

Hanley is the match winner as UCD pick up another three points.

LEINSTER SENIOR LEAGUE  
SATURDAY MAJOR



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UCD AFC began this game with the backs against the wall as they came under pressure early from a home side intent on playing a direct style of football on a pitch that, if rumours were to be believed, has only felt the touch of ball on its surface at the beginning of either half. The game turned on the sending off of UCD's Canon, whose short fuse was lit following an altercation and the resulting explosion saw red flash from the referees pocket. Ultimately this brought out the best in the Belfield side and Niall Hanley took one of many chances that fell UCD's way to pick up another valuable three points in the top Saturday division.

Canon was the picture of trouble from the off as he was a constant thorn in Firhouse's side. Time and again he ventured down the left to great effect, whipping balls into the box for his hungry team mates to attack. He was the focal point of UCD's attack and soon became the focal point of the home side's defenders as he was rough housed until he snapped. When he did the referee was on hand to give him his marching orders and common intelligence would say the game would swing against The Students.

In fact the opposite was the case as Firhouse abandoned their direct style in favour of an attempt to play the ball out from the back. This invited the UCD side to close down at a ferocious pace and with that came the best of UCD's chances. The best example of this hunting in packs bearing fruit was when Ronan Crean nicked the ball off the centre back and sent John Naughton careering through on goal with an exquisite pass. Naughton's shot was blistering but ultimately stung the palms of the keeper as he diverted it to safety.

An audible sigh of relief swept across the pitch as Firhouse realised they had experienced a lucky escape. Instead of concentrating on their good fortune they would have been well advised to pay more attention to the resulting corner. Ronan Lynagh, well used to innovation, produced a stunning corner kick that was begging to be attacked. Attacked it was as Limerick's long leg

came through the rucus to poke home and Hanley wheeled away in celebration.

Up front UCD were making a name for themselves as they looked to push further in front as the second half began. At the back it was all Niall Corbett as he produced stunning save after stunning save to keep the Boys in Blue in the game. It was an onslaught as Firhouse looked to batter their way back into the game but UCD, with a team peppered with greying wise heads, showed plenty of experience to weather attacking storm after attacking storm.

Corner kicks appeared to be the biggest threat to UCD's lead and with 8 minutes remaining it looked like they had finally been undone. A clever delivery dropped right in the centre of the UCD box and it was all hands on deck as The Students scrambled to clear. Their tiring limbs could not react quick enough and out of nowhere the Firhouse striker smashed a ball towards the bottom corner. Hearts dropped as the sinking realisation dawned that three points was about to become one. Then out of nowhere a beautiful purring sound drifted across the goal as Corbett sprung like a feline in fine fettle towards his bottom corner and his outstretched paw tucked the ball around the post.

That moment of wondrous athleticism inspired UCD's players to dig deeper and again face up the onslaught of corner kicks. Finally the ultimate whistle was blown and UCD knew they had been in a battle, a battle they had won.

**UCD AFC:** 1. Corbett, 2. Hickey, 3. Naughton, 4. Keogh, 5. Breen, 6. Murray, 7. Crean, 8. Fallon, 9. Canon, 10. Hanley, 11. Lynagh.

Kelly, Sutton, Molumby, O'Reilly, Suleiman, Feeney, Boland