

Urlingford NS Crowned Tommy O'Brien Cup Champions After Superb Final Display

Urlingford NS gained sweet revenge for last year's final defeat as they produced a magnificent performance to defeat Tullaroan NS in the Tommy O'Brien Cup Final in UPMC Nowlan Park. The same two sides had contested the decider twelve months ago, with Tullaroan emerging victorious by four points. Having also met recently in a fiercely contested league encounter that required extra time to separate them, another close battle was expected. However, Urlingford had other ideas.

Played on a pitch in immaculate condition and excellently officiated by referee Julian O'Dwyer, the stage was set for a memorable occasion. Dylan Carthy won the toss and elected to play with the aid of the breeze, a decision that paid dividends as Urlingford exploded from the blocks.

Dara Hickey opened the scoring after reacting quickest to a breaking ball before firing over confidently. Paudie Power soon doubled the lead with an excellent effort from a tight angle and was unlucky not to find the net shortly afterwards when his goal-bound strike was brilliantly saved by Frankie Cleere.

Tullaroan responded through the accurate free-taking of Tom Hogan and a point from play by Dan Doheny, but Urlingford's defence was setting the tone. David Maev and Dara Hickey formed a commanding spine, while Niall Rothwell, Robbie Quinlan and Oisín Sweetman repeatedly cleared their lines under pressure. While others grabbed the headlines, Pdraig Bourke's contribution was invaluable. A true team player, he put the needs of the team first throughout, working tirelessly and selflessly to limit Tullaroan's key threats.

As the half progressed, Aoibhinn Manton began to impose herself on proceedings, linking defence and attack with intelligence and energy. Her deliveries into the forwards caused constant problems, with Cian Doyle and Conal Lyng thriving on the quality service. Doyle struck two excellent points, while Eoin Gibbons produced one of the scores of the game following a slick passing move involving Will Bergin. At the interval, Urlingford led 0-6 to 0-2, though they felt there was even more left in the tank after registering several wides.

The second half proved to be Urlingford's finest display of the year. Jayden Elfehli was introduced for Rian Lawlor and immediately added energy to the attack. In midfield, Manton, Bergin and Gibbons completely took control, winning vital possession and supplying a relentless stream of attacks.

Although Hogan converted two early frees to reduce the gap, Urlingford responded emphatically. Conal Lyng pointed smartly from under the stand before Gibbons added his second score of the afternoon. Moments later, Dara Hickey claimed a puck-out and delivered a perfect ball into Paudie Power, who gathered and blasted past Cleere for the game's opening goal.

With confidence soaring, Urlingford dominated every sector. Alex Cashin landed two superb long-range frees, while substitute Laura Minogue made an immediate impact. Laura Minogue showed exactly why she is regarded as one of Urlingford's brightest young talents as she made a memorable contribution after her introduction, finding the net with a brilliant goal and following it up with a fine point from play. Further scores followed from Dara Hickey, who struck a remarkable goal from distance, while Power and Jayden Elfehli added points to

complete a dominant tally of 3-13. A late Tullaroan point left the final score reading Urlingford NS 3-13, Tullaroan NS 0-5. With the result all but secured, Dylan Carthy, Sarah Harrington and Tom Hickey, younger brother of Dara, were introduced in the closing stages and all made valuable contributions, bringing fresh energy and enthusiasm to the Urlingford cause.

The final whistle sparked scenes of pure joy as players, families and supporters flooded onto the field to celebrate a famous victory. Captains Will Bergin and Robbie Quinlan proudly lifted the Tommy O'Brien Cup to huge cheers, while Alex Cashin and Dara Hickey delivered excellent speeches. Jayden Elfehli, Bergin, Pdraig Bourke and Quinlan also represented their school brilliantly in post-match radio interviews.

After the heartbreak of last year's final defeat, this was a day of redemption. Through hard work, resilience and outstanding teamwork, Urlingford finally got their hands on the Tommy O'Brien Cup and deservedly etched their names into school sporting history.

