

# UCD NEWS



## The UCD FC Supporters' Club Newsletter

Issue 4

December 2003

**WELCOME TO THE** fourth issue of UCD News. In this issue, we have a profile of captain Tony McDonnell, Pete Mahon's views on the future for UCD, the last winners in this season's ticket giveaway and, as usual, the Belfield Diary.

It's been a rather dramatic month, to say the least. Right up to the very last day, it looked like we were going to seal one of the greatest escapes from relegation ever – not far off Dunfermline's famous escape in 1960 when they appointed Jock Stein as manager with six games to go. Having won only four games all season, they promptly won each of the last six games and stayed up by seven points. I don't think it's much of an exaggeration to say that, had we stayed up, the feat would have been comparable.

But we didn't, and we can only look ahead to next season now. The team's form since Pete Mahon took over, had it covered to whole season, would have had us four points off a European spot. Only three teams conceded fewer goals than us, and so it seems that the sky's the limit if we can only find a 20-goal-a-season striker! Derry hammered Limerick 4-0 in the play-offs, and so it appears that we can look forward to a successful season next year, with the play-offs being the absolute least to expect. The general belief around the club is that if we can keep moving forward at the same rate since Pete took over, it could be only five years before we're back playing European football again. Here's hoping – it's already been four years since our last trek, which is long enough!

I'm sure you all have differing opinions about whether Ireland's World Cup draw was favourable or not, but one person who's probably delighted with his draw is UCD's Hugh Davey. Having broken into the North's U-21 squad recently – he started their last three games of their Euro 2004 campaign – Hugh has seen his team drawn against Wales and, even better, England. Still only 19, Hugh will be eligible for the whole campaign, so it isn't inconceivable that the next 18 months will see him live on Sky Sports in a Premiership ground (England's last home match was in Upton Park in front of a crowd of 20,000), playing against Premiership regulars! The last English U-21 squad included such players as Shola Ameobi and Jermaine Jenas of Newcastle, Manchester City's Shaun Wright-Phillips, West Ham's Jermaine Defoe and Aston Villa's Peter Whittingham to name a few! Other recent squads have included the likes of Jermaine Pennant, Carlton Cole, Francis Jeffers, Tony Hibbert, Miche Tonge and Gareth Barry. It goes without saying that it's a huge boost to have UCD mentioned in the same breath as those clubs and players!

In contract news, Robbie Griffin, Seán Finn, Niall Donnelly and Ben Savage have all been released by the club, while Pat Jennings has also left and Mark Rooney has signed for Drogheda. Pete Mahon hopes to retain most of the remainder of the squad – however, that won't stop the likes of Shels, Drogheda, Longford and others snooping around to try and pick up a bargain! The likelihood is that a couple more players will leave, which will still leave us with a decent squad for the First Division, which will be supplemented when a few Soccer Scholarships signings next month. And Mahon is looking for one or two extra players as well, with highest profile rumoured to be Stephen Geoghegan, who was in two Ireland squads in his day.

Anyway, that's it for UCD News for a few months. It's been a season which has really seen us go from despair to hope, back to despair but ending back up at hope for the future. It looks like the start of a very bright era for UCD – just a shame there's three or four months to go until it continues!

## BELFIELD DIARY

**4<sup>th</sup> November** – UCD start into the last month of the regular season six points off Derry and seven behind Drogheda, both of whom have a game in hand. Our remaining matches are against the five teams directly above us and Shelbourne, five points clear at the top. First up was a trip to Waterford, where a missed penalty in the last minute sees us miss out on all three points. John Frost – who used to go out with a member of the UCD Ladies' team – stars for the College; the Waterford player concedes an early penalty (this one scored) and scores an own goal!

**7<sup>th</sup> November** – The first of three crucial home games in a row sees us take on Derry, six points above us with a game in hand. A penalty in the first minute sets us on the way to a comfortable enough win, sealed with Robbie Martin's first goal since his comeback from injury. Worryingly, Robbie Mac is now our top league scorer with four – all from penalties!

**10<sup>th</sup> November** – Away to champions elect Shels, and our unbeaten run is somehow extended to five games. Shels dominate the second half, but an inspired performance from Pat Jennings in particular seals a point.

