

An Focal

In Focus:

All different,
all equal



Sport: Ladies rugby claim
victory over Gardaí

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Tuesday

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FREE

SU calls for security increase after break-ins

Katie Harrington

A NUMBER of people have been brought into to custody at Henry Street Garda Station after up to twenty cars in Cappavilla village and the Foundation Building car park were broken into on St Valentine's weekend.

In what has been described by security officials as "mindless acts of vandalism", the thieves mainly targeted older cars which were unlikely to have an alarm system.

After overlooking items such as I-pods which were left in the cars and making no attempt to steal the

cars themselves, Gardaí believe they were primarily looking for cash.

Sgt Ollie Kennedy, a Castletroy Community Garda said, "Persons have been arrested in connection with the investigation; the investigation is ongoing but we are not looking for anyone else in relation to the crimes."

The suspects are believed to be known to the Gardaí.

Sgt Kennedy advised students not to leave items such as suitcases, laptops or wallets visible in cars as this increases the likelihood of being targeted. He also urged students to come forwards with any

information they may have to Henry St Garda Station on 061-212400.

UL security, who patrol the student villages at night, said that following their patrol at around 2.30am – around the time students were returning from nightclubs – the break-ins took place between 3am and 4am.

Asked how regularly they patrol the villages, a Federal Security spokesman stated that a full security sweep of campus takes thirty-five minutes and that while they attempt to patrol every hour they do not want to do so religiously on the hour as this will only give potential

thieves a clearer idea of when security are not around.

The incidents were described as "smash and grab" which would have taken a very short amount of time.

While it is believed that CCTV cameras installed last year helped with identifying and arresting the suspects, security have expressed the view that it has not aided as a deterrent and that nothing short of a 24 hour guard in each village would deter criminals.

Security in the student villages has been increased as a precaution, but this is not seen as sustainable in the long term for financial reasons.

SU Welfare Officer Caitríona

McGrattan stressed the importance of safety in on campus villages, advising students not to assume they are safer there then they would be off-campus.

She said, "It's important to remain as safety-conscious in on-campus accommodation as you would in your own home or somewhere off-campus. We encourage students to keep doors and windows locked, and not to leave valuables visible in cars."

SU President, Pa O'Brien, strongly criticised Plassey Campus Centre, who run the student villages, for not doing enough to protect students living on campus from

such crimes.

"This is a very serious situation and I'm delighted the people doing it were caught. I think the onus has to fall on PCC and Federal Security to increase patrols and offer the students the protection they deserve.

"Students are paying very large sums to live on campus so they deserve to have secure car parking. We have a very open campus here which means it can't be completely secured, but incidents like this show that PCC need to do more to protect their customers."

The SU has advised students to report any crimes or any suspicious activity they come across immediately to Security on 061-213446 and to the Gardaí on 061-212400.

Students attempt to stop the shafting

Aoife Ní Raghallaigh
News Editor

ON WEDNESDAY of Week 4, ULSU held a successful protest to highlight student dissatisfaction at unpaid and irrelevant Co-Operative Education placements. The protest was organised following continual complaints from students, particular those in the Health Science and Education Departments.

Campaigners and protesters dressed in yellow t-shirts which proclaimed, "Let's stop the shafting" asked students to fill in generic letters explaining their frustration with the current placement system. These letters were then presented to the Dean of Education and Health Sciences, Professor Mary O'Sullivan.

Speaking at the protest Aoife

Finnerty, Equality Officer, explained that the protest "is a testament to the fact that students aren't pleased with the system that's in place at the moment.

"There is obvious dissatisfaction, particularly with nurses and teachers."

Student teachers, who are due to begin teaching practice this week, often spend upwards of €300 developing lesson plans before they begin their placement. They are then faced with an unpaid position, yet they are still expected to pay for accommodation, food and transport costs where they arise.

Student nurses are also aggravated by the placement system. Aisling

Fitzgerald, 1st year General Nursing and Mairéad O'Connor, 2nd General Nursing, also said, "It's ridiculous that we don't get paid because we're doing as much as other nurses and I think we should be paid for our efforts".

Students are particularly angry at a rumour which claims that payment for 4th year student nurses is due be reduced. At present, 4th year Nursing students receive payment equal to 80 per cent of a senior staff nurse's wage. It is now rumoured that will this be reduced, possibly to nothing.

Speaking at the protest ULSU Education Officer, Eamonn Gardiner, stated that the Co-Operative Education office should start planning student placements in 1st year. He believes that a file should be created as soon a student begins their degree and that information regarding QCA and placements would be added to it over time.

He also stated that in addition to this file, staff from the Co-Op office should be meeting with students regularly from first year onwards.

Mr Gardiner went on to explain that the Co-Op placement was the

original reason that a UL degree lasts for four years. It was initially believed that a practical placement led to a more valuable degree, and thus increased employment opportunities for UL graduates.

Mr Gardiner said, "This year's UL degrees are not worth as much as they were 10 years ago because of irrelevant placements. This is unacceptable especially as employers are beginning to examine degrees more extensively."

Mr Gardiner also explained that a UL student should not be required to spend six months doing irrelevant

modules because early planning was not done with regard to their Co-Op placement.

He stated that Mary Sweeney, Head of Cooperative Education and Careers Division, has explained that the issues surrounding placements are not due to lack of staffing or funding.

The Education Officer felt that the issue lies with there not being enough advanced planning.

The Students' Union will continue to take on board any issues that students may have with their placements.



Students sign the letters to University faculty to air their grievances with the placement system

An Focal Digest

Shorts

To commemorate the 25 year Paudí O’Sé Gaelic Football Festival which is held in Dingle every year, the University of Limerick’s very own UL Vikings will be involved in what will no doubt be one of the highlights of their season , a mouth – watering clash with the renowned Philadelphia Blue Flame Football team.

Philadelphia Blue Flame Football team is made up of members of the Philadelphia Fire and Police Departments and is widely regarded as one of America’s best semi – professional football teams. The game will be held in the Dingle Rugby Grounds on Saturday, 28 February. The game is due to kick off at 2pm.

