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Soccer

Superb McMillan the difference as Dundalk sparkle in Iceland

League of Ireland champions will now face Bate Borisov in the third qualifying round

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Dundalk's Patrick McEleney with Kassim Doumbia and Pétur Viðarsson of Fimleikafélag Hafnarfjarðar during their Champions League clash. Photo: Eythor Arnason/Inpho

Darren Crawley
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FH Hafnarfjordur 2 Dundalk 2 (aggregate: 3-3, Dundalk advance on away goals)

Dundalk advanced to the third qualifying round of the Uefa Champions League on Wednesday night as they won on away goals after a thrilling 2-2 draw at the Kaplakriki in Iceland.

The back-to-back Airtricity League showed tremendous character on the night to recover from Sam Hewson's first half goal and turn it around thanks to a superb David McMillan brace in the second half even after Ronan Finn missed a penalty after half-time. Kristjan Floki, Finnbogason set up a grandstand finish with a late goal however it is Stephen Kenny's men who advance on a great night for the club.

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Dundalk, with the one enforced change from last week's first leg Brian Gartland replaced by Paddy Barrett, were on the back foot in the opening stages with the hosts having most of the possession.

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Barrett had a header crash off the crossbar and go out for a goal kick but from the re-start, FH took the lead. Some terrific interplay on the edge of the box from Lennon and Sam Hewson saw the latter find space in the box and slotted under Gary Rogers into the net.

Dundalk almost responded immediately but Dane Massey's drive from 20 yards whistled past the right hand post.

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Horgan was in the game now and he ghosted past three FH players after winning the ball but his shot was straight at Nielsen.

McEleney then robbed Doumbia of the ball and raced to the box. He showed terrific skill and pulled back for Finn but his shot was deflected over. Finn again had an effort after McEleney's layoff but it was shot aimlessly wide.

Dundalk had a chance immediately after the break to level matters when David Vidarsson hauled McMillan down in the box which resulted in a penalty. Finn stepped up however it was saved by Nielsen down to his right.

But Dundalk would get their equaliser and it was one of real quality.

McMillan intercepted the ball 25 yards from goal and he turned before firing low and hard to the bottom right which rebounded in off the post out of the reach of the goalkeeper.

The Lilywhites grabbed a crucial second goal just after the hour mark and it was a goal of quality which eclipsed the first one.

Barrett won the ball superbly to scupper an FH attack 30 yards from the Dundalk goal. He played it to O'Donnell who passed wide to Massey. His superb ball in behind was raced onto by Horgan and his outstanding pull back was finished to the net by the man in form – McMillan – for his second of the night.

Lennon had a chance to draw the sides level again in the moments after the goal when he caught the visiting defence napping but the ball was just wide of the goal.

Dundalk were happy to play on the break however, after Benson blocked a Petur Vidarsson shot, they faced a nervous final 10 minutes when substitute Kristjan Floki, Finnbogason was set away by Lennon again. He raced away from the back four and fired low at the near post past Gary Rogers to rise the host voices again.

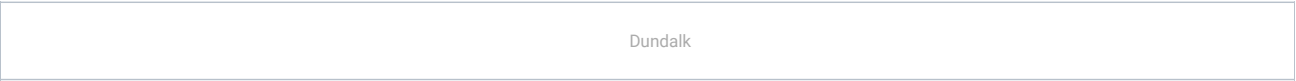
And nervous it was. The Lilywhites faced an onslaught of sorts as FH piled forward for a goal that would take them through and survived the best chance as Finnbogason headed inches over the bar in injury-time.

That was the final action and Dundalk go onto Belarus to face BATE next week.

FH: Gunnar Nielsen; Johnny Hendrickx, Bergsveinn, Kassim Doumbia, Bodvar Bodvarson; David Thor Vidarsson (capt), Emil Palsson (Petur Vidarsson 65), Sam Hewson (Atli Vidar Bjornsson 76), Bjarni Thor Vidarsson (Kristjan Floki, Finnbogason 65), Thorainn Ingi Valdimarsson; Steven Lennon. Substitutes not used: Sonni Ragnar Nattestad, Jeremy Serwy, Brynar Gudmundsson, Kristjan Finnbogason (GK)

DUNDALK: Gary Rogers; Sean Gannon, Paddy Barrett, Andy Boyle, Dane Massey; Ronan Finn, Stephen O'Donnell (capt); John Mountney (Robbie Benson 46), Patrick McEleney (Chris Shields 79), Daryl Horgan; David McMillan (Ciaran Kilduff 82). Substitutes not used: Shane Grimes, Ciaran Kilduff, Darren Meenan, Michael O'Connor, Gabriel Sava (GK)

Referee: Paolo Valeri (ITA)



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