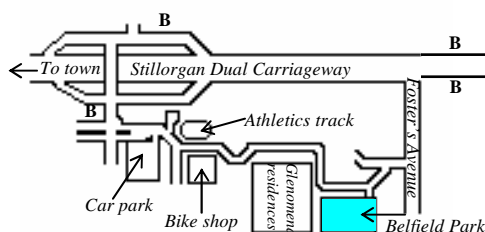
**14<sup>th</sup> November** – Another massive game as Paul Doolin returns to Belfield Park. A late Robbie Griffin header sends the UCD fans wild – as much for coming off the bottom of the table for the first time since the opening day as for seeing a Doolin-managed team lose in Belfield again!

**21<sup>st</sup> November** – Despite being down to ten men for 75 minutes, Pat's use the old UCD ploy of putting everyone behind the ball and countering to good effect and hang on for a 0-0 draw. Drogheda somehow beat Bohs 2-0 in O2 Park to not only hand Shels the title but also ensure Drogheda's safety. It's down to us and Derry for the play-off and the automatic drop...

**25<sup>th</sup> November** – Another poor day for UCD. First up, we lose the Colours match against Trinity for the first time in 19 years – although it wasn't played every year, and we tend to put out a weakened team. Pat McWalter was one of the few first-teamers involved when he came on as a second-half sub in the 2-1 defeat. Then Derry manage only their second win in the last 24 in beating Bohs – remember them?! – and go two points ahead of us going into the last day...

**30<sup>th</sup> November** – D-Day – and a comfortable 2-0 win over Cup holders Longford Town – courtesy of a brilliant Tony McDonnell volley from outside the area and an even better goal from Alan Cawley as he chips the ball over the defence to himself before rounding Longford keeper Stephen O'Brien – isn't enough to avoid the drop as former Student Ciarán Martyn scores the only goal in the RSC as Derry beat Waterford. John Frost goes from hero to villain in the space of a month as he gets sent off for Waterford with ten minutes to go, probably ending any chance that Waterford were going to get the draw we needed.

## WHERE IS BELFIELD PARK???



### Buses to Belfield:

3	10
11	11B
17	46
46A	46B
46C	46D
63	84
<b>B</b>	<b>– Bus stop</b>

## LOOKING FORWARD

*How Pete Mahon was quoted in various media sources (www.cfcen-a-side.com, The Irish Times (01/12/03) and The University Observer, among others) after the Longford Town game*

"We were under a bit of pressure to win the game, because we had to if we were going to give ourselves any chance of survival. Unfortunately, it was not to be.

"If you look at our form, well, since we came here 16 games ago, we've amassed 24 (sic) points from 48. When we came here, we had 12 points from 20 [games]. That's when the damage was done – the early part of the season.

"I don't see any reason why we can't bounce back from this. I certainly feel very positive. Sometimes it takes a situation like this to see what kind of person you are.

"I would certainly hope the bulk of the team would remain here. It's only the end of our stay in the Premier League and we're going to do all we can to get back up into the Premier League straight away."

"It's ironic that Derry, in fairness to them, hadn't won a game since June and they win the last two. We played them here earlier and beat them 2-0. I thought they were dead and buried.

"We are very, very positive. We are going to move on from this, it's not the end of the world, it's a blow, it's the biggest disappointment I've ever had in football but, as I said, we'll move on from this.

"I have to be judged now. People were saying to me: 'You've done great since you came here.' We've done great but we still got relegated. So that to me is not good enough. We have to be at the forefront of the First Division next season."

## MOVING UP

*(From www.cfcen-a-side.com/shelbourne)*

Glen Fitzpatrick, recognised as one of the hottest young strikers in the circom League and linked with a move to Huddersfield Town recently, has reportedly joined league champions Shelbourne. Fitzpatrick's contract at Shamrock Rovers came to an end on the final day of last season, a campaign in which he scored eight league goals for Liam Buckley's Hoops. With Rovers in such debilitating financial trouble, however - he was one of nine players allowed to leave because the club cannot afford them new deals - he was always on his way out of the club, with Shels and Huddersfield leading the chase to sign him. He had been due to undergo a trial at the McAlpine Stadium with the Division Three outfit, but his dream of full-time football was satisfied without leaving these shores after Shelbourne boss Pat Fenlon agreed a deal with the 22-year-old in midweek.