A prayer for Lent

Most people don’t find praying particularly easy, but if you feel that Lent may be a good time to make a little extra effort perhaps our weekly session of prayer in the style of Taizè might be helpful.

Taizè is a village in France where young people of all Christian denominations gather in huge numbers to pray. This gentle, relaxing way of praying uses a lot of easy-to-learn chants in a cosy, candle-lit setting. Why not give it a try?

Where: Contemplative Centre (opposite SU)

When: Wednesdays: 6pm

Duration: 30min.

Fair Trade Coffee Morning

Come in for a free cup of Fair Trade coffee or tea and be in with a chance to win a hamper of Fair Trade goodies!

Tuesday, 3 March, 10am to 12.30pm in Teach Fáilte (beside the bookshop)

Ash Wednesday

Mass including distribution of ashes in the local Parish Church (near the East gate):

7.50am; 10.00am; 1.05pm; 7.30pm

OR:

A short service including distribution of Ashes:

3pm in the Contemplative Centre (opposite the SU)

In Words

“UL today is just a siege of yellow and red...you’d swear you were in a yellow and red county.”

SU Faculties Officer Dave Ryan commenting on the placement protest.

“There are sperm but no Willie.”

A comment heard during the rally in the SU courtyard on Monday of week 4 following the no-show of Minister of Defence Willie O’Dea, given that there were two male students dressed up in sperm costumes for the occasion.

*“I’ve got good news and bad news, folks. The bad news is that Willie O’Dea has decided not to try and sneak on campus today. The good news is that this means we are making an impact. It means we are getting the message through to this government that we are not ***** happy. We won’t sit here and take this assault on our existence.”*

SU President Pa O’Brien speaks to the crowd at the anti-fees rally in week 4.

“They wouldn’t just be rumours...there would be a flock of inflatable sheep with your name on them.”

SU Ents contractor Keith Pigott to SU Communications Officer Aoife Breen after she raised her concerns about the rumours that might arise when a large package of inflatable sheep arrive...the sheep were purely for the promotion of the SU Union General Meeting – honest.



Patricia Murphy, 2nd Year Digital Media & Design, Mairéad O’Connell, 2nd Year General Nursing, Olivia Kennedy, 2nd Year DMD, Dana Madigan, 3rd Year Electronic Engineering and Eamon Finn, 2nd Year DMD, line up in protest against UL’s unfair placements on Wednesday of week 4, 18 February, 2009.



ULTV Co-President Louise McCormack relishes in wetting fellow member Laura Kerin during the society’s oil wrestling fundraiser in week 3.

In Figures

42

The number who attended this year’s class reps’ training in NUI, Galway, at the end of week 2.

340

The final figure raised by Drama Soc for the sale of the First Year Rep, Dee Wilson, in their slave auction in week 3. She’s worth more than Pa!

1970s

The decade that the Stables is adopting for its Abbaesque theme night in week 6. Tuesday, 3 March; be there.

2000

The number of Shag packs distributed throughout the campus during the welfare office’s Shag Week campaign.

2.7 million

The number of deleted mail items on the UL servers that was partially the problem in the restoration of the email service following its crash on Wednesday of week 2.

Sperm but no Willie

Katie Harrington & Aoife Breen

DESPITE A no-show from the Minister for Defence Willie O’Dea on campus on Monday of week 4 (16 February), two costumed sperm held placards asking the local TD to “stop screwing us” and to “protect us from inflation” in opposition to the reintroduction to third level fees.

The representative was expected to make an appearance on campus to launch the AMAI Fellowship in the History of Urban Government but information that Minister O’Dea had cancelled his engagement with the Department of History was only made known to the SU organisers an hour prior to the planned protest and an sabbatical decision was taken to hold a rally instead in the SU courtyard.

As part of their campaign not to let any government minister come on campus unimpeded, the SU had originally planned for a march from

the courtyard to Plassey House where the launch was being launched.

SU President Pa O’Brien assured the hundred-strong crowd gathered in front of the Students’ Union building that, “We’re not done with Willy.”

Mr O’Brien told students that, “We’re not finished with him at all. We will still deliver him a letter asking him as the most senior member of Government in the area whether he gives a s*** about us.

“We’ll ask him to come and speak to us and justify what his Government intends to do.”

President Pa O’Brien made a speech on behalf of the Students’ Union once again expressing the anger of students who feel cheated by the reintroduction of fees.

He criticised the Government on the basis of the current economic climate.

“The Government believes that we aren’t worth it. They think they

can turn around this economy without an educated workforce.

“They think that by barring the way to education at a time when we need it most that they will solve our problems.

“Well, do you know what I think? I think they’re...wrong.”

The SU leader also remarked on the 67 per cent increase in registration fees which will come into force by the next academic year

in September and condemned the decision to direct county councils not to supplement the grant to cover this increase.

Ann Katrin Orr represented the FEE (Free Education for Everyone) group who are also campaigning against the reintroduction of third level fees.

A student dressed up as the Minister for Defence was then locked into the stocks and pelted with wet

sponges by students angry at the thought of the return of fees.

There is a belief that Minister O’Dea may have decided to cancel his appearance at the event in the aftermath of skirmishes between students and politicians such as former Taoiseach Bertie Ahern and Minister Eamon O’Cuiv at FEE-organised protests in NUIG.

Students’ Union President Pa O’Brien expressed disappointment

that Minister O’Dea failed to appear on campus.

“I don’t know why Willie didn’t show. He was booked in to open a University collection so I imagine they are quite disappointed too.”

“It’s not like Willie to avoid confrontation but we were there to make our point peacefully – that being that fees and the barring of access to education is a ludicrous policy to follow at this time.”



A disgruntled Willie in the stocks: First year Economics & Sociology student Tom Moore takes the pain for the absentee Minister

New shop for north campus

Jason Kennedy

A NEW shop will open in Cappavilla Student Village, in the Irish Concert Orchestra building, next September. The shop will contain a deli, a coffee stand, and a place to sit down and eat. It is expected to have similar opening hours to Spar and is not likely to be open on weekends.

