

UCD moved into the final of the Harding Cup following a 5-2 victory over Mary Immaculate. BRIATHAR DÉ



UCD moved into the final of the Harding Cup for the second year in a row following a demolition of Mary Immaculate. UCD entered the game having already played two extremely competitive games while Mary I were taking their bow in this year's competition following Jordanstown's late drop out. The Belfield Students did not let this upset their progress as they strolled into the final.

UCD's fluency in attack was hindered by the poor surface but once the Dublin Fresher's got to grips with the pitch it was one way traffic. Stiofain Sexton was the first to threaten the Mary I goal with a snap shot that thrashed against the post before bouncing to safety. That early effort was a taste of what was to come. Cillian Morrison gathered a ball forward from defence, turned his man, before beating two more would be challengers. A neat ball slipped into the path of Sexton invited a cool finish and he duly obliged.

With the deadlock broken UCD settled into their usual attacking style. John Finnegan in the UCD goal fired an inch perfect ball upfield to Darren Muldowney who did not have to be asked twice to stretch his legs. With the defender in his wake, Muldowney picked his spot and fired the ball past the Mary I keeper.

UCD were starting to dominate proceedings with Cillian Morrison directing traffic expertly. His close control combined with intelligent passing brought his teammates into the game and further misery on the already suffering opposition defence. Shortly before half time UCD had a third goal. Niall Hanley and Thomas O'Brien exchanged passes before Hanley lifted a ball towards Alan Sutton. The tall striker flicked the ball forward to Muldowney who did not hesitate before grabbing his second goal of the game.

Mary Immaculate upped their game in the second half and tried to intimidate UCD out of their stride. This aggressive tactic left open spaces behind their back four which UCD were more than happy to exploit. Tristan Dent dropped a ball over the defence and O'Brien ran onto it, skipping past his defender before crossing for Sutton to head past the keeper for number four.

Credit to Mary I, they never gave up and a combination of hard work and UCD's growing complacency delivered two quick fire goals. The first arrived as they took advantage of a through ball with a smart finish, not long later the deficit had been reduced further when confusion in the UCD box following a free kick saw them concede again.

UCD added to their total to put the game well out of reach when Declan Horlick, on as a sub, gathered Alan Sutton's clever flick before finishing smartly.

Surprise packet of the tournament, NUI Maynooth, await UCD in the final following a 1-0 win over UCC.

UCD: Finnegan, Westman, Dent, Keogh, Wright, Dunne (Ogunfowora), O'Brien, Hanley (Horlick), Muldowney, Sexton (O'Halloran), Morrison (Sutton)