

Lámhs capture Reserve Shield

Lámh Dhearg 3-10 v All Saints Ballymena 0-08

Lámh Dhearg overcame the challenge of a stubborn All Saints Ballymena to lift the reserve Shield at St Pauls on Friday night.

The Lámhs came into the encounter on the back of a comprehensive and morale boosting victory over their Belfast rivals St Pauls; while a one point victory over Moneyglass was enough to book Ballymena's place in the showpiece. And it was the Saints who made the brighter start to the encounter; they hit the front early on with a well taken point from full forward Ciaran Shannon. But the Lámhs quickly sprang into action and were soon ahead in the blink of an eye; a point from Ciaran Smyth levelled up the encounter, before hero of the semi-final Jody Quinn opted for a point rather than goal to put the Lámhs in front. In the opening ten minutes of the game the pendulum swung between both sides; Sean McCambrige pulled All Saints level with a well-executed score, before Kevin Quinn was afforded too much time and space to get a knock the ball over the bar and restore Lámh Dhearg's lead.

The Lámhs showed ruthlessness throughout the game; and approaching the quarter hour mark raised the green flag; influential midfielder Gary Galway picked up possession inside the Ballymena half, known to his team-mates as Hammer he certainly lived up to his nickname by Hammering a goal-bound shot low into the net giving Paul McCann in the All Saints goal no chance at all. The Saints wasted no time at all in trying to rectify their mistake; they soon turned defence to attack and a long ball into the danger area picked out Ciaran Shannon, but Gerard McKeown in the Lámh Dhearg goal was ready and waiting to be called upon deflecting the shot into the path of Niall Wright who took the point to reduce the deficit to three points. Some of the Lámhs football in the first half was hard to live with; the next score of the game fell to one of the old guards in Micky Boyle, Boyle rolled back the years with a run down the middle before firing over the bar. The Lámhs were growing in confidence and with twenty minutes gone took a massive step to victory with a second goal; Jody Quinn who managed five in the semi-final was on target again, Quinn caught the ball well before turning and firing a bullet shot high into the roof of the Ballymena net to give the Lámhs a 2-04 – 0-03 lead with ten minutes of the half remaining.

The sides then exchanged scores in the next passage of play; Ciaran Smyth's point stretched Lámh Dhearg's lead to eight, before Paul Heffron landed a fine point which had keeper Gerard McKeown slightly worrying as the ball dipped but the lead was reduced none the less. As the half drew to a close the Lámhs racked up a further three scores to put themselves in a comfortable position at the break; Jody Quinn was as threatening as ever adding two fine scores to the board, while Gary Galway added to his goal with a fantastic effort from range which flew over the crossbar for a point. Emmet Killough replied before the break with a wonderful point, but at the interval the Lámhs were in cruise control and lead by ten.

Half time: Lámh Dhearg 2-09 All Saints Ballymena 0-05

The second period began with the Lámhs in the ascendancy once again; two efforts went wide of the mark before the first score of the half, Marc Jordan was found free in space by Kevin Quinn and Jordan showed no hesitation blasting the ball over the bar. Ballymena were not about to go down with a fight and benefited from a cheap free given away deep inside the Lámh Dhearg half; from the resulting kick Aidan Walsh reduced the Lámhs lead back to ten points. Mid-way through the half the Lámhs put the final nail in Ballymena's coffin with

a third strike; Marc Jordan was played a brilliant ball, and with time and space Jordan blasted the ball high into the roof of the net past the despairing Paul McCann to make the score 3-10 – 0-06 .

All Saints could only go for some consolation scores before the end of the match; and they grabbed two further scores before the finish. Aidan Walsh was on target on both occasions as the Lámh's defence gifted Ballymena a further two frees, both were dually converted by wing half forward to take his tally to three for the game. The final whistle blew to the delight of the Lámh Dhearg squad; but the result was never in doubt after a strong first half by the men from Hannahstown. Lámh Dhearg captain Johnny Jones lifted the shield aloft to the cheers from the faithful on the terrace that applauded the magnificent achievement from a squad that consisted of a mixture of youth and experience.

Final score: Lámh Dhearg 3-10 All Saints Ballymena 0-08

Lámh Dhearg squad: Gerard McKeown, Johnny Jones, Sean O'Neill, Sean Elliot, Christopher Monaghan, Brendan Elliot, Ciaran McGarry, Gerard Walls , Gary Galway (1-02) Ciaran Smyth (0-02) Marc Jordan (1-01) Charlie McCloskey, Jody Quinn (1-03) Kevin Quinn (0-01) Micky Boyle (0-01)

All Saints Ballymena squad: Paul McCann, Conall Rodgers, Frankie McDonald, James Timoney, Declan McKee, Paul Heffron (0-01) Joe Rocks, Emmet Killough (0-01) Rory McVeigh, Aidan Walsh, Damian Casey, Niall Walsh (0-04) Ciaran Shannon (0-01) Sean McCambridge (0-01) Diarmuid McNally .

By Kevin Herron