The shop will be bigger than the shop in Dromroe Village, but smaller than the main shop in the Students’ Centre.

It will service the 500 residents of Cappavilla, students in the nearby Health Science building, as well as students who will be using the proposed new buildings on the North side of the campus in years to come.

Students’ Union President, Pa O’Brien said that the shop will be a valuable benefit to students in that area.

“Our main aim is to get variety and value for students on campus.

“I feel that the shop is opening at just the right time, as Cappavilla is the newest of the five on-campus villages and has already shown huge potential.”

Mr O’Brien added that the main aim of the shop was to service students and not solely to make money, Manager of Campus Life Services, John O’Rourke confirmed that the

shop is currently in its design stage.

“We’re currently working on the unit within the ICO and we’re hoping for an opening in September.

“I hope this shop will be a valued asset to the large community that has developed on that side of the campus.”

Both Mr O’Rourke and Mr O’Brien feel that the shop will be successful, despite the closure of Kilmurry shop a number of years ago.

“The North side of the campus is a developing area, and we will be seeing a large influx of students in a number of years” Mr O’Rourke said.

Many student residents, who have reapplied to live in Cappavilla next year say they are looking forward to having access to the Shop.

Eadaoin Phelan, a Digital Media Design, student says she will definitely be using the shop.

“The distance for the Spar shop is the worst thing about living here. If

all I wanted was a carton of milk, I’d have to walk for 20 minutes to get it. The shop will just be brilliant.”

Journalism and New Media student, Aisling Hussey agrees with this.

“If I wanted to buy something nice, I’d be a bit lazy and just got to the common room and get sweets out of the vending machine. The shop might stop me constantly snacking on rubbish food.”

Law student, Orlaith Murphy also has high hopes for the shop.

“I hope that it’s nearly as good as the Spar shop. I spend most of my day on campus and would use that shop a lot. It would be very to have a shop like that near where I live.”

Cappavilla, which officially opened in 2006, is situated on the highest point on campus. It is accessed from the main campus via the Living Bridge.

Students wishing to live in Cappavilla next year should get their application forms in as soon as possible.

“...and we will be seeing a large influx of students in a number of years”

Obstructive parking blocks emergency access

Aoife Breen Editor

RESIDENTS IN College Court have expressed grave concerns about the increasing parking problem in the area which prevented an emergency vehicle gaining access to a house and are appealing to staff and students to consider their parking options more carefully.

Following an incident last semester where illegally parked cars blocked an ambulance from reaching a house, residents in the estate and Limerick County Council are appealing to drivers to ensure that their cars are not parked in a way that would cause an obstruction and potentially block a road.

Triona Collins, a representative

from Limerick County Council, told the University’s Community Forum at a meeting last semester that haphazard parking in the area was impeding access to houses for emergency vehicles. She reiterated her concerns at the first Forum meeting of this semester in an attempt to highlight the ongoing issue.

A Garda representative commented that while physical parking tickets are no longer issued, drivers are still penalised for illegal parking. Instead of dockets, licence plate numbers are taken and processed. The owner will receive notification of a fine three days later in the post.

The issue of parking on campus is an ongoing complaint from staff and students alike. However, John

O’Rourke, manager of Campus Life Services, pointed out that the new Western car park on campus, near to Thomond Bridge, is “probably the same distance to most buildings on campus as parking in College Court” and also noted that it was rarely, if ever, full.

Pa O’Brien, SU President, said, “It’s vital that people park their cars responsibly. Minutes matter when it comes to saving someone’s life. The fear would be that if an ambulance had to gain access to a serious incident that the time lost would mean a life lost.”

College Court is the closest private residential area to the campus, located behind the Schuman and Kemmy Business School buildings.

Make your mark on the wall

Caitríona McGrattan

What is the number one stereotype that people use to define you that drives you berserk? Let us know by writing it on the Wall during Equality Week 2009.

Are you gay but hate all things camp? Are you a mature student who loves to dance about to Ber in the Satbles every Thursday night? Are you from Kerry but have an aversion to Gaelic Football? Stereotypes can often be

the backbone of our discriminating behaviour and so we are asking the UL campus to write all the unfounded generalisations people make about them on the equality week Wall. You can write any stereotype you want on the wall.

The Wall will be constructed at the beginning of Equality Week (week six) and will remain in the SU courtyard for the entire week so that everyone, students and staff alike, will have the opportunity to write

the one stereotype that irritates them the most. The Wall will be dismantled at the end of the week into several pieces and will be displayed through campus. We hope by naming the offensive stereotypes and putting the show for the entire campus to see that we can in some way challenge the generalisations!

For more information on the Wall or any other aspect of Equality Week 2009 please contact welfare@ulsu.ie or drop into the welfare office.

Students' Union General Meeting wednesday, week 5 jean monnet theatre, 2pm

you'd be maaaaaad to miss it!

come along and meet the rest of
the flock at the union general meeting



fees air your views on third level tuition fees



Follow Paaaaaaa to the UGM!

THE ECOLOGY FOUNDATION,

in association with **Siemens Ireland**, is presenting a series of lectures to Ireland's leading Universities on climate change and its implications for the future of society.

The lectures series is designed to inform and encourage undergraduate and graduate students to assess how they can play a role in meeting the challenge of tackling climate change. The lectures not only focus on the challenge of climate change, but also the positive role science, engineering, innovation and business can make by addressing it.

Lecture 1

Wednesday 4th March, Jean Monnet Lecture Theatre, 2.30pm

Introduced by SU President Pa O'Brien.

Climate Change - An introduction to climate change, the science behind it, the facts, and a discussion of the efforts required to meet the climate change challenge.

With climate change becoming the world's number one issue both for business and government, tomorrow's graduates will need to be aware of the opportunities and risks inherent in this new paradigm. These lectures will be of distinct value to students from all disciplines.

UL Environmental Committee

Free Wednesday afternoons feasible

Emma Hayward & Aoife Ní Raghallaigh



Student representatives lead the 2008 campaign to 'walkout' to highlight the need for free Wednesday afternoons

A RECENT consultant report by Serco, a task management company, has found that it is feasible to leave Wednesday afternoons free from classes in order to allocate time for Clubs and Societies activities.

