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Fitzpatrick's men have the final word after stalemate

AFTER 110 goalless minutes at Sportslink on Saturday, San Marino beat Schalke Rovers 5-4 on penalties to lift their second successive UCFL Division 1 shield.

by **SEAN FARRELL**

**San Marino0
 Schalke Rovers0**

**NET San Marino win 5-4 on pens
 SEAN FARRELL reports**

Finals are rarely a pretty spectacle. Too often, tension and nerves get the better of players, discouraging them from taking risks.

However, it was a combination of two early red cards and four seasons' worth of weather which put the dampener on this encounter.

The game was barely 90 seconds old when Geoff Hawkins saw red. The left winger was tackled by Stephen Burey and accidentally clipped the top of his head with a trailing boot.

The referee's assistant saw it from a different angle, and motioned a swinging leg which left referee JJ Walsh with no option but to send Hawkins off.

Any advantage which Rovers thought they might have was taken away in little over a minute.

James Flynn latched onto a long ball ahead of Paul Goddard. Gearing up to shoot from just outside the box Flynn tumbled under pressure from the full back.

The eagle-eyed linesman was on hand again, advising Walsh that Goddard was the last man. And so, the match was left with just 20 players.

Schalke were the first to settle into any sort of rhythm after that. After 20 minutes, a deflected cross from the left wing deceived Colin Keely and was deftly plucked out of the sky by Mick Fox.

Volley

The winger's first touch hit off his shoulder. His second was a beautifully hit volley which clipped the outside of the woodwork.

Fox was Schalke's most potent threat in the first half. Paul Egan on the left wing was Marino's danger man. But neither could carry the fight on his own.

The game badly needed a goal and an improvised effort from Conor Prunty almost gave Schalke a half-time lead but his back-heel drifted past the post.

The game did open up after the break. But a clinical finish never seemed likely as the stormy show-ers swept along the pitch, occasionally given reprieve by some rare rays of sunshine through steel grey clouds.

Schalke again forced the better openings, making little of the league standings as Division 1's

BALL: (l-r) Cormac Dunne, Niall Walsh, Ross Maybury, and Zac Labib

