

# Crossmolina and Burrishoole for historic club showdown

## Report: Ivan Neill

Champions Crossmolina posted notice at James Stephens Park, Ballina, on Saturday evening that they don't intend surrendering their county and provincial senior football titles easily.

### **CROSSMOLINA 0-14 SWINFORD 0-5**

Swinford, the '99 Intermediate champions, made a brave, determined effort to end the Deel Rovers' reign in Saturday evening's semi-final, but when experience, cuteness and craft were called for over the final thirty minutes it was the champions who delivered on them all. This is a comparatively young Swinford team and would have learned a lot from the experience.

The standard of football by both teams, however, in the opening thirty minutes left a lot to be desired. Too many passes went astray and, for some reason, a plethora of attempted boot passes were ballooned out over the sideline. The members of the county senior football team management present at the game would not have learned much as regards good prospects for the new panel to be formed in the next week or so.

The East Mayo representatives, to their credit, made the favourites earn their passport to the showdown and would have been a lot closer at the end but for their own lack of discipline, particularly in the third quarter when unnecessary frees were conceded within Ciaran McDonald's scoring range.

As it was, I felt that Swinford were deserving of a penalty twelve minutes from the end, at a time when only five points separated the teams.

From my perfect viewpoint a Crossmolina defender touched the ball on the goal line but the offence escaped the attention of the umpires and referee.

Had a penalty been awarded and a goal scored it would have given the underdogs the confidence boost they badly needed to get back into the game.

They didn't get it and, in the scrambled clearance downfield seconds later, Ciaran McDonald widened the gap to six points.

### **Heroic feats**

Crossmolina trailed 0-2 to 0-0 after seven minutes and 0-3 to 0-2 at the break, but would have been further behind but for the heroic feats of their defence, particularly the full-back line of Francis Costello, Tom Nallen and Colm Reilly.

All three were inspirational all through that opening period, a fact reflected in Swinford failing to score from play until the 27th minute, when half-back Vinney Callaghan took advantage of a poorly directed kickout by Crossmolina goalkeeper Barry Heffernan to hammer over the point that was to separate the teams at the interval.

Only one Swinford forward managed to score from play over the hour but the hardworking corner-forward Sean Roughneen had to wait until the 58th minute to get into the scorers' chart.

In fact Swinford were delayed until the 50th minute for their opening score of that period, that from a free by Timmy Gallagher.

Crossmolina would not have been too happy with their first half performance around the middle of the field or in an attack that looked only a pale shadow of last year.

### **Off form**

Johnny Leonard was not at his usual good free-taking form, while Ciaran McDonald was also off target from scoreable positions in the first period.

The only point the Deel Rovers managed from play in the first half came from the overlapping Gerard Lavelle after twelve minutes in a move involving James Nallen and Johnny Leonard.

The second point came from a well-struck '45 by McDonald in the 22nd minute. But to give credit where it is due, the Swinford defence stuck to their task magnificently.

Robert McCallion, Vinney Roughneen and Alan Heaney were superb on the full-back line and the commitment by half-half-back Vinney Callaghan in the second period could never be questioned. Crossmolina took the lead for the first time four minutes into the second period with a Paul McGuinness score, McDonald having earlier restored parity.

As was the case in the previous two games, the Deel Rovers, once they got their noses in front, pulled away with a further five unanswered points by McDonald (3), Enda Lavelle and Michael Moyles before Timmy Gallagher broke a scoreless spell of twenty-five minutes for Swinford.

Crossmolina again hit the target five more times, McDonald (2), Peadar Gardiner, Johnny Leonard and Michael Moyles, with just one more response from Swinford, a Sean Roughneen point three minutes from the end.

**Crossmolina:** Barry Heffernan; Francis Costello, Tom Nallen, Colm Reilly; Pat McAndrew, Damien Mulligan, Gerard O'Malley (0-1); James Nallen, Thomas Loftus; Enda Lavelle (0-1), Ciaran McDonald (0-5), Noel Convey; Paul McGuinness (0-1), Michael Moyles (0-3), Johnny Leonard (0-1). Subs: Pdraic Costello (for Convey); Peadar Gardiner (0-2).

**Swinford:** Ray Rooney; Robert McCallion, Vinny Roughneen, Alan Heaney; Dermot Walsh, Kevin Kane, Vinny Callaghan (0-1); Kieran Gallagher, Michael Smyth; Owen Gallagher, Declan Murtagh, Paul McDonagh; Timmy Gallagher (0-3 frees), Enda Murtagh, Sean Roughneen (0-1). Subs: John McCallion (for Smyth); Paul Broderick (for McDonagh).