

UCD AFC take on Templeogue United in the Final of the Gilligan Cup final.



Cup Final day is nearly upon us, 3pm on Saturday in the Golden Ball in Wayside, UCD AFC's Leinster Senior League Sunday side take on Templeogue in the Final of the Gilligan Cup.

It has been an all conquering season so far for this talented group of current students and graduates. With some astounding team performances, moment's of individual brilliance and fantastic memories behind them already it is time to look back over the season as they prepare for one last push for silverware in the 2010/11 season.

The team is lead by Graduate Niall Daly and it was against UCD's "Graduate Team" Pegasus that he had his most memorable moment of the year. With the team already down to ten men following Steve Dillon's decision to open a can of expletive in the general direction of the referee, one muttered F word and the referee's expert hearing, Daly and UCD knew they were in for a tight night at the office. With the clock ticking towards ninety, Daly chased a long ball up the line, shrugged off the challenge of his nearest defender and looped a shot over the stranded keeper. UCD had a lead and more importantly another three points that would be added to the eventual haul of 20 wins in 26 games. Stiofain Sexton and Brian O'Brolchain stepped into the great man's boots and performed just as well. Fresher Sexton was always on the prowl looking for opportunities to score. Second year O'Brolchain refused to allow defenders time on the ball and once in the box, the outcome always rippled the net.

When it comes to Barmy decisions on a football pitch UCD's defence has plenty to step up to the mark, that they are continuously chosen to face the next opposition means they must be doing something right. Dan Lehane's late season injury robbed UCD of moments of magic on the edge of his own box. One goal to the good against a resurgent Whitehall side with 3 minutes to go and Dan Lehane fakes to clear and slips the ball between his opponent's legs. The well known Lehane smirk was out to play as he skipped off with the ball and UCD saw out another victory.

When it comes to nutmegs there is no better man than UCD's right back and part time astronaut Brian O'Reilly. Loving nothing more than an over eager winger closing him down he regularly makes use of the "petit pont" as the French say, to embarrass his opponents and move up the field. He has become expert at heart stopping moments none more so than in the semi final of the Gilligan Cup. With the scores even in the penalty shoot out, O'Reilly steamed up to the ball as if to blast it, before chipping it down the middle as the keeper dove to one side. Genius.

Method to their madness has seen UCD concede a paltry 19 goals in league competition. Marshalled by the irrepressible Steve Dillon, the UCD backline has performed incredibly no matter who has filled the positions, be it Brian McFlynn or Cormac O'Brolchain, Dan Lehane or Hugh Davey, Brian O'Reilly or John Bourke.

Connor McGroarty's form in UCD's goal justified his decision last summer to stay at home and jump over progressively big boxes instead of going abroad with friends. Not only has his ability to imitate Mario and Luigi improved, he now boasts an impressive clean sheet record in one of Leinster Senior League's most competitive divisions. His heartbreaking performance against Sacred Heart is a stand out performance from a stunning season. All this in the shadow of the returning Sean Coffey, likened to WWE's Undertaker in stature and presence, has clearly spurred UCD's number one on. Coffey performed heroics when called upon in the run in, leaving his goal at one stage to effect a headed clearance that if missed would have certainly cost UCD dear.

UCD's midfield is packed with experience and more importantly winners. From players who have seen it all before and then some to players who have not been around the block as many times but have picked up as many medals. James Timmons knows every blade of grass on LSL's football fields intimately before the first half is up but he showed on several occasions he has everything in his locker. Timmons' goal haul is as impressive as his left foot volley from all of 30 yards that left one crossbar in Rathcoole thanking its lucky stars it was an inanimate object and as a result did not have feelings.

Ronan Lynagh and Kieran Harte acted as the lieutenants in UCD's midfield. Enforcer Harte, never shirking a challenge and twinkle toed Lynagh popping up in the box on several occasions to put his name on the score sheet, ensured UCD's midfield was a busy busy place. Eoin Roche and Marc Whelan grabbed the eye on the wings with Roche's step overs still the envy of the league. Whelan revelled in his first season back from injury only to confuse the matter. With

Michael Whelan gaining his foothole in the UCD line up towards the end of the season it was always a case of seeing double, on the team sheet at least. Seeing double moved to the score sheet also as Marc refused to score a hatrick, two goals were enough on many an occasion. Rumours of an arrangement with Diarmuid McNally intensified after McNally grudgingly lost another match ball to a Ronan Lynagh hat trick.

Moment's of magic one and all. But it does not stop there, with one more game to be played and one more cup to be one you can be sure that when the final whistle goes on Saturday afternoon, UCD will have provided plenty to be cheerful in 90 minutes; win or lose.

UCD AFC v Templeogue, Golden Ball, Wayside, 3pm KO