



UCD NEWS



The UCD FC Supporters' Club Newsletter

Issue 23

April 2006

WELCOME TO THE twenty-third issue of UCD News. In this issue, we have a profile of top scorer Paul Byrne, a look at the proposed new league format and, as usual, the Belfield Diary.

The season's well under way, and it's been an encouraging start so far. UCD are usually slow starters, so seven points from seven games – including the top four from last season – isn't bad. Pete will undoubtedly have the players focussed on doubling that tally by the end of the first round of matches.

The end of the first round of matches, however, is further away than it seems. UCD's eleventh match of the season is scheduled for the 19th of May against Dublin City away. However, Darren Quigley and Gary Dicker are once again in the Ireland U-21 squad – this time for a Euro 2008 pre-qualifying tie against Azerbaijan. Ireland play in Baku on the 11th of May and the return is in Kilkenny on the 18th, so the games against Longford at home and Dublin City away look likely to be postponed due to international call-ups. Always has a nice ring about it!

Going back to on the pitch, fourteen points from our first eleven games would work out to 42 points over the season – enough for seventh last year and only nine points off the tally which qualified us for Europe in 1999/00. However, this mightn't be enough to keep UCD in the Premier Division under controversial new plans announced (kind of) by the FAI, in which clubs are to vote in June on a plan to pick the Premier Division teams next season by ranking clubs by history, crowds, facilities, geography, marketability and, as an aside, league position. Pete Mahon has been one of the more vociferous opponents of the plan, and a sample of his views can be read on the next page! It should be noted that even if the vote is passed and UCD are relegated, there is still the option of a legal recourse to UEFA and the EU.

The U-21s are back in action as well – you could argue they started their season with a 3-2 defeat to Dundalk's first team in the League Cup recently, but they are involved now in the U-21 Shield competition – a pre-season tournament so pointless that two of the seven other teams in UCD's group have already withdrawn. The Students – national league champions two years running now – have lost 2-0 to Bray, beaten Athlone 1-0 (with a goal from 30-year old Tony McDonnell!) and drawn 1-1 with Shamrock Rovers. Updates on the competition will appear on the UCD forum on foot.ie, although it should be noted UCD came nowhere last season and still won the league, so don't use the tournament as a form guide!

BELFIELD DIARY

8th March – The League Cup First Round draw pits UCD away to Dundalk, with a tie against either Monaghan, Drogheda or the winners of the Bohs-Athlone tie to come in the Second Round.

10th March – The season gets underway...and UCD slip straight to the foot of the table with a 2-0 defeat in Derry. The performance is encouraging though. Ciarán Quinn makes his debut, while Alan Cawley and Darragh Ryan play their first games since re-signing in the pre-season.

17th March – St Pat's at home on St Patrick's Day – and the Saints score a goal in Belfield for the first time in about 725 minutes to sneak a deserved 1-0 win. The goal ends up winning TV3's Goal of the Month competition for March.

24th March – A major boost for UCD as Paul Byrne returns after nearly a year out with injury. After a thorough dressing-down from Pete Mahon after the Pat's defeat, UCD outplay Waterford in the RSC, although in the end, only Brian Shortall's goal in first-half injury-time is the difference.

27th March – Dundalk take an early lead in the League Cup First Round, but Paul Byrne equalises from 35 yards and Conor Sammon scores five minutes from time to put UCD on course for a Second Round spot in the League Cup. Then...two goals in injury-time – where have we heard that before in the League Cup?! – see UCD dumped out. For Dundalk, former UCD players Rob McAuley and Rob Dunne line out.

31st March – UCD hold the league champions at Belfield – 0-0 the score, which causes Damien Richardson to complain again about teams not lying down and losing for them. Reading manager Steve Coppell is in attendance, though contrary to press reports, it's unknown who he was scouting.

8th April – The first Saturday evening game sees UCD hammer Bray 4-1 – though in fairness, the score was harsh on the Seagulls. Paul Byrne brings his tally for UCD up to 7 goals in 13 games, while Conor Sammon also scores a brace. The result lifts UCD up to fourth in the table.

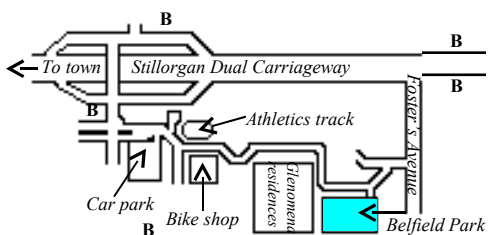
9th April – UCD's U-21s get their Shield competition off to a belated start, and with a team including Aaron McEniff, Gary Dicker, Jimmy Lee Matthews and Derek Doyle, go down 2-0 to Bray in Belfield Park.

11th April – The U-21s beat Athlone 1-0 in St Mel's Park – the game was previously postponed because of a waterlogged pitch. Tony McDonnell scores the only goal as he steps up his comeback from injury.

14th April – Drogheda United secure an undeserved 1-0 win over UCD – their fifth 1-0 win in six league games – to go four points clear at the top. Tony McDonnell makes his first appearance of the season, although Conor Kenna and Alan McNally are injured.

22nd April – A late Darren Quigley blunder gifts all three points to Shelbourne in Belfield Park. Derek Doyle scored for the Students within 60 seconds of Shels taking the lead.

WHERE IS BELFIELD PARK???



Buses to Belfield:

3	10
11	11B
17	46
46A	46B
46C	46D
7	84

B – Bus stop

UP FOR A FIGHT!

