

UCD NEWS



The UCD FC Supporters' Club Newsletter

Issue 7

June 2004

WELCOME TO THE seventh issue of UCD News. In this issue, we have a profile of Conor Kenna, Pete Mahon's views on his time at UCD so far and of course the Belfield Diary.

May has been good down Belfield Park way – seven points from nine in the league, through to the League Cup quarter-final and three more players with representative honours. In the league, we're showing the odd sign of complacency, though there is the feeling that we're playing a large part of games in second gear and that there is much more this team can achieve if they want to. Against Cobh, we only started to play well after going a goal behind and could have had three or four goals in the last twenty minutes but for some dodgy refereeing and linesmanning (and Colm Kierans clearing off the Cobh line!). Against Sligo, after an early goal, we let the foot off the pedal and let the Westerners in for an equaliser; however, the scores were level for less than ten minutes before we scored again. And against Kilkenny last weekend, we went 1-0 down only to equalise within a minute, and then score twice just before half-time to kill the tie. If the team is to gain promotion this season – and promotion now seems to be a four-horse race, with eight points and a game in hand separating league leaders UCD from fifth-paced Galway – they could well achieve a lot next season!

That optimism is due in no small part to the youngsters coming through the ranks. The scholarship scheme was largely neglected under previous manager Paul Doolin, but this season alone we've seen the emergence of Willie Doyle (eight goals in nine games), Conor Kenna (who is currently keeping Rob McAuley, the second most experienced player in the squad, out of the team), Neil Gallagher and Darren Quigley (who between them have conceded a mere seven goals in twelve games, with three of them coming in one match) and others. Given a couple of years' first-team experience and the prospect of more such players coming through on a regular basis, the future is exciting for UCD FC!

The League Cup is not a competition we've been overly concerned about – we want to win it, obviously, but see it more as a chance to give some fringe players a run. However, having beaten Bray and comfortably held off Shamrock Rovers, we now have a quarter-final against Bohs to look forward to. It's our first Cup quarter-final in three years, since that epic FAI Cup tie against Derry, when we led at home until the last kick of the game. There won't be a replay of the Bohs game – it would go straight into extra time – but with the added boost of Pete Mahon returning to his former club, it will make for an interesting tie.

Finally, the long-awaited UCD FC scarves are to be awaited no more – they arrived in during the week and will be in stock from the Bray game, priced a mere tenner.

BELFIELD DIARY

4th May – Two near reserve teams for the League Cup tie, but it's UCD who come out on top for the second time in six weeks in Bray. Colm Kierans marks his full debut with a great goal in the last minute; Pat Burke, Darren Quigley, Ciarán Foley, Conor Kenna, John Gaffney, Damien Kelly and Lloyd Colfer also play.

8th May – A sluggish performance sees two points dropped, and it could have been worse as Seán Finn rams home a penalty with the last kick of the game, though the referee doesn't exactly endear himself to the travelling UCD fans after some highly questionable decisions.

14th May – Sligo are the visitors to Belfield, and have the audacity to equalise after Robbie Martin puts College ahead with an early penalty. But Robbie is on target again in the second half, and it's seven consecutive home wins for UCD. Despite the victory, the Students are deposited at the top of the table on goal difference after Bray win 6-0 in Dundalk.

18th May – A rather tame League Cup tie sees College draw 0-0 against Shamrock Rovers and reach the quarter-finals. Meanwhile, Hugh Davey plays as the eircom League Under-21 team beat an English Conference select 3-2 in Aberdeen.

20th May – Ireland slip to a 2-0 defeat against hosts Scotland, with former Student Robbie Doyle being sent off early on. Davey plays again.

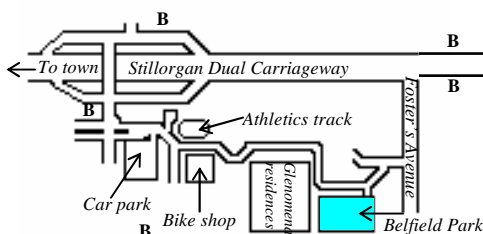
22nd May – Neil Gallagher and Willie Doyle join Hugh Davey in the eL starting line-up against the Welsh league, and it's Davey who gives Ireland the lead just after half-time with a 30-yard half-volley. It's all downhill from there though, as Wales end up 4-1 winners.

25th May – The League Cup draw sees UCD in the same half as Dublin City, Longford and Bohemians, and we come out against Bohs in Dalymount – not exactly our favourite ground! Still, with Bohs playing a full-strength team in their 4-1 win over Drogheda, it's a good chance for our younger players to get some experience against Premier Division opposition.

27th May – A late Matt Holland goal sees Ireland beat Romania 1-0 in Lansdowne Road in the last of the FAI's three-match package featuring Brazil and the Czech Republic.

28th May – Another easy home win sees UCD go back top of the First Division on goal difference from Bray, who can only win 2-1 in Monaghan. Kilkenny take the lead midway through the first half – the first visiting side to do so since Bohs last October – but Willie Doyle equalises within a minute. Two goals at the end of the first half end Kilkenny's resistance, and Willie Doyle completes his hat-trick midway through the second half. The goals bring Doyle's tally to eight from nine games, all the more remarkable for the fact that he has completed ninety minutes only once this season! He's the first UCD player to score a hat-trick since Seán Finn against Drogheda in November 2002, while he's also well on course to smash Mick O'Byrne's record of 14 league goals in a season.

WHERE IS BELFIELD PARK???



Buses to Belfield:

3	10
11	11B
17	46
46A	46B
46C	46D
63	84
B – Bus stop	

WIN MATCH TICKETS

We've improved our match tickets giveaway for the new season – now, in addition to four free match tickets, each winner will also pick up two match programmes and two fanzines. Our winners this month are Gráinne Hartnett, Conor and Hugh Gowins and Adam Collins.

