

UCD AFC advanced to the next round of the CUFL with a 2-1 win over WIT.



UCD started and ended this Colleges and Universities Football League match well, it was the bits in between that could have cost them. As it was a Cillian Morrison goal after two minutes and a Tom O'Halloran special with four minutes left proved the difference. The game was keenly contested with both sides giving their all, Waterford losing the battle of wits when Ian Goulding was shown a straight red card for a shocking tackle on Niall Wright, meaning UCD had the upper hand heading into the last ten minutes searching for a winner.

The game was but two minutes old when Cillian Morrison closed down the visiting full back. The wily Donegal man nipped in and knicked the ball before the WIT incumbent realised he had been selected to play, put on his kit and had begun the game. There was no looking back from there as Morrison advanced on goal. It was a heavy touch that brought the next calamity for the visiting side. With the ball running away from Morrison it became a straight sprint, one which the UCD man won only to be brought down in the area by the WIT keeper. A penalty was awarded and surprisingly WIT retained their full compliment. Morrison stepped up to calmly steer the penalty home for a 1-0 lead.

In a strange twist WIT began to dominate the remainder of the first half, all 43 minutes of it. UCD appeared all at sea at the back and were lucky not to concede. It was long balls over the top and miscommunication that was proving their undoing. One long ball ended with a wayward shot from the visiting striker, from a set piece the ball fell to the WIT centre half and he struck the post with his effort. These two efforts were followed swiftly by another ball over the top that was not properly dealt with and again the chance went abegging.

At the other end UCD were having similar luck in front of goal. Conor Butler was having a lot of joy terrorising his opposite number but his team mates in attack were not making the most of his efforts.

Half time brought UCD the opportunity to regroup and this resulted in a much more solid looking outfit. Niall Wright and Butler were stretching their legs at every opportunity and attacking the

WIT defence, while Dent and Boyle began to look like they had played the game before, dominating in the air and looking tired on the floor. A combination of a poor final pass and a difficult playing surface was hampering UCD's attempts to extend their lead.

With the Belfield Students beginning to tire, WIT upped the tempo again in the hope of breaking the UCD resistance. It finally broke thanks to pressure that came from a corner. The WI winger delivered a ball into the box that was not properly dealt with and the same player that had struck the post earlier was not about to make the same mistake as he buried his effort to draw WIT back level.

A game that had been fiercely competitive to this point began to boil over as tempers and tensions flared. This flare resulted in the introduction of a Cannon as Connor replaced the injured Robbie Benson, cut down thanks to a poorly timed WIT tackle. Niall Wright locked horns with Ian Goulding in a scene reminiscent of something often seen on Wright's home away from home, the BBC, all it was missing was an Attenborough voiceover. Snarled nostrils and gnashing teeth later both players were warned and separated. It did not take long for both players to come together again and when they did Goulding was shown a straight red card for an horrendous challenge. No amount of acting talent could hide Wright's obvious pain.

With the extra man, UCD went about putting the game beyond doubt but were faced with a stubborn visiting defence intent on holding onto what they had. With ten minutes left in the game, former full time spectator turned footballer Tom O'Halloran was introduced to the fray. Timmy Molloy and Robbie Murray began to dominate the midfield and created chances almost at will. But last ditch challenges were keeping UCD at bay and the second goal continued to be elusive.

With four minutes left on the clock UCD won a free kick. O'Halloran, sensing his time to shine and an opportunity to continue his remarkable goalscoring run in this competition, stepped up to deliver quality at a time when it had never been needed more. He placed the ball calmly on the sodden turf, took a step or two away from the ball, flicked a bead of sweat from his eye and thought about where he wanted to place the ball. "The corridor of uncertainty, my favourite corridor" he undoubtedly thought as he sent a wicked effort towards the area of the goal where attackers, defenders and keeper often collide. The ball beat all and as the keeper stood motionless expecting a touch, O'Halloran had his goal and UCD had their win as the ball nestled in the back of the net.

UCD AFC: Corbett, Dent, Wright, Boyle, Butler, Benson (Cannon), Murray, Molloy, Morrison, Belhout (O'Halloran), Clarke