

CROKES HAVE YOUTH ON SIDE

Kilmacud turn on the power in last quarter to topple champions

Rónán Mac Lochlainn

AS if often the way with the fall of a champion, the end was quick and merciless as Kilmacud Crokes ended any hopes of a Ballyboden St Enda's quest for back-to-back titles in Parnell Park on Saturday afternoon.

The 1-14 to 0-9 win was a hugely encouraging result for Kilmacud, who finished in a completely dominant fashion, with Mark Vaughan and Paul Mannion starring up front, to ease home in what many expected to be a tight encounter throughout.

However, all the win, albeit impressive, guaranteed was a spot in tonight's SFC quarter-final draw with manager Gabriel Bannigan ensuring his youthful side don't get carried away with the result.

"What Ballyboden achieved last year was remarkable and they were worthy champions so we knew the calibre of team that they had.

"When people saw the team list, maybe they thought that we may be risking too much with the young lads but they showed their character all the way through the match.

"But look, the season is only really starting again and admittedly, Ballyboden was a massive hurdle to get over but it's only a start.

"We haven't won anything yet and that was what I was emphasising to the players after the match," said Bannigan.

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Kilmacud Crokes' Paul Mannion tries to hold off Ballyboden's Aran Waters and Cathal Flaherty.





Kilmacud Crokes' Paul Mannion tries to find a way past Ballyboden St Enda's Robbie McDaid in last Saturday's Dublin SFC second round clash at Parnell Park.
Pics: Doug O'Connor

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REVIEW: DUBLIN SFC SECOND ROUND

WHEN the draw for the second round of the Dublin Senior Football Championship was made over five months ago, a number of mouth-watering clashes stood out with Ballyboden St Enda's facing local rivals Kilmacud Crokes the most eagerly anticipated of all of them.

Naturally, followers of St Vincent's, Na Fianna, St Brigid's and Ballymun Kickhams might argue to the contrary but a youthful Crokes coming up against the Dublin, Leinster and All-Ireland champions was always a fixture to whet the appetite.

DYNAMIC

Not only have the teams produced traditionally close encounters, the fact that Boden had enjoyed the upper hand on their near neighbours in two of the previous three years added to the dynamic of the tie.

So it proved in Parnell Park on Saturday afternoon as Kilmacud finished in the ascendancy to deliver a hugely impressive 1-14 to 0-9 win.

There was little to separate the teams with 20 minutes remaining but the ability of Crokes to dominate the closing stages was as emphatic as the eight-point winning margin might suggest.

"The first thing to be said about that team is that we had nine of last year's under-21 team starting and there were three more than came on in the second-half," said Kilmacud manager Gabriel Bannigan.

"The key player of that team, Dara Mullin, had a cruciate injury



Kilmacud's James Murphy tries to dispossess Ballyboden's Andrew Kerin.

Youth plays its part for Kilmacud

which meant he missed out, but those kids have answered every question that we have asked of them and the effort that they have put in has been phenomenal.

"When people saw the team list today, maybe they thought that we may be risking too much with the young lads but they showed their character all the way through the match.

"I think there may have been a few nerves at the start and that is understandable and it took us a little bit of time to get going but in the second-half, they really showed their character and desire to get over the finishing line," he added.

Of course, it wasn't just the young tyros like Cillian O'Shea, Andrew McGowan, Callum Pearson and David Campbell that were the key figures for Kilmacud over the hour.

Bannigan was also able to call on the enduring excellence of David Nestor between the sticks, with the goalkeeper making a crucial intervention to deny Andrew Kerin what appeared a certain goal in the first-half, while up front Mark Vaughan and Paul Mannion excelled.

"We were lucky to have Ross O'Carroll playing a key role for us in defence and then you can bring on someone like Darren Magee who

won three serious balls for us in the second-half when introduced.

"The last ten minutes, we were able to introduce Pat Burke as well and he gave us much-needed experience and we have a massive team spirit there.

"The blend between the young lads and the older players is working at the minute and the spirit that they have between them was for all to see in that final quarter.

"The lads have done in with the under-21s and they have done it all year for us and I never doubted that they would do it again for us on Saturday," concluded Bannigan.