

COUNTY CHAMPIONS INFLICT FIRST LOSS

12.10.08



Meath County Champions, Donaghmore Ashbourne have inflicted the first defeat of the AAFC U23 tour when they were victorious by 5 points. With a side containing many All-Ireland stars, the locals and the Australians provided a fantastic spectacle for the large local crowd.

Brilliant conditions greeted the Australian players as they ventured just outside Dublin to Ashbourne to meet the Meath County champions in Donaghmore Ashbourne. A new stadium, perfect pitch and a crowd of around 2500 warmly welcomed the AAFC side along with a number of guest stars for the local side, who wore the Irish national jumper for the match. 3 All-Ireland (soon to play the AFL) and 3 County stars joined the team for the highly anticipated match and their class was evident throughout the match. After a stirring rendition of the national anthems, the match was underway and immediately the Australians knew this was a match of speed and intensity they had not yet encountered.

The Irish side were first to score through All-Ireland star Graham Gerrity through an over at the one and a half minute mark and again at the four minute mark. Some hard running was needed from the Australians and they soon found their feet, notching up their first score through a Peter McGettigan over at the sixth minute mark. The Irish responded with pace and skill to quickly slot another over and some brilliant work from Australian keeper Nick McKenna prevented further damage on the scoreboard. The into the game came Daniel Ellis with two superb unders in the space of 2 minutes to give the Australians a slender lead at quarter time. The pace of the match was extraordinary with both coaches needed to make many interchanges. Australia's best for the term were Ellis, Richter, McGettigan and Dowd.

Quarter Time

AAFC	2-1-1 (16)
Don-Ash	0-4-1 (13)

With Bob Cross asking his players to run and take them on, the Australians gained control for the early part of the second term with Watts and Jones slotting through overs at the 4th and 6th minute marks. Only excellent work by the Meath County keeper and the Irish side getting numbers back prevented the AAFC from doing more damage on the scoreboard. Then, against the run of play, the Irish showed just how damaging they can be with two hard running unders in quick succession. The Australians regained their composure and continually attack, but their inability to convert was costing them dearly. Again the Irish punish the Australians on the rebound, and slotted through another under and an over to hold a handy 7 point lead at the long break. Jordan, Buller, McGuinness and Watts were the stars for the AAFC during the second term.

Half Time

AAFC	2-4-5 (29)
Don-Ash	3-5-3 (36)

With players from both teams taking full advantage of a much needed break, the third term was going to a case of who could keep the most run in their legs. Both coaches made the AFL's interchange rate look miserly in the first half as they desperately tried to avoid running their players into the ground. The Irish showed no signs of relenting on their consistent run, attacking the Australian goals with regularity at the start of the third term. Brilliant work again by debutant Australian keeper Nick McKenna prevented many opportunities, having they did manage two overs at the 1st and 3rd minute mark. The match was in danger of slipping away from the Australians until Jones marked strongly and converted an over and Watts followed suit shortly after. Many opportunities were being wasted however with poor shots on goal and forward disposal. The Irish side made the Aussies pay late with two hard running overs to take a strong lead into the final break. O'Sign, Iezzi, Dowd and McKenna were excellent for the Australian side during the third term.

Three Quarter Time

AAFC 2-6-8 (38)
Don-Ash 3-9-5 (50)

With an excited crowd making plenty of noise, Bob Cross implored his players to give everything they had and that's exactly what they did in the last term. Taking control of the centre through Pinkney and Dowd, the Australians were on the board in the first minute through an over to Jones after another strong mark in the forward box. Again, plenty of scoring opportunities were being denied by quality keeping, kicking errors and the Irish pushing numbers back. The locals then seemingly sealed the match with a fast break over at the 6th minute mark to once again take a 12 point lead. Then, as tired legs had their affect on both teams, the Australian broke the scoring shackles through a sensational under from a long way out by Alan O'Sign followed by a strong mark and over from Watts. Ireland then replied with an over before Jack Watts put through another one for the Aussies after an obvious free kick. With the Irish leading by a point, the next five minutes became a battle of the backlines with both holding firm as exhaustion set in to both sides. The vocal crowd were treated to some intense, physical and slick passages of play with both sides desperate to take the advantage. In the end, the Irish sides ability to finish off their good work got them over the line in the end, with a point and an over in the dying minutes securing victory for the home team. Loud applause escorted the players from the field, with many of the local children lining up for autographs and photos with the Australian players. The club's two sizable bars were packed to capacity as supporters, players and officials mingled, all unanimous in their praise of the quality, intensity and spirit of the match.

Final Score

AAFC 3-9-10 (55)
Don-Ash 3-12-6 (60)

Unders:

Ellis 2, O'Sign

Overs:

Watts 4, Jones 3, McGettigan, O'Sign

Best:

McGettigan, McGuinness, McKenna, Jordan, Jones, Dowd, Richter