

Monaghan V Cavan Dream Match Report

It was a glorious day in Clones home to St Tiernach's Park where the sun was splitting the stones. If the game turned out as good as the weather we were in for a treat! The last time these teams met it was a thriller in Kingspan with the Cavan men coming out on top. I spoke to Monaghan manager Seamus McEnaney before the game & he was in no doubt that "it would be a tight contest". The local rivalry between these neighbouring counties both players & supporters alike, is always something to savour.

The game begins with referee Maurice Deegan throwing the ball in. While it took both teams a bit of time to settle with players spilling the ball & some "getting to know you" tactics plus some wayward passes the game soon took off. Monaghan had the brighter start with Conor McManus opening the scoring with a trademark opening point off his left boot. Then a quick kick out from Cavan goalkeeper Raymond Galligan was beautifully intercepted by Conor McCarthy who dummied his player, head down & straight through the Cavan defenders & expertly planted the ball in the top corner!! This score however seemed to spur on the Cavan men with them scoring 3 unanswered points from Thomas Madden, Conor Galligan and Killian Clarke. Then a majestically fielded ball by Darren Hughes saw the Scotstown man go on a run into the heart of the Cavan defence, giving a super pass to Ryan McAnespie who put the ball over the bar. The score now stood at 1-2 to 0-3 in favour of the Farney men. With 10 minutes remaining in the first half the teams exchanged 3 more points to leave Monaghan leading at half time by two points on a score line of 1-5 to 0-6. The capacity crowd of 25,000 or so have barely had time to draw breath!

Just as the sun came back out both teams took up their positions with no immediate changes to either line up. If Monaghan had the brighter start in the first half Cavan certainly had the better start in the second. With Gearóid McKiernan winning the throw in & passing the ball into Dara McVeety who side stepped Ryan Wylie & was thundering towards the Monaghan goal. His shot while on target was pushed over the bar by Monaghan's goalie Rory Beggan. With only the narrowest of margins between the two teams there was everything to play for! From Beggans kick out he found his club man Kieran Hughes who in turn gave a gem of a pass to Conor McManus who put the ball between the posts. The Cavan keeper Raymond Galligan kicks the ball straight into Conor Mc Carthy's hands and Conor taps it over the bar for an easy point to put 3 points between the teams. The Cavan keeper is not having a good day! This time he finds a Cavan jersey & Killian Clarke moves

towards the Monaghan half of the field, finding Dara McVeety with a sweet pass. Dara is met by Drew Wylie with the Ballybay man coming away with the ball. Drew goes on a run & finds Shane Carey who sells a dummy to his man & puts the ball over the bar. With Monaghan ahead by 4 Cavan had it all to do in the final 15 minutes. Gearóid McKiernan wins the kickout & pumps the ball into his full forward line. The ball was won by Oisín Galligan who only had Beggan to beat. Beggan came out to meet him & spread himself wide but Galligan sidestepped him & the ball was in the Monaghan net. Back to a margin of 1 with all to play for! Points were exchanged with McManus & Carey delivering for the Farney men & Reilly & McKiernan scoring for Cavan. Down to the last 5 minutes of normal time & only a point separated the two teams. Beggan's kickout soars 50metres with McKiernan & Hughes tussling for the possession with Hughes coming away with it, his long pass finds his brother Kieran who races towards the Cavan goal! On the edge of the square he scores a screamer into the top corner which Galligan hadn't a hope of saving. It looked all but over now with the Farney men pushing up on the Cavan kickout. Niall Kearns breaks the kick out which was won by Karl O'Connell who was off like a steam train. He breaks 2 tackles & puts the ball over the bar. With a minute of injury time to play it looked like it was Monaghans day with the score standing at 2-11 to 1-9. With the clock running down a free was awarded to the Monaghan men on the 45m line, Beggan came up to take it & coolly placed the ball over the black spot. The referee blows the final whistle & it's all over, Monaghan have won & go on to meet Antrim.

Man of the Match Darren Hughes was outstanding but his praise for his teammates shows that Monaghan are all about their team.

Reported by Darragh Feeney.