The report, which reviewed the scheduling system used within the University, was presented to the scheduling committee in November 2008. It looked at how the current scheduling system could be improved and was mainly based on a meeting between Serco and UL representatives on 12 February, 2008.

The main issues discussed in the review include the fact that 30 per cent of the timetable has to be scheduled manually and that a number of systems are being used in addition to the Facility CMIS system to manage timetabling.

The report also looked at the training system for scheduling investigators.

The report proposed that the current scheduling structure and processed were reviewed. It also indicated that current policies may require rewriting or reengineering in order to be made suitable. It was also advised that appropriate training for staff members was provided so that they can understand any adjustments to the system.

The Serco report stated, "The central office in UL schedule a proportion of the modules run within the University within Facility CMI. The remaining modules and room scheduling is carried out by the various departments in systems other

than Facility CMIS. The fact that there are two systems to manage the rooms within the University is a situation that can only lead to extra effort and stress and probably error.

"With the appropriate security model in place, there could be an improvement in the usage of the various resources within the University as well as possible reductions in timelines for the scheduling processes."

Students have been campaigning for free Wednesday afternoons to facilitate engagement in extra curricular activities, particularly involvement with campus clubs and societies.

In 2003 a report undertaken by the SU into clubs and societies found that the main reason students gave for dropping out of a club or society was "due to academic workload".

In 2002 the University and the SU entered into campus partnership on alcohol. Under the Alcohol Policy, the University made a commitment to keep Wednesday afternoons free of classes so as to facilitate involvement in clubs and societies and allow students to find social alternatives to drinking.

Despite students fulfilling their side of the agreement by, amongst other criteria, not taking sponsorship from alcoholic drinks' companies or allowing alcohol promotions on campus, the University has failed to implement its promise to free up Wednesday afternoons.

In October 2007 University head Prof Don Barry told Class Reps'

Council that students were, "going on a wild goose chase" in their quest for free Wednesday afternoons, but promised them that, "If [he] could fix it, [he] would fix it".

In a referendum in April 2008 students voted in favour of leaving the Alcohol Policy until such a time that the University fulfilled its obligations and set a deadline of 28 November, 2008 for the commitments to be seen through.

As the University had not delivered by this date, the SU, on behalf of all students, withdrew from the campus-wide Policy and staged the 'Walk Out Wednesday' demonstration in which students were encouraged to leave their classes in favour of club or society activities to highlight the ongoing issue.

SU President Pa O'Brien explained that the SU is still "lobbying for Wednesday afternoons off".

Eamonn Gardiner, SU Education Officer, explained that the biggest advantage of free Wednesday afternoons is that it would create "room to live and grow as a community. Wednesday afternoons off means setting aside time to build up the campus community, setting aside time for forging better links with each other" as well as to allow for social interaction outside of a pub setting.

Mr Gardiner also stated that this step may not make a huge difference to the attitude of students towards alcohol, but it is a step towards improving the social interaction of student life.

UL well represented at Galway debates

Darragh Roche

SEVENTEEN MEMBERS of UL's Debating Union competed at the Irish National Law Debates at the National University of Ireland, Galway on the 13 and 14 of February.

The four teams and two judges comprised the largest contingent Deb U has sent to an external competition this academic year while the seventeenth debater spoke with a colleague from another college.

The debates were hosted by NUIG's Literary and Debating Society and Law Society and attracted teams from all over the country as well as Cambridge University in England and Macquarie University in Sydney, Australia.

The topics covered during the debates ranged from the current political situation in Israel to the right to freedom of movement across international borders and a maximum wage level.

One motion in particular proved an enjoyable challenge to the debaters when they were asked to consider giving high-level primates the same rights as human children,

which generated much lively discussion.

The final took place in NUIG's historic Aula Maxima and the motion was that this house believes that Holocaust deniers and their ilk should not be given a platform on college campuses.

The Literary and Debating Society recently invited the famous Holocaust denier David Irving to address the society.

The team from Middle Temple, Greg O'Neill and Danny P McCarthy, won the debate speaking in opposition and Greg O'Neill was named best individual speaker.

Danny P, a famous name in debating circles, announced his retirement from debating after five years and received a standing ovation from the audience.

Proposition speaker Tony Murphy also delivered a stirring speech to much applause and praise from the crowd.

The competitors were treated to St. Valentine's Day dinner and dancing while External Convenor Conor Kelly, who organised the competition, was presented with the now annual hip flask for his efforts.

PhotoSoc goes into hiding

Michael Johnson

In the coming months, UL students will get a chance to photograph and study the University's wildlife in great detail, thanks to a recent collaboration between the UL Photographic Society and the Society of Architecture.

After receiving permission from Buildings and Estates for the construction of a temporary wildlife hide, the Photographic Society members ran a competition with the School of Architecture, with the hope of coming up with a suitable design for the hide.

The hide will be placed on the banks of the River Shannon which runs through the university campus and will hopefully be in place in the near future.

The designs were judged in terms of their suitability as wildlife hides, their aesthetic qualities in relation to their surroundings, and overall cost. A great number of entries were submitted and the overall winning submission was from Sinead Stack, a UL Architecture student.

The runners up were Fionnuala Breathnach and Colin Dorgan, both also architecture

students.

The university river banks provide an excellent location for a wildlife hide, and having one on the banks will, in time, result in plenty of opportunities to observe the diverse fauna, which includes herons, kingfishers and perhaps even the occasional otter.

Advice was sought from one of Ireland's top wildlife experts, Geoff Hunt, who was extremely enthusiastic about the idea and looks forward to the establishment of the hide along the banks of the Shannon.

The placing of a wildlife hide on the river represents an opportunity to increase awareness and understanding of the animals and birds many of which may pass each day without notice.

Last semester the UL Photographic Society ran photography training classes, trips to the Burren, the Clare Glens, Kerry, an animal wildlife sanctuary and Lough Gur.

