

UCD 2-1 DIT Colleges and Universities Football League Final Tolka Park 24 February 2010 By Brian de Salvo



Pre-match pasta for DIT at Bertie's favourite hostelry, Fagans of Drumcondra. Scrambled eggs for the Students at the Skylon. Congratulations to both chefs. The feast that followed was worthy of a cup final, full of passion, drama, commitment and good football on a rain soaked surface that must have been like treacle under foot. How would cramped legs fare in extra time? We were about to discover when a steeping long distance lob from Robbie Creevy two minutes after the regulation ninety secured the trophy for UCD. Great goal or flukey finish? I suspect the verdict depends upon which colours you wear. Certainly it was a few moments after the ball nestled into the net for even the scorer to realise that he'd written finis to a memorable evening. With Paul Corry, named in the Indo as one of the ten players to watch in the forthcoming Premier season, fit to take his place as playmaker alongside Ger Barron, Gareth Matthews, Peter McMahon, David McMillan and match winner Creevy this was a UCD line up with a League of Ireland look. DIT responded with five across midfield and relentless commitment. It was furious from the off with Blues skipper Leahy having to look sharp to head the ball back to his keeper under pressure. Then Gareth Matthews showed excellent close control to beat three opponents who converged on him and supplied Falconer to set up McMahon who dragged his shot across goal. After ten minutes a fumble stumble by DIT keeper Craig Hyland on the edge of his area showed that the pace and bounce of the ball on the dead surface was an additional hazard. There was a suspicion that he might have handled outside the box but after an endless moment he was able to reclaim the ball within his domain and the danger passed. At the other end Barron was lightning off his line to kick clear. On the quarter hour McMillan's free kick glanced the outside of Hyland's right post but a breathless minute later DIT came closer with a fierce drive from a corner on the right whacked against the underside of Barron's crossbar and scrambled to safety. Now Houston forces a corner on his right from which Hyland makes a stunning catch under pressure leaving Kelly flattened in the mud in the process. There was plenty of action for the notebook. And after nineteen minutes a goal too, a fine goal originating in UCD's half and created with flowing football that culminated with McMahon ghosting past Niall Flynn and slipping the ball under the advancing keeper. It looked as though the Students sophisticated football might now overwhelm determined opponents. It was twenty four minutes before UCD gained a first free kick, DIT had notched up six by then, a tribute to the application with which they hustled their opponents. But was this the turning point? Not a bit. The response from DIT was such that, with Corry increasingly crowded out in midfield, manager McNally was forced to change tack at the interval, switching from the 4-3-3 that had served him well early on

to 4-4-2. By then the Techies were level, thanks to a blistering drive from Craig McDonnell from the edge of the area into the roof of Barron's net. The half time reshuffle saw McMahon and David McMillan up front for UCD with Stephen Doyle coming in for Falconer to partner Creevy and Corry on the left flank of midfield until injury forced him off. Nine minutes into the second period Flynn did well to block McMillan's fierce drive at point blank range and then a mistake from Michael O'Connor conceded a corner to UCD on the right. From the flag kick the ball slipped through the leaping Hyland's hands but his goal survived a frantic scramble in a packed penalty area. Despite this UCD activity there was never a time within the regulation second period of forty five minutes when DIT could not have snatched a winner and there was plenty of work for Barron. Hyland was the busier keeper, however, and his evening was a combination of fine goalkeeping with a the odd moment of good fortune, although he will count himself unfortunate not to have gained a free kick when with ten minutes left he appeared to be forced off a long ball under his bar. But his goal survived anyway.



If anything the tempo actually increased as relentless commitment somehow stimulated weary legs and DIT, who made no substitutions in the regulation ninety minutes looked for extra time and the possibility of penalties. Hyland seemed to have ensured that option with a frighteningly brave dive at the feet of an equally determined Houston that left both players injured. Then came Creevy's winner, the agony and the ecstasy, and Michael Leahy took the trophy from Packie Bonner to brandish it aloft. If this is third level soccer, bring it on! UCD: 1 Ger Barron; 2 Gareth Matthews, 5 Michael Leahy, 4 Michael Kelly (15 James Timmons 83), 3 David O'Connor; 8 Robbie Creevy, 6 Paul Corry, 7 Peter McMahon; 10 David McMillan, 9 Gavin Falconer (16 Stephen Doyle h/t (17 Samir Bulhout 74), 11 Sean Houston. DIT: 1 Craig Hyland; 2 Dean Zambia, 4 Conor McMahon (capt), 5 Niall Flynn, 3 Michael O'Connor (12 Conor Costello 93); 7 Richard O'Farrell, 10 Eoin Kavanagh (15 Toheeb Adigun 93), 8 Sean Fitzgerald, 6 Craig McDonnell, 11 Stephen Roche (13 Soon 96); 9 David O'Sullivan. Referee: Dave Fisher