

Raheny United 3 - 2 Shamrock Rovers

by Niall Farrell
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Raheny United made sure they kept pace with rivals Peamount in the title race with a confident 3-2 win over Shamrock Rovers at home on Sunday.

The final score may have been close, but if Grace McCauley hadn't been on top form in the Rovers goal the winning margin could have been far greater.

A four minute blitz near the end of the first half put Raheny in a commanding position going into the second half. It looked like Siobhan Killeen's pass across the box on 36 minutes would be cut out by a Rovers defender, but it evaded them all as well as Rovers 'keeper Grace McCauley.

Katie McCabe took on the ball at an awkward angle and curved her shot well into the goal. Raheny were on the attack immediately afterward, as Rovers fell apart at the back and midfield.

Megan Campbell confirmed her reputation as a long-throw specialist when she threw the ball onto the head of Mary Waldron from some distance on 42 minutes. Waldron headed powerfully from about seven yards out past Grace McCauley.

Rovers barely had a chance at goal for most of the second half. Raheny had chance after chance, putting the Rovers defence under siege. To her credit, Grace McCauley produced a string of superb saves to keep them in the match.

Niamh Connolly cleared off the line twice for the Hoops, but around the 70th minute Rovers at last made a few forays into the Raheny half. The first two were fruitless, but the third yielded a fantastic goal.

Noelle Murray, who scored from similar distance last week against Peamount, struck from 40 yards. This time it was from a free-kick, with Murray forcefully curling the ball into the top corner. Hopes of a comeback didn't last too long, though, with Raheny restoring their two goal lead five minutes later.

Siobhan Killeen hit a lovely lobbed shot over Grace McCauley from inside the box, also evading a Rovers defender on the line. That goal quelled Rovers' hopes, but it didn't stop the home side going for more goals. Grace McCauley was again on top form to deny Christina Byrne Christina Byrne a long range goal and with three minutes left Siobhan Killeen whizzed a shot wide.

Nicola Sinnott restored some hope for Rovers with her headed goal in the third minute of stoppage time, but it stayed 3-1, meaning Rovers stay bottom and Raheny stay in the running for the first Womens' National League title.

Raheny United: Niamh Reid Burke; Megan Campbell, Christina Byrne, Seana Cooke, Rebecca Creagh, Rachel Graham, Katie McCabe [Sandra Mulhall '68], Siobhan Killeen, Rebecca Walsh [Elaine Murray '55], Ciara Grant, Mary Waldron.

Subs Not Used: Joan Daly, Catherine Cronin, Lynn Bradley, Kate Flood.

Shamrock Rovers: Grace McCauley; Nicola Sinnott, Lyndsey Hayden, Carol Conlon, Niamh Connolly, Rachel Jenkins, Hannah Tyrell, Noelle Murray, Orlagh Nolan, Nicola Dorley [Laura Chambers '45], Joanne Ennis.

Subs Not Used: Grace McAuley, Zara Dillon, Paula Doran, Ashling Cusack, Amy Kelly, Grainne Walsh.

Referee: Paula Brady

Attendance: 50 (unofficial estimate)

Extratime.ie Player of the Match: Grace McCauley