Looking forward to the challenge of the professional game, the former UCD and Athlone Town man told the Evening Herald: "You see that people like Jason Byrne have improved because of full-time training at Shels, so I hope I can do the same next season. I think full-time training and coaching at Shels would add another 10% to my game.

Shelbourne is a really exciting place to be. Playing in the Champions' League is very attractive for any player and I'm no different. I enjoyed the Intertoto Cup experience with Rovers last summer, but the Champions League is another level of football and I really want to play there and see how I can do."

*[Ed's note – Glen's high point with UCD came when he represented Ireland in the 1999 Meridian Cup in South Africa, a competition between European and African underage teams. Alongside him were such players as John O'Shea, John Goodwin, Shaun Byrne and Thomas Butler. Ireland beat South Africa, drew with Egypt and lost to a Spanish team featuring Iker Casillas in nets!]*

## WIN MATCH TICKETS

Our free match tickets giveaway has been continuing in the last few weeks – our latest winners are John Byrne from Stillorgan, Stephen Kelly from Riverside and John McCarthy. We'll be continuing this giveaway all through next season as well!

*To unsubscribe from the UCD Supporters' Club, simply send us an e-mail at [ucdafc@yahoo.ie](mailto:ucdafc@yahoo.ie)*

## FOCUS ON – TONY

**Name** – Tony McDonnell

**Date of birth** – 10/02/76

**Place of birth** – Dublin

**Position** – Centre-mid, centre-back, right-back – wherever he's needed really.

**Joined UCD** – July 1993 – ten years later and he still hasn't left college! We're just jealous of course...

**Signed from** – St. Kevin's.

**UCD debut** – A v. Longford Town, 11/03/94.

**First goal** – A v. Galway United; 03/02/96.

**2003 UCD statistics** – Played 28 (26 league, 2 League Cup), scored 2 (2 league)

**Career UCD statistics (league only)** – 208 games, 16 goals. Only Robbie Griffin and Ciarán Kavanagh have played more games for UCD!

**Did you know?** – Although Tony has 16 goals for UCD, he isn't renowned for his goalscoring exploits. Indeed, seven of those goals came in one season – 2000/01, when we stayed up by beating Athlone Town in a play-off. Tony scored our crucial goal in Athlone in the first leg.

**Famous relatives?** – Tony's cousin also scored seven goals for UCD in the 2000/01 season – unlike Tony, though, Derek Swan made his name scoring goals, and is one of the top scorers ever in the League of Ireland! Derek's dad – Tony's uncle – is Maurice Swan, who also played League of Ireland.



## UPCOMING EVENTS

Eh...none for a while! Try the following if you want:

**January sometime** – Final decisions on UEFA licencing to be announced. Or not. Cos it's the FAI. The theory is that we're all supposed to be playing in much nicer stadia next season (1,500 covered seats if you want to play in the Premier; 500 for the First). The reality is unknown; possibly a delay in meeting the ground requirements, but all the others (youth development, financial, administration) to come in for next season.

**End of February** – Fixture list announced.

**14<sup>th</sup> March** – UCD Alumni Dinner in the Burlington, with many of our former players returning to celebrate 25 years in the league.

**Middle of March** – New season starts.

*Don't forget – if you can't go to a UCD game, you can keep in touch with the Students in many ways –*

- Aertel page 222
- ThreeText page 237 (on TV3)
- The UCD text service – text UCD to 53131 to receive goal flashes and news! Texts cost 30p each. To unsubscribe, text "Unsub UCD" to 53131.
- <http://www.foot.ie/forums> – a UCD messageboard
- [www.ucd.ie/~soccer](http://www.ucd.ie/~soccer), the official UCD website
- [www.ucd.ie/~soccerrp](http://www.ucd.ie/~soccerrp), the unofficial website. We hope to have our new website up and running for the start of the new season.