From The Mirror; 07/04/06

If and when the FAI's proposed merger with the eircom League happens, it will have serious repercussions for the one true nursery club at that level.

UCD played Dundalk in the eircom League Cup on Monday night. Four of Dundalk's players once played for the Belfield club - Aidan Lynch, Robbie McAuley, Robbie Dunne and Seán Finn. It's not a once-off statistic. For the past 27 years, some of the best players in the league have been nurtured by Pete Mahon and the managers who came before him. Paul Doolin cut his managerial teeth in Stillorgan and Martin Moran, Theo Dunne and the late Dr Tony O'Neill all guided such talents as Jason Sherlock, Ken O'Doherty, Alan O'Neill, Barry Ryan, Joe Hanrahan, Mick O'Byrne and Ciarán Martyn. Gary Dicker, currently being tracked by Charlton, is the latest to emerge in a team brimming with potential.

As Mahon says, the club is primarily about the development of young players, who are also given the opportunity to further their off-field education. UCD remain the only university team to compete in the top division of a national league in Western Europe - but now the club's hard-earned Premier Division status is under threat.

There's still no indication that there will be promotion and relegation this year - as the FAI eye up the creation of a new-look top-flight aimed at certain catchment areas. If that's the basis for invites to the party, UCD - attracting minimal crowds in a crowded market-place in the capital - would appear to have no chance.

Mahon is trying not to allow the situation affect his squad. It's difficult, but Mahon, being who he is, won't go down without a fight. In fact, he's scathing of the notion the Blazers could swipe the Students off the top table so easily, making their hugely successful scholarship system less attractive.

"Of course it affects us," he stressed. "If everyone was up front, they would say 'We don't want UCD in the league.' But it won't be done that way. With the FAI as it is, it would be difficult for UCD to be given a Premier Division slot. We don't have a support in the proper meaning of the word. We might get a couple of hundred down to watch the games. We wouldn't have a hard-core.

"But there is a lot more to it. What amazes me is that people talk about big clubs - but only one big club owns their ground, and that's Bohs. No wonder they all want to groundshare! There's so much talk about clubs moving to new grounds but I haven't seen anything yet. UCD, though, will be moving to another Belfield site next year; we have planning permission. And what I see here at UCD is the best-run club. Every club has been in financial trouble, but I don't remember seeing UCD in that position. The club's officers do things properly. Everyone is paid on time, everything is in order. Is that the case with the so-called bigger clubs? Nevertheless, we are very vulnerable."

Newly-promoted Dublin City are in the same boat, and their chief executive Ronan Seery has threatened legal action if a worst-case scenario occurs. Mahon says UCD have some of the best legal minds to call upon. They will surely follow suit.

He can see it coming. He saw it last year, when he sensed the negative attitude to the Students reaching the League Cup final and hosting it at Belfield. He claims the club was given the impression that victory in the competition, or finishing runners-up to Derry - who went on to finish second in the league - would qualify UCD for the Setanta Sports Cup.

"I was fairly sure that was what was going to happen", he recalled. "But then, in these people's minds, what would UCD bring to the Setanta Cup?"

"We showed, by hosting the final, that our organisational skills, facilities and pitch are as good as can be had here."

"...[T]his new Premier Division will be by invitation only. The least they should do is ensure there is no relegation and promotion this season.

"As Dermot Keely has said, will they wait until July to see if UCD and Dublin City are in the bottom positions and hope to get rid of us that way?"

"In the unlikely event that Shels or Derry or Cork are bottom, will they relegate any of those clubs? I don't think so."

Meanwhile, they will get on with it on the pitch.

Mahon knows, and his players know, there could be an awful lot at stake.

FOCUS ON - PAUL BYRNE

Name - Paul Byrne

Date of birth - Dublin

Place of birth - 19/05/86

Position - Striker

Joined UCD - June 2004

Signed from - Cherry Orchard

UCD debut - v Limerick (A), 16/07/04, (First Division) - won 3-0

First goal - v Sligo Rovers (H), 05/11/04 - won 2-0

2006 UCD statistics - Played 6 (5 league, 1 League Cup), scored 3 (2 league, 1 League Cup)

UCD career statistics - Played 15 (14 league, 1 League Cup), scored 7 (6 league, 1 League Cup)

Did you know? - Paul took all of five seconds to score on his Premier Division debut - running straight up the pitch after coming on as a sub to prod home a corner. It was his fourth goal for UCD in 76 minutes of first-team action.



UPCOMING EVENTS

28th April - Away to Bohs in Dalymount Park for our first away Dublin derby of the season. Usually an entertaining game between two sides who play good football; made all the more interesting by Bohs' record of four points from their first six games.

6th May - Sligo Rovers are the visitors to Belfield Park. UCD's recent record against the Bit O' Red is excellent, but Sligo have gone full-time this season, which may help them.

13th May - Home to Longford Town, another team struggling for form this season. Brothers Robbie and Johnny Martin return to Belfield Park.

19th May - The first round of matches ends (a third of the way through the season already!!) with another trip to Dalymount - this time to face Dublin City. Note that both of these games may be off due to the Ireland U-21 qualifiers against Azerbaijan.

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
- 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> - the UCD messageboard, which will continue to provide match reports all season - drop by and have your say!
- RTÉ Medium Wave and Newstalk 106, both of which offer regular eircom League commentary on Fridays.
- www.UCDsweeper.com, the official UCD website
- www.Eleven-a-side.com/ucd - A handy site for UCD news and match previews.
- www.STUCOnline.com - The Supporters' Club/fanzine website.

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