

Rory Keaveny looks back on his favourite Collingwood Cup.



The 2012 Collingwood Cup kicks off in Limerick on Monday and with that in mind Rory Keaveny recalls his last Collingwood Cup in Cork in 2009. The premier intervarsity tournament pits the best players in Universities from across the island of Ireland in a 4 day long knock out competition. To win it you have to be the best and beat the best with a game ever 4 days. Keavney and his UCD side of 2009 did just that.

I luckily had the privilege of captaining a winning UCD side in the 2009 Collingwood Cup in Cork. This was a spectacular experience and would say without doubt it is the best memory of my brief footballing career! We went into the side with the bones of the then UCD Eircom League team and a number of Irish University internationals on the side, myself included. We had a fantastic squad, with young aspiring stars like Mick Leahy and Robbie Creevy mixed with seasoned pros like Philip Bourke and Marc Whelan. So the pressure was certainly on. It had been a number of years since UCD won the tournament and hopes were high.

The squad assembled and went down to Cork and from the moment we stepped on the bus the professional standards expected were there for all to see. The first hotel we stayed in wasn't up to par so our management team, led by Maccer led us to a far better hotel and that set the tone.

We had a seriously tough run of games up to the final and every member of our squad was thoroughly used. The toll of playing 4 games in 4 days with extra time in two of those speaks for itself.

I was brought through the tournament on the back of intensive physio and intensive painkillers. We beat UUJ in the semi-final in an absolutely frantic encounter. We went 2-1 up in last min of extra time and then UUJ scored with the last kick of the game. We eased through the penalties thanks to the cool head of Mick Leahy and my calming words!

Into the final and a very tight encounter with NUI Galway was edged by a moment of sheer class by Robbie Creevy allowing me to lift the trophy. It was absolute grit, determination and pure quality from our side that won it for us. The tournament was incredibly exciting and such was the quality of football, organisation and the effort of all teams that made it absolutely memorable. The satisfaction of the booze up on the bus back to Dublin was worth the pain my limbs felt, I was on crutches for a few days after the tournament such was the toll on my legs but as I said winning the Collingwood Cup was the best football memory I have and I am very jealous of those that get to play this year.