

Awesome Crossmolina shatter 'Brides' big day

CROSSMOLINA 2-14 KILBRIDE 0-9

Midway through this preliminary round tie of the AIB Connacht Club senior football championship at Dr. Hyde Park, Roscommon, on Saturday, defending champions Crossmolina launched their heavy artillery into action - blasting the dreams and aspiration of debutants Kilbride with unstoppable firepower.

The strong message delivered in this performance by the Mayo club to other pretenders to the crown was loud and clear- 'we intend to keep what we have'.

On Sunday week Sligo champions Bunninadden, making their debut in the championship, are visitors to St. Tiernan's Park, Crossmolina, for a semi-final clash and face an extremely difficult task, judging by the apparent 'no surrender' mood of the champions.

Kilbride, who had regained the Roscommon county title for the first time in 86 years, would have been happy to have kept within striking distance of the visitors after thirty minutes-trailing by three points at the break and a point less one minute into the second half.

But then the champions turned up the temperature and by the end of the third quarter the game was over as a contest, a gap of nine points had been opened up via some fine possession play that simply dazzled at times.

All through the second period Crossmolina were simply awesome and was, without doubt, the best performance served up by the Deel Rovers so far in championship football this season, despite kicking a total of fifteen wides, eight in the opening period.

The ploy by James Nallen and Michael Moyles to break every ball at midfield had obviously been hatched up during the interval, and at all times other Deel Rovers players were in place to gain possession from the breaking ball situation.

Kilbride appeared to have no answer to Crossmolina's well-planned ploy and for most of the third quarter the play was confined to the Kilbride half of the park.

Scoreless period

This was reflected in the fact that the homeside went through a scoreless period of twenty minutes before landing their final score.

Again Kieran McDonald-the recipient of the AIB Player of the Match Award- was again the jewel in the Crossmolina attack, helping himself to a personal tally of 1-6 and, as well, involved in the build-up to most of the other scores by four of the other starting six attackers- Johnny Leonard, Paul McGuinness, Enda Lavelle and Peadar Gardiner.

Kilbride did not have the same scoring potential up front and were, to a very large degree, dependent on the Lohan brothers- Stephen, Eddie and Gerry-for all their contributions to the scoreboard.

Colm Reilly, Damien Mulligan and Gerard O'Malley excelled in the Crossmolina defence throughout the hour.

On a day borrowed from summer, Crossmolina provided all the necessary evidence after ten minutes of a possible rout, racing into a 0-6 to 0-1 advantage by the end of the first quarter, but by the break Kilbride were still in the game, mainly due to Crossmolina's wastefulness.

Michael Moyles set the tone of the opening fifteen minutes by landing the opening point after just ten seconds.

In fast moving play, the champions added on a further five points before the fifteenth minute by Kieran McDonald (0-3), Johnny Leonard and Gerard O'Malley, the only interruption being Stephen Lohan's 6th minute score for Kilbride.

Crossmolina continued wayward shooting in the second quarter inspired Kilbride, out-scoring champions 4-2 to leave just three points- 0-8 to 0-5- separating the teams at the interval.

Paul McGuinness in the 21st minute and Kieran McDonald in the 29th minute were the visitors only two points in the second quarter, while Stephen Lohan (2) and Eddie Lohan (2) accounted for Kilbride's four scores.

Fifteen seconds into the restart Gerry Lohan reduced the deficit to two point and a dour struggle looked certain.

Tornado force

But then the champions hit the area with tornado-like force to keep the scoreboard operator working overtime. Each kickout by the Kilbride goalkeeper the ball was batted down to a waiting Crossmolina forward.

Three minutes into the resumption McDonald signalled Crossmolina's intentions with a point from a free. Leonard, McDonald, Leonard and McGuinness increased the advantage to six points before McDonald, from an Enda Lavelle pass, crashed home the side's first goal.

The only real chance of Kilbride had of getting back into contention came in the 45th minute when Gerry Lohan bore down on Barry Heffernan's goal but, true to character, Heffernan pulled off a great save by deflected the ball out at the expense of a '45.

McDonald completed his 1-6 tally before Enda Lavelle hammered in the champions second goal nine minutes from the end.