

Match Report for Tommy O'Brien Cup ¼ Final with Mullinavat

From the opening whistle, this had all the makings of a fiercely contested knockout clash between two sides who had impressed throughout the league campaign. With little or no wind to influence proceedings and referee Owen Beehan keeping a close eye on matters, both teams arrived looking sharp and well prepared during their warm-ups. As always, championship hurling brought an extra edge.

Urlingford burst from the traps and immediately set the tone with an aggressive, high-energy display. Padraig Bourke was immense in the opening half, throwing himself into every ruck, tackling ferociously and driving his side forward at every opportunity. His display was reminiscent of Will O'Donoghue in full flow during a Munster Championship battle. Bourke also chipped in on the scoreboard alongside Dara Hickey, who struck an excellent point from distance, while Will Bergin added a well-taken free and another fine score from play as Urlingford raced into a four-point lead.

To Mullinavat's credit, they responded brilliantly. Their danger man Alfie grabbed the game by the scruff of the neck and rifled a bullet-like 21-yard free beyond a crowded Urlingford goalmouth to bring his side right back into contention. However, Urlingford showed real composure. Alex Cashin slowed the tempo when needed, while the full-back line of Niall Rothwell, David Maev and Robbie Quinlan rolled up their sleeves and dealt aggressively with every ball entering their territory. Eoin Gibbons was outstanding throughout and added a valuable point, while another Bergin free left Urlingford leading by 0-6 to 1-0 at the break.

Mullinavat exploded into the second half and once again Alfie proved the catalyst, bursting past several defenders before batting the ball past the helpless Cashin to level matters. The intensity lifted another notch, but Urlingford's leaders stood tall. David Maev, Dara Hickey and the midfield pairing of Gibbons and Bourke drove the team forward, supplying Rian Lawlor and Paudie Power, who began to flourish under pressure. Both players struck two excellent points each, some from serious distance and under immense pressure.

Although Mullinavat added a second-half free, Urlingford finished strongly to claim a deserved 0-10 to 2-1 victory. Special mention must go to the Mullinavat goalkeeper, a third-class student who produced a series of acrobatic saves worthy of Eoin Murphy himself. Urlingford will know there is room for improvement, particularly in front of goal, but this was another gritty championship win and a huge boost for the boys moving forward.