



12 December 2010

### Ulster Club Final 2010

The 12th December 2010 is a day which will be remembered when the history of the proud is written. It was a day when hundreds of our members put their lives at risk to travel to Breffini Park to support our young team against Donegal champions Naomh Conaill in the final of the Ulster club Championship.

Although we had won seven titles, I think this one was the sweetest as many people both inside and outside the county doubted our ability to come back after our defeat in 2009.

This team is made of sterner stuff and under the leadership of Gareth O'Neill, Tony McEntee and Seamus McGeown they proved to have the character to overcome all challenges presented to them. I would like to single out for mention Seamus McGeown for special praise as the team's level of fitness is superb and although we lost a player for half the game we finished the stronger side.

Conditions were fairly good for the game with bright sunshine and not a breeze, underfoot conditions were a bit heavy. Playing into the town goals and with the sun on our backs it was Rangers who made the early running and we opened our account with a point from play by Jamie Clarke. During this period we had at least four great chances to stretch our lead but poor finishing and wrong options meant our hard work went unrewarded. After this mistakes began to creep into our game and we gave the ball rather easily and from one of these mistakes our opponents opened their account with a point from play. They went ahead with a point from a free, but Oisín McConville brought the sides level with a point from a free. The Donegal boys signalled how they were going to approach the game as they picked up four yellow cards in the first ten minutes. Our mistakes were helping the Donegal side and they went ahead with a point from a free. Then followed one of the three crucial moments in the game. A superb pass from Michael McNamee found Jamie Clarke and although he still had a bit of work to do he quickly found the net.

This score brought an immediate reaction from Naomh Conaill and three points in a row put them back in front again. A point by Mickey McNamee from an acute angle brought the sides level, before our opponents finished the half with a point to go in at half time a point to the good. Prior to the interval Francie Bellew replaced Mickey McNamee. Half time score Rangers 1-3 Naomh Conaill 0-7. As far as I can remember this is the first time, this year, we went in a point in arrears at half time.

On the resumption Tony Kernan brought the sides level with a great point from play. Then followed the second crucial moment of the game when Tony Kernan was harshly dismissed for a second yellow card offence. It was a case of all backs to the wall and how did the team respond. At this stage management made two substitutions with Martin Aherne replacing Stephen Finnegan and Aaron Cunningham replacing Stephen Kernan. Then came the third crucial moment. Within a minute of the sending off we showed what we were made of, a brilliant move involving four players resulting in Jamie Clarke finding Oisín on the edge of the square and no better man to finish to the net. With our defence performing heroics, the full back line of Paul McKeown, Paul Kernan and James Morgan were impassable

as they harassed and closed their opponents. While the half back line of Aaron Kernan, Danny O'Callaghan and Martin Aherne gave great support to our attack. Although having plenty of possession the Donegal boys could make little impression and all they had to show from their efforts was a point from a free. With us upping the tempo of the game our opponents began to lose their discipline and conceded two frees which Oisin duly pointed. The Donegal side mounted a couple of attacks and were rewarded with a point from a rather fortuitous free. Another point from a free gave them some hope and reduced the margin to three points. At this stage Rangers made a couple of substitutions with John McEntee replacing David McKenna and Kyle Carragher replacing Francis Hanratty.

The last five minutes was all Cross and we finished off the game with two points, one from a free by Aaron Kernan and the other from play by Oisin McConville. Final Score Rangers 2-9 Naomh Conaill 0-10.

This success was achieved by a combination of experience with the older players dictating the play and the younger players providing the legs. An ideal combination. It is now off to London in the New Year.

Who says Santa Claus does not exist. He certainly came early for Rangers this year. Congratulations to Jamie Clarke for getting Man of the Match.

#### Membership

Now is the time of year for renewing membership and a special night will be arranged after Christmas for registration. Members will be pleased to note that there has been no increase in membership fees.

Adult £20; Family £30; Youth or Senior Citizen £5.