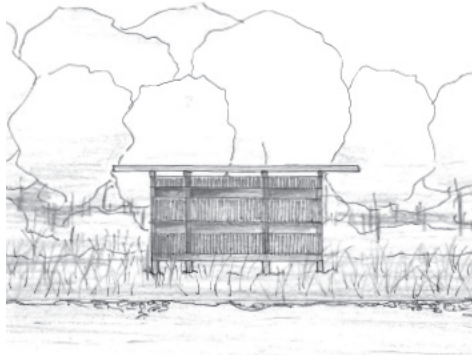
Many more events are planned for the upcoming semester, such as a photographic treasure hunt, a trip to Northern Ireland (Belfast and the Giants Causeway), whale watching and a table quiz.

In addition the society covers numerous gigs, sporting and social events, and is available to cover events for all UL clubs

and societies for a minimal cost. For more information, email photoul@gmail.com or visit www.photo.ul.ie.



Kevin Johnson, UL Photographic Society, presenting Sinead Stack with her prize.



The winning hide designed by Sinead Stack.

Slippery event for charity

Jason Kennedy

ULTV raised over €100 for charity by organising a sponsored oil wrestling event, held in the Stables Courtyard.

The event, which was held on Thursday, 12 February, was organised by the society's Trips and Events Officers, Gina O'Brien and Niall Curry.

The oil wrestling also raised money for the new society, while also enticing spectators to join.

"It was real nifty," says O'Brien, a Corkonian New Media and English student. "The wrestlers had fun, a load of people came and had a good time and we raised a lot of money for both the society and charity."

The charity money will be used to send two UL students to Ghana, to volunteer in the Padre Pio Leprosy Rehabilitation Clinic.

The wrestling took place between 2-4pm. Eight female contestants and two male contestants took part. They were: Ide Curtin, Larissa Mirtschink, Thomas Kehoe, Lorraine Breen, Gina O'Brien, Louise McCormack, Mark Moody, Laura Kerin, Alana Sheridan and Eileen Shanahan.

Prior to the event, all the wrestlers were given a safety briefing by the

society's safety officers.

The wrestling was judged by Students' Union President, Pa O'Brien, alongside Paddy Rockett and Ailbhe Kirwin. The society's treasurer, Shane O'Callaghan, also acted as referee for the event. Music was provided by Eoghan O'Brien.

The final of the women's oil wrestling was between Louise McCormack and Laura Kerin. Louise emerged as the winner, while Mark Moody won the men's match.

O'Brien also showed her appreciation to all involved after the event.

"I want to thank the wrestlers, I want to thank the staff in the Stables, I want to thank the judges, the DJ and everyone else who kept us sane while organising it."

Welfare Officer, Caitríona McGrattan also commented on the money raised for the charity,

"The event raised a lot of money and we were all pleasantly surprised at the number of people that stayed around for the duration of the wrestling.

"It was a great success and we'll definitely be doing it again for RAG week."

Snowdrops for charity

Caitríona McGrattan

SNOWDROPS ARE on sale in various locations across campus to raise much-needed funds for Console, a charity that helps those who have bereaved by suicide.

Launched last Thursday, 19 February, the organisation's annual Snowdrop Appeal is a vital fundraiser. Snowdrops will be on sale across the campus including points at the SU reception and shop, the Stables, the Scholars, the Plaza and the Paddocks. All money raised will go directly to Console.

Over four hundred people died by suicide in the Midwest region in 2007; a tragic statistic that has been rising every year. Many people are affected by their deaths; their family, friends, colleagues and classmates. These people require support in the immediate aftermath of the suicide and in the long term. Console is one organisation that helps those bereaved through suicide.

Console was established in 2002 by families that had experienced the grief of losing a loved one through suicide. In the past seven years Console

has developed into a professional organisation, which not only responds to the needs of those bereaved by suicide but also promotes positive mental health within the community with a view to reducing the number of attempted suicides and deaths through suicide.

Console has offices in Limerick, Dublin and Galway, each offering a range of supports including individual and family counselling, practical information following a bereavement through suicide and literature to assist people to understand their grief.

Console have also developed a range of workshops, conferences and community outreach programmes. They operate a national free phone helpline for those who have been bereaved by suicide and for those who are having suicidal thoughts; the number is 1800 201 890.

As a charity Console does not receive funding from the government, they rely instead on donations and fundraising. For more information please contact the SU Welfare Office.

Steady sales for Rag Week '09

Arielle McCarty

THIS year's Rag Week tickets are selling steadily after going on sale in the Students' Union in week three.

Keith Piggott, Eightball Productions and Media and Ents contractor, said there was a clear spread of sales across the events.

"People are pretty happy with the line-up," Mr Piggott said.

"The Rag Ball with the Blizzards is selling fastest. It's a great line-up with the Dirty Epics, Vesta Varro, Walter Mitty, Baby Jenx, Arveene, Headphone Disco and more to be confirmed so we expect that to sell out first," he added.

It will not be known how well tickets have sold in the first week until the night of the gig to see if there has been an increase or decrease since last year.

He said sales for this year's Rag Week have been a little slower than in previous years, but mainly because tickets went on sale in week three.

"Normally we would be selling in week eight or nine for that event so it's just a case of tickets selling over a longer period of time," Mr Piggott said. Rag Week kicks off Monday, 30 March with Christy Moore Tribute and Fred in The Stables and DJ Sash in Trinity Rooms.

The rest of the line up includes Hells Bells AC/DC Tribute on Tuesday and The Young Wolfe Tones on Wednesday. Both will appear in The Stables.

"Between the line up and the daytime events that we are putting together we're really looking forward to the week itself," Mr Piggott said.

Tickets for Rag Week '09 are still available from the Students' Union.

Have you got what it takes?

As the economy crumbles, with employment prospects for graduates appearing bleaker on initial inspection than has been the case in the past; downsizing and pay cuts at every news bulletin, credit crunching and property bubbles bursting are the sounds replacing the till ringing days of the Celtic Tiger. What is a highly qualified and motivated student to do?

There is an opportunity on your doorstep with a salary of €24,000 for a one year contract. At the end of this year you will gathered some critical skills which will only serve to broaden and expand upon the academic learning already garnered during your time in University Of Limerick.

