' Stefan Forker who shot seven points on the day.

The stats showed that 15 individual players got onto the scoresheet during the 70 minutes. The conversions were, at times, sublime.

Both Forker and young Armagh Minor Andrew Murnin hit spectacular scores, which were only bettered by a Ryan Henderson effort from the left touchline which saw the the Clann Éireann man catch, turn and strike all in one movement in almost breathtaking fashion. Young Murnin looks a player for the future. He was majestic on the day, hitting an outstanding effort during the second half as well as standing up to the physical challenges from Country defenders Ryan McQuillan and Finnian Moriarty in particular.

Considering that the game had to be postponed twice before, it was amazing to see so many players showing an interest to play.

On the management front the Town's sideline were without both Gary Mallon and Paul Henderson who were unavailable but the injured Brian Mallon and Paudie McKeever stepped in to fill the positions.

Town boss Tommy Coleman said: "This game was a great advertisement for North Armagh football. We got off to a great start but neither team wanted to lose the game and both battled to the end."

Although Maghery's Jim Robinson could not be there on Sunday, his fellow clubmen James Lavery, Stefan Forker, Conor Mackle and Paul Forker should be commended for taking part, considering that they had just come through a promotional play-off two days previously against Granemore.

Both goalkeepers were brilliant on the day. Kieran Murray made up for a first half mistake, when he let an Owen McCormack effort through his grasp, by saving Ryan Henderson's penalty late on.

At the other end St. Peter's Paul Wilson made at least three crucial saves but could do little to prevent brothers Johnny and Mark Reynolds from finding the net on their home ground on 24 and 27 minutes.

The first half saw the Town shoot out of the blocks with points from Henderson and Conor Bell either side of the McCormack three pointer.

The Country team, steadied by Eamon McGeown's introduction to midfield, replied through Paul Forker, a cracker from Paul Magee and the Reynolds goals, to lead by six points at half time.

With the effective Mark Beattie forced to limp off, the Country midfield began to take a hold. Beattie's absence, which perhaps could have been plugged by Michael Austin, did not detract from the Town side's determination and, in the third quarter, they struck eight points to their opponents three.

Two from Henderson, a Murnin brace and single strikes from Conor McCaffery, Owen McCormack, Paul Carville and the impressive Steven McCann brought the Town team back within a point before Henderson tested the umpires' eyesight. Referee Rory Robinson had the final say and the teams were level.

The drama was far from over, however, as home player Eamon McGeown, who showed certainty throughout, put Forker through for the lead score.

The Town, through Carville, again levelled the game, but a volleyed Johnny Reynolds effort sailed over and Forker put the nail in the Town coffin to level the series at one-all.

Stefan lands Man of the Match prize

STEFAN Forker was the popular choice for the 'Man of the Match' award following his superb display in last Sunday's Town v Country Cup game.

The Maghera player hit seven points in the Country side's victory over their Town rivals.

The award was presented by the Bayshore Sports and Social club manager Serena Slane, who said: "We were delighted to be involved. The game was a big event and it was great to see a big crowd here after the game."

The Bayshore provided hot food for the players and one of their committee members, John Hogan, had his Apple Blossom coach on hand to bring the players to and from the Sarsfields ground.

Speaking on behalf of the sponsors, Eugene Creaney said: "There are so many people to thank. All the players have been fantastic and have thrown their weight behind the game from the start. The managers also took it very seriously. We hope next year's event is even bigger.

"Special thanks must go to referees Mickey Leonard and Rory Robinson who turned down official fixtures to oversee the event, and also to the officials on the day".

"The Sarsfields club went to great lengths to ensure everything went smoothly and, of course, the North Board were excellent in accommodating the game, especially PRO Stephen Moore.

"Our editor Clint Aitken and financial director Barraí McConville have both been very supportive of the event but the biggest praise must go to those people who donated money to St Vincent de Paul. They can rest assured that their donations will make a big difference this Christmas."