

Declan Hughes tells us why he supports the boys in blue.



I have been supporting UCD actively since 1981 but I guess they were sort of on my radar because they joined the League of Ireland in 1979, which coincided with my arrival at Belfield. I've lived on the Northside of Dublin for more than 40 years so how you may ask did I of all people end up supporting UCD. Well here's the true confession, when the CAO form arrived in early 1979 to be completed by me at my school, I chose Trinity College as my preferred option. Purely for commuting reasons. There were no Express busses back then and no DART. Travelling by train in Dublin those days was a bit like a quiet day in Mumbai. And getting to UCD from my neck of the woods involved two bus journeys totalling a minimum of 90 minutes in each direction. Anyway seemingly I drew the short straw when I was offered a place in UCD instead. I was a First Arts student at the same time that Keith Dignam, the first ever scholarship recipient, was in First Commerce and a friend of mine Ciaran McCormick was heavily involved in the Superleague. He later even managed a few first team appearances before he left and emigrated to Germany in the late 1980's.

Now like a lot of youngsters of my age bracket we were brainwashed sort of into liking English football and I took a shine to Leeds United because of a certain John Giles who in those far back days played midfield, so I adopted them when my family returned from Canada in the

early 1970's . Fast forward 10 years and Giles is now in charge of the Vancouver Whitecaps who play in the North American Soccer League every summer. Every winter from 1980 to the end of the 1982-83 season Vancouver loaned out a number of their players to UCD , and they would train with Shamrock Rovers who were then full time (and who were also being managed by Giles) train with UCD on a Saturday and play with us on a Sunday. On a Thursday afternoon in March 1981 UCD officially opened a brand new dressing room block at our old ground Belfield Park. Vancouver Whitecaps played UCD in a friendly and 9 regular UCD players lined out to face the NASL side and two guest players. One of whom is current St. Patrick's Athletic manager Liam Buckley who at the time was on the books of Shelbourne and was on trial for the Whitecaps by playing against them for UCD. The other guest player was from Chorley and his name was if I recall correctly Peter Devine. I believe he was on trial for UCD. Anyway UCD held a Vancouver Whitecaps team containing former Leeds United players from the 1970's , David Harvey, Terry Yorath, Peter Lorimer and Ray Hankin to a 1-1 draw. Also in the Vancouver squad were the young Canadians who had been playing for UCD the week before. I had attended several League of Ireland games over the previous nine years as a neutral but had never found a time I could call mine. Now as a registered student at UCD, I could get in at an affordable price, I had found my team. **Stay tuned for the next installment...**