The Students' Union will shortly have vacancies for five Sabbatical Officers. Sure, the SU may be seen by many students as a clique for political activists or of no relevance to their present and definitely none to their futures.

Take a moment to reconsider these perceptions and look at what a Sabbatical Officer can gain from their year serving the students of UL.

In addition to the primary student representative role sabbatical officers have, after their year, being exposed to some key on-the-job experiences which will serve them well

throughout the rest of their lives. So, what are they?

Management: to put it into a "job" analogy, sabbatical officers are effectively the Board of Directors of Students' Union Inc. Their decisions impact on the student body and the University but also on the 90 or so people who are employed by the Students' Union.

Governorship: The President and Deputy President of the Students' Union, along with the President of the Post Graduate Student Association, sit on Governing Authority for the University. This is the final forum where all matters relating to the operation of the University are discussed and decided upon.

Project Management: Whether it is a campaign or a new service, an Ents gig or some other initiative, there are narrow timelines which will need to be adhered to in order to deliver the message, initiative or service in a timely manner. There are two periods of 15 weeks that are the target times.

Procurement: Getting the right products or services, for the best price, at the right time.

Advocacy: As a Sabbatical Officer, you represent all students and will represent the cohort or an individual in many varied situations which can range from University

Discipline to Community Forum or landlord disputes.

Fiscal Acumen: All Sabbatical Officers will have budgetary control over their remit and as a collective will have accountability to the members for the financial stability of the Union.

Marketing: The Students' Union, to be effective, must get its message out there.

Directorships: Every Sabbatical Officer will have at least one Directorship of a Registered Company; some may have three or four directorships with all the responsibilities contained therein.

Counsellor: Primarily within the remit of the Welfare Officer and the Education Officer, but all Sabbatical Officers will at some stage have to advise a distressed student.

Decision Making: You won't be able to please all the people all the time so you will learn to rationalise and prioritise to deliver the best result for the Students' Union and students.

Negotiation: Sometimes involving high stakes.

Commercial/Retail Management: Through close involvement in the operation of the Students' Union shops and services

This list is not exhaustive; there are many other key learning opportunities available. Surely there

are not that many other jobs that will get you this range of experience in the first year while still having the benefit of a paid student existence .

If it is so wonderful, why doesn't everybody go for it? Fundamentally there are three downsides.

In order to get these positions you must subject yourself to the annual popularity contest, namely the Students' Union elections. For some, this may be no problem but for the shyer amongst you that could be an insurmountable obstacle but a vibrant campaign manager may help with that.

Secondly, there is the politics and perceived power struggles between the different offices; this is no different to the majority of workplaces that you may end up in after college.

Thirdly, and most important to be aware of, you will be wearing the office for the entire year. When interacting with a general student outside of your circle of friends you are still the SU Officer 24/7 and what you say or do will be taken as the SU position. Also you are never really off-duty. You may get queries and complaints at any time.

So, what are the positions?

President – The most visible Sabbatical Officer. The representative of UL students in many forums;

internally, locally and nationally. The President is the Chair of the Executive and, as such, is responsible for getting and maintaining collective responsibility to deliver the Union's objectives.

Welfare Officer – The Sabbatical Officer who is most focussed on ensuring that students' physical, mental and sexual health are catered for in the best possible way. The Welfare Officer is the Students' Union contact for landlord issues. The Welfare Officer also administers the Financial Aid Scheme for undergraduates. The Welfare Officer is also the Deputy President and all that that entails.

Education Officer – Represents the students' interests within the University on all issues regarding the academic part of your time in UL. The Education Officer also manages the Class Rep process, which is where each student's voice can be heard through their Class Rep at fortnightly Council.

Campaigns and Services Officer – This office is responsible for all services offered by the Students' Union from the pool room through to Ents and many others in between. They are also responsible for the logistics of all SU campaigns

Communications Officer – This position has responsibility for Students' Union publicity. This

includes editorial responsibility for all SU Publications, and liaison for all external businesses who wish to hawk their wares to you as students.

All prospective Officers must have altruistic intentions: these roles are not for selfish purposes. The primary role is representation of the interests of all students as well as taking up the cudgels for the disenfranchised few.

Yes, you do get some personal benefit from exposure to the position, but anybody going for the position purely for the personal benefit will ultimately be unsuccessful in their tenure and probably not enjoy what is a most rewarding and satisfactory year.

If this has pricked your interest, in any position, go and speak with the incumbent officer and they will answer any questions that you may have.

Look out for the notices calling for nominations which will open in week 8, with the election taking place in week 9.

The Postgraduate Student Association will also be holding an election for a President. The PSA President combines the roles of President, Welfare Officer and Education Officer for Postgraduate students. This election is held later in the semester.

Ulsu specials

Owned and operated by students for students

- NEW! HOT DINNERS FROM 5PM!

- Lasagne & wedges only €3.50

- Chicken curry & rice only €3.95

- Chicken/mushroom/chicken & ham pie- €1; Jambons €1.25

- Goodfellas Deeply Delicious pizza- only €2.99

- Spar apple juice - half price! €0.79

- Bassett bag range...buy one get one free! €2.50

- Kellogg's Just Right 500g/Cornflakes 750g/

Rice Crispies 600g - 2 for €4.99!

STAR BUY!

Buy any roll or sandwich from the deli,

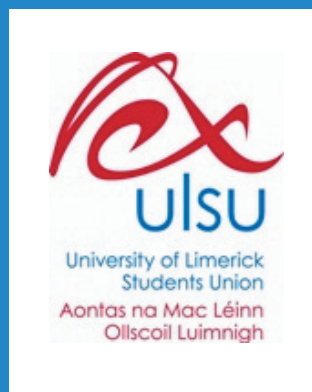
and get any 2 of: M&M chocolate, Hunky Dory 25g AND Ballygowen Still 500ml for €1.20 more!

offers available until 1 March or while stocks last

See Euro Crunch offers in store:

- Nutri grain cereal bar...2 for €1
- Muller Corner range...2 for €1
- Club orange can range...2 for €1
- Spar washing up liquid range...€1
- Kitten soft white toilet rolls...€1

UNIVERSITY OF LIMERICK STUDENTS' UNION



Union General Meeting

Meeting : Annual General Meeting
 Date : 2008-02-25
 Venue : Jean Monnet, DG016
 Time : 14.00
 Quorum : 200

1 Apologies

2 Minutes of Previous Meetings (Date: 2008-10-08)

3 Matters Arising

4 Audited Accounts

5 Ratification of Auditors

6 Officers Reports

6.1 Questions for Officers

7 Ratification of Unopposed Officers

8 Items for Discussion

Third Level Fees

• Discussion about the upcoming review to be published by the Minister for Education and the action for the Union to take.