LOVING IT!

From the Irish Mirror; 14th May.

Knockbacks are part and parcel of football. Just ask Pete Mahon – he has taken the blows, endured the downside to it all. But he's still here, and still in love with the game. Still quiet, but always confident.

It's been a while now since Mahon enjoyed the life of a full-time manager, the challenge of Champions' League. Instead, he's right back at the coal face. UCD is his football home now – and as he surveys the campus training facility, he insists that he has no regrets.

"There's more responsibility on my shoulders than ever before", he insisted. "We have got to make sure we pick the right players for UCD. There's a lot at stake as regards future careers – you know, we could have the next Taoiseach, the next Minister for Foreign Affairs at this club. We're bringing in fellas at 17 and have to make sure everything matches up. It is some responsibility."

Mahon's pedigree, developed over 26 years with Ireland's best junior club St Francis (including an FAI Cup final appearance in 1990) earned him some big jobs in the senior game. He spent one month at St Pat's, less than six at Bohs. Things ended badly at Bohs, with some supporters going over the top in their criticism of the manager. The 56-year-old stands by his decision to leave both clubs – and he would do it again.

"Firstly, I just realised Pat's wasn't for me at the time", he said. "I would have found it hard to work with Pat Dolan. He was stepping down after the Carlsberg Tournament that year, I was going to take charge of the Champions' League tie against Celtic. Watching from the sidelines, I just felt that it wasn't going to work out. It was a pity."

Mahon moved to Bohemians at the behest of Roddy Colline and was instrumental in the Gypsies winning the double. But Collins moved on that summer and Mahon was moved into the hot-seat. It worked initially, then fell apart. Family members were subjected to personal abuse at Dalymount Park. Time to ship out, Mahon reasoned.

A period of reflection followed, along with some job offers in the eircom League. In the end, though, he plumped for Leinster Senior League side Belgrove. The Midas touch that had made St Francis the best amateur club returned as the Dublin club won the Division One and the Intermediate Cup. Life was good again.

Then, just as Belgrove were kicking off last season, UCD came calling. He had been a regular visitor to Belfield Park through the years, mainly because his son, Alan, was a regular in defence. Paul Doolin's departure to Drogheda at that time appeared to signal the Students' death-knell. They had accumulated 10 points from 20 games by mid-September, and relegation was a certainty. Under Mahon, they only went down on the last day. Since he has come to the club, his young side has only lost four times – the first defeat was his first game, another was against champions Shels. The start to this season has been just as consistent – even if high-profile players like John Martin and Alan Cawley have remained in the top flight.

"It's a fact of life", said Mahon. "But it makes room for others."

The UCD job has brought different challenges. Along with assistant Eddie Wallace, Mahon has secured his scholarship players for this year and they've already all played first-team football. Conor Kenna has come in from Shels, while Brian Gannon, Damien Kelly, Darren Quigley and Willie Doyle have already shown promise. Another batch of youngsters are on the way once they finish their Leaving Cert, including Dublin teenagers Gary Dickers and Darren O'Brien.

"We give young players a far better chance of progressing than Shels or Bohs", stressed Mahon. "On the pitch, we want to keep things going. I want our legacy to be a team that gets promoted and holds its own in the top flight."

He doesn't want to hang around in Division One for too long either. "The league doesn't put as much into the First Division and it shows", he stated. "There are no Richmond Parks, Tolkas or Dalymounts – but we'll get there. If I'm still managing next year, I want to be back in those venues."

Don't bet against it.

FOCUS ON – CONOR KENNA

Name – Conor Kenna

Date of birth – Dublin

Place of birth – 20th February 1982

Position – Centre-back

Joined UCD – February 2004

Signed from – Shelbourne.

UCD debut – A v. Finn Harps, 2nd April 2004.

First goal – None yet.

2004 UCD statistics – Played 9 (7 league, 2 League Cup), scored 0

Career UCD statistics (league only) – 7 games, 0 goals.

Did you know? – Before joining Shels, Conor spent three years in England with Coventry City, returning home last July. He is also an Ireland U-16, U-18 and U-19 international.



UPCOMING EVENTS

4th June – The second round of matches begins with a promotion six-pointer against second-placed Bray Wanderers in Belfield. UCD have beaten Bray twice this season, but Bray have by far the best away record in the league to bring to Belfield to face by far the best home record in the league. A win would be a massive boost for either clubs' title hopes.

11th June – Away to Athlone, with revenge for those two late goals in Belfield earlier in the season being sought! We still won that game, of course, but such has our season been that we don't have much else to seek revenge for! There's a bus going to this game for anyone interested – return price is E20 and places can be booked through the shack or by e-mail.

14th June – Away to Bohs in the League Cup.

18th June – Finn Harps are the only team to have beaten UCD this season, and as they're looking for promotion after three successive play-off defeats, this will be another six-pointer when they come to Belfield.

25th June – Away to Galway, to see that old bald man who ain't what he used to be!

There's also a game against Dundalk to be rearranged – the date for that isn't yet known; keep an eye on the below or the match programme for confirmation when it's announced.

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 267 (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.fut.ie/forums> – the UCD messageboard, which now includes match reports from all our matches this season as most of the rest of the papers don't seem to care!
- RTÉ Medium Wave and Newstalk 106, both of which offer regular eircom League commentary on Fridays.
- www.ucd.ie/~soccer, the official UCD website
- www.ucd.ie/~soccup, the unofficial website.

To unsubscribe from the UCD Supporters' Club, simply send us an e-mail at ucdafc@yahoo.ie