

Centenary Shield | U18 Boys' International

Press Release: Thursday, February 16, 2017

Irish claim late win against Welsh Schools

Republic of Ireland 2-1 Wales

Neil Farrugia (44), Seán McDonald (90+2) Conor Harwood (56)

Late drama at Whitehall saw the Republic of Ireland snatch an injury time winner from the penalty spot against Wales to open their **Inspiresport Centenary Shield** campaign on a bright note. The Welsh entered the opening match of their season without Cai Powell-Roberts due to illness which saw the introduction of Sam Richards and a starting position for the young Ysgoi Garth Olwg scholar. Another late withdrawn due to injury was Rhydian Morgan, who made way for Harri Hughes (Coleg Menai).

O'Reilly had made some changes to the starting eleven that entertained Australia last month where they went down 2-0 that afternoon. **St. Oliver's James Carroll took the spot of Mount Sion man Tunmise Sobowale.** Gorey's Vinny Quinlan was in for Carlow's John Martin who was just returning from injury and Neill Byrne made the cut ahead of Seán McDonald at the starting post. The impressive winger Neil Farrugia of St. Andrew's College, Blackrock had given the home side an interval lead when he ran on to a clever through pass from Carrigaline CS scholar Alec Byrne to beat goalkeeper Jack Atkinson (Ysgol Castell Alun) with a clinical finish with just a minute before half time.

The goal although brilliantly taken gave the Irish a rather flattering lead after a lack luster opening half with Farrugia providing their only likely threat in front of goal.

For Wales midfielder Callum Saunders (Gower College) had an excellent half and he certainly stood out as a player who could do some damage later in the game.

Wales resumed after the break in attacking mode and substitute Conor Harwood (Coleg Cambria) was only on the pitch two minutes when he pulled them level.

A well delivered Saunders free on 58 minutes deep into the Irish area was met by Harwood and from close in he headed the deserved equaliser past a helpless Paul Martin of Presentation DLS, Bagenalstown.

The goal sparked the home side back into action and Dunshaughlin CC pupil Neill Byrne and Farrugia both went close.

While defender James Carroll (St. Oliver's CC, Drogheda) forced replacement 'keeper Iwan Roberts into making a brilliant save from his fiercely driven shot.

The Irish were now looking the more likely to come out winners after Wales were reduced to ten men with ten minutes remaining when goal scorer Harwood was sent off by referee Brendan Clarke.

However Wales might have grabbed a winner themselves when Saunders delivered another great free kick into the home area and skipper George Coulton (Coleg Cambria) headed just over the crossbar.

Coulton was then involved in the dramatic final minutes of injury time when he fouled Athlone CC star Conor Layng as the Irish player was attempting to fire in a close range effort.

Referee Clarke awarded the penalty with the Wales skipper receiving his marching orders.

Clonkeen College man, Seán McDonald, a second half substitute stepped up and coolly beat Roberts to claim all three points for Paddy O'Reilly's side and join Farrugia his UCD U19s team mate on the score sheet.

The Irish will now go on to face Northern Ireland in Bangor on March 2, Scotland in Glasgow on April 6 before ending their campaign with a home game against England at Home Farm FC on April 13. Wales will bounce back from this narrow defeat as they host Scotland at Bala FC on March 17. Their penultimate game is another home tie in Cardiff on April 12 when Northern Ireland come to visit. The Welsh Dragons will finish their campaign on the last day of Shield action when Bristol Rovers plays host on April 21 against defending Champions England.

REPUBLIC OF IRELAND: Paul Martin (Presentation De La Salle, Bagenalstown); **James Carroll (St. Oliver's Community College, Drogheda)**, Evan Murphy (St. Enda's College, Salthill), Shane Blaney (Captain) (St. Eunan's College, Letterkenny), Darryl Walsh (St. Declan's Community College, Waterford), Alec Byrne (Carrigaline Community School), John Mahon (Coola Post Primary School, Sligo), Neill Byrne (Dunshaughlin Community College), Neil Farrugia (St. Andrew's College, Blackrock), Ronan Manning (Calasanctius College, Oranmore), Vinny Quinlan (Gorey Community School).

SUBS: John Martin (Presentation De La Salle, Bagenalstown) for Mahon (HT), Seán McDonald (Clonkeen College, Blackrock) for Quinlan (HT), Conor Layng (Athlone Community College) for N Byrne (78), Steven Nolan (St. Aidan's CBS, Whitehall) for A Byrne (78), Tunmise Sobowale (Mt Sion CBS Waterford) for Manning (88), Connor Gormley (Loreto Community School, Milford), Jamie Bell (St. Columba's College, Stranorlar).

