

UCD AFC were beaten by St Francis in the Noel Ryan Cup.

## Noel Ryan Cup



UCD AFC exited the Noel Ryan cup on Sunday following a 3-1 defeat to St Francis. UCD were two nil down before Kieran Harte stepped up to drag UCD back into the game from the penalty spot. It was not enough and as UCD poured forward in search of an equaliser they were hit on the break and conceded a third goal.

The game began in frantic fashion with both sides looking to impose themselves on the game. St Francis and UCD battle for dominance in the middle of the park but neither side was willing to give up an inch.

Disaster struck for The Students midway through the first half. James Timmons made what

looked like a perfect recovery tackle inside the box and cleared the ball to safety, the referee was happy with the challenge, the linesman was not. A case of too many cooks spoiling the broth as the linesman insisted a penalty should be awarded and it came to pass. The St Francis chosen one made no mistake from the spot. UCD found themselves one goal in arrears unjustly.

UCD were stirred into life by this injustice and brought the game to their visitors. Eoin Roche and Steve Dillon had chances to drag UCD back into the game. Roche collected a perfect ball from Michael Whelan at the back post but smashed his effort across the goal rather than at it, Dillon was very unlucky not to find the back of the net from a corner.

UCD began the second half with three substitutions and moved to a 3-5-2 formation. This had an immediate effect as UCD slipped into their attacking gears much quicker and looked far more dangerous. A momentary lapse in concentration undid this good work. The defence switched off at a throw in and as the ball made its way to the UCD six yard box UCD failed to clear and St Francis' striker pounced to put UCD further behind.

UCD reduced the margin ten minutes later. The impressive Stiofain Sexton caused commotion in the box and was eventually brought to earth. The referee pointed to the penalty spot and Kieran Harte made no mistake to give The Students a glimmer of hope. The game was becoming more and more competitive and it threatened to boil over as Kieran Harte was pole axed in the centre of midfield. The referee flashed a red card and UCD had a man advantage going into the last 20 minutes of the game.

What followed was ten minutes of glorious chances as the St Francis goal appeared to lead a charmed life. Sexton again was at the heart of it. A brilliant header was expertly saved and a shot from outside the box was tipped around the post. Brian McDonald and Hugh Davey were combining well on the left hand side as UCD pushed for the equaliser that appeared to be on the horizon. It was fading slowly as time ticked away. As if proof that this was not going to be UCD's day, Michael Whelan beat a couple of players before shooting from outside the box, his effort beat the keeper but not the post and the ball somehow stayed out.

UCD were caught on the break as a long ball forward caused confusion and John Kelly in the UCD goal was forced to bring the advancing striker to the ground for another penalty. St Francis' 100% record from the spot was preserved and with that their place in the next round.

**UCD AFC:** Kelly, O'Reilly, Davey, Dillon, Curtin (Lynagh), Timmons, Harte, Buckley (Sexton), Whelan, Campion, Roche (McDonald)