9 Motions & Resolutions

9.1 Amendment to Article 38.3 relating to the Union's accounts

The Union shall amend the Article 38.3 in order that the accounts shall be drawn up to the 30th of September each year in light of the University's financial calendar.

9.2 Pursuant to Articles 5.3, 5.4 and 5.10 of ULSU Constitution outlining policy subsidiarity of the Union, it is proposed that this meeting sanction the consumption, but explicitly not the sale, of alcohol in the Union Building.

9.3 Pursuant to Articles 5.1 and 6.1.1 of the Constitution under which this meeting is held, the meeting requests UL Students' Union to ballot members by way of a multiple choice referendum on alternatives, in order of preference in the manner of Article 44.1 pertaining to elections, to exchequer funded 3rd level tuition fees before Minister O'Keeffe's April deadline, so as to constructively engage the Department of Education and Science in a manner of maturity not heretofore displayed by and singular or pluralistic body affected by the issue in accordance with Article 2.1 and Article 5.3.1. The status quo not to be option.

9.4 UL Students' Union, pursuant to Art 2.1 of the Union's Constitution adopts the following policy:

1. To adopt an approach of mass campaigning and mobilisation to defeat the threat of third level fees.
2. To organise a referendum on whether the Union should organise a 24 hour shutdown of the University. The shutdown would take place in advance of the cabinet meeting that will decide on fees in April. The shutdown should consist of a mass student strike with protests and other anti-fees activities on campus.
3. To campaign in favour of the proposal of a 24 hours shutdown as described above to be adopted through the referendum.
4. To seek the active support of the university staff and their trade unions for this shutdown and campaign.
5. To campaign among other student unions for this shutdown to be part of a co-ordinated shutdown of all third-level institutions nationally.

10 Policy Review

AOB

THE ECOLOGY FOUNDATION,

in association with **Siemens Ireland**, is presenting a series of lectures to Ireland's leading Universities on climate change and its implications for the future of society.

The lectures series is designed to inform and encourage undergraduate and graduate students to assess how they can play a role in meeting the challenge of tackling climate change. The lectures not only focus on the challenge of climate change, but also the positive role science, engineering, innovation and business can make by addressing it.

Lecture 2

**Wednesday 11th March, Jean Monnet
Lecture Theatre, 2.30pm**

**Introduced by Professor Donal A.Dineen,
Dean Kemmy Business School.**

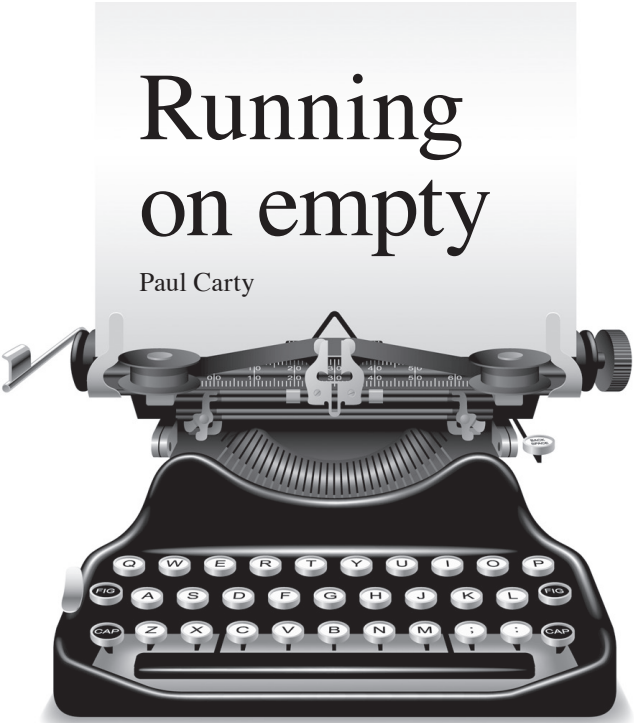
The Business of Climate Change - An explanation of how climate change will transform global commerce and affect business strategy, illustrating how business can play a leading role to help society adapt to the inevitable challenges.

With climate change becoming the world's number one issue both for business and government, tomorrow's graduates will need to be aware of the opportunities and risks inherent in this new paradigm. These lectures will be of distinct value to students from all disciplines.

UL Environmental Committee



Columnists



Running on empty

Paul Carty

It’s the epitome of haute cuisine at that time of the night, isn’t it really? That lovely, absolutely gorgeous, taco fries. Mince made of such exotic parts of the bovine species you don’t really want to think about, drenched in the most mouth-watering cheese strips you’ve ever dreamt about, all accompanied by a most delicious dressing in majestic mayonnaise.

Any care about how this Michelin-standard threatening piece of fine cuisine came about? Was it just down to your precise timing of the words, “Taco der plaaaassssee”? And it all came off perfectly and said taco chips were delivered accompanied by silver spoon merely minutes afterwards?

A night out in our beloved Ireland inevitably takes the same twist no matter what part of the country you hail from. Go out, have a copious amount of drink, have the ‘craic’ whatever the hell that is, and finally stumble into your nearest fast food takeaway to round off the night. Sounds like so much fun, doesn’t it?

Yet this is a scenario replicated week upon week in this country without fail. Back that whole year and a half ago when I first touched down in UL, the only place that would still be open in the city after a club was Supermacs.

This year McDonalds, and even Burger King, have got in on the act, extending their opening hours in peak student night out hours. While I question the whole morality of the situation – taking advantage of drunk students should exclusively be the the preserve of drunker students – there is no denying that the 2am dining experience is one that is proving most fruitful amongst the chipper fraternity in Limerick.

All is rosy in the garden one might think. Not so is the reality. In my experiences so far, fast food emporiums have been the catalyst for an inordinate amount of rows and scuffles.

It seems that being the first to the till for your order is a somewhat poisoned chalice of sorts in modern day après-club Ireland. I find it incredible the aggressiveness a person can take to defend their ‘honour’ and secure their chicken burger a whole five minutes before the person they’d threatened to disable for ever more.

Sympathy is a rare commodity these days but it’s the only thing I have to offer to staff who work late nights these chippers. I’d imagine a septic waste engineer has to deal with less shite than these unfortunate souls encounter every night they work. I can’t dream of how hard it is to deal with the drunken shite that they come upon on a nightly basis.

Even a visit to the toilets of such establishments induces an illness I can only describe as being similar to finding yourself peering out over the Empire State Building and suddenly acquiring an acute case of vertigo. One can only imagine what the poor souls that clean them feel like.

What if it was you? It’s not as far beyond the bounds of possibility that you could find yourself slaving behind the Supermacs counter with a degree, or even a Masters, in the future. Perhaps then you might appreciate what it takes to work those long unforgiving, unsociable hours into the morning to provide you with those much coveted taco chips.

Failing that, I’m sure most fast food workers would appreciate patience and politeness as much as anything. They take absolutely nothing to give yet can mean all the world to someone.

I implore you to take a new attitude with you in the search for after club snacks; appreciate it. While your mind may fantasize about the lotto from time to time always keep in mind that working in one of these fast food franchises may not be as far removed from you as you think. The catchphrase they have puts it in a nutshell: it could be you.



I Spy’s Alternative nights in



The doom and gloom is with us again. Everywhere we look places are closing down, there are job losses and general downturn. You can’t even pick up the stupid paper without being constantly reminded of the fact that we’re proper f*cked.

If you believe the papers, we’re only two steps away from the coffin ship and munching on grass at the side of the road. Soon, insults will fly over soup consumption that will stick with your family for generations. Yes, people, according to the doomsdayers, we will soon be back in the traditional Irish existence of misery and suffering.

But, hey, who’s to blame really but ourselves. We now sit like remorseful children whose communion day cash was prematurely blown on a super soaker 500 and a thousand drumstick lollypops.

So is this the end of the world?

No...we used to know (or at least our parents did) how to have fun without money. It isn’t all bad. So this week’s I Spy is going to look at alternatives to spending €150 on beer, kebabs and beautiful women who wouldn’t want to talk to you if you bought them twenty Red Bull and vodkas. That’s right, it’s cheap nights in I Spy style.

Sitting around with lads drinking tea, playing cards and cursing

Get a box o’ Barry’s in. Clear off the table, dole out the cards. Start talking about Gah, Championship Manager; how you’re the best person you know at Pro Evo and of course which one of Girls Aloud you would have sex with first if someone had a gun to your dog’s head head. Problem solved.

Study
Hmmmmmm...maybe not.

Makeovers

Yes, I know this is one usually reserved for the ladies, lads, but this is a recession – the rules are out the window. All you need is a group of lads, one girl armed with make up and a willing (preferably drunk) volunteer. Get said lady to cover said man in said make up. Before you know it the volunteer will have gotten carried away and will be wearing a skirt with frilly blouse. Take pictures of the subject and post liberally on Facebook and Bebo; also send hard copies to subject’s parents and girlfriend where applicable. If any video is taken ensure the volunteer is seen to say something like, “Ooooooooh, hello boys!” Great night in guaranteed.

Internet pornography

Cheap; cheerful; something for everyone. Does exactly what it says on the tin.

Board Games

Unfortunately named, these babies can mean a good night in. I dusted off the old “Game of Life” last week. Last time I played it I didn’t know Boom, Recession or, indeed, life actually, and d’ya know what I still f**kin’ don’t. Clothing optional if you want to make this one fun.

Well there you have it. Don’t do them all in the one week: you might go mad with excitement. Cheap nights out are a possibility too. I had a 3 Euro cocktail in the Stables last week. As Homer once intimated, “It passed the first test: I didn’t go blind”.

Until next time I will spend my existence attempting to avoid stupid recession articles like this one. Next week’s article will be called “What to do now I can’t afford hookers, cocaine and hotel rooms”; promises to be special... stay tuned.

Columnists

Deep Throat

We’re settling nicely into the semester at this point and with everything being oh-so familiar at this stage we find ourselves ever so gently tempted to rehash material from years gone by. If we do lapse feel free to pull us up on it, if you manage to notice that is. Still and all, we’re fairly motoring now as our uncle Ed used to say. The cold snap has lasted longer than is usual and as is typical of such extremes of climes it has shown up the lack of long term planning that marks UL as a jewel in the crown of Irish educational institution. Lots of smooth surfaces on inclines that ice over easily are just one example of this smart thinking!

Shag week came and went, and isn’t that so typically male, you do your best with so much moaning and groaning that it seems like you must have food poisoning and then it is over and done before the week is out. There again why is all the blame placed on the sperm? I’ve yet to see an unfertilised egg wandering the courtyard handing out leaflets. There again as my old drill sergeant used to tell us, “Lads if you’re not wearing the right gear going into an engagement in a tropical climate then keep it in your pants.” Or something like that, it could have been my horticulturist that said it. Still remember our watchword: wear

it, don’t share it!

In perhaps related news, class reps went to Galway for ‘training’, much fun was had and I’ve seen only some of the pictures. “Careful there you can put your back out by doing that, especially with her only barely looped into that harness!” “Still you’d wonder why they have to go so far away for a gathering, couldn’t we keep this money in the local economy? Are some of the reps temporarily barred from premises in the city?

Dealing with matters more concrete for a moment, the boathouse is now due to finally open next September that is almost 18 months after the substantive construction work was finished on it. Curiously no one appears to be asking the seriously probing and potentially embarrassing questions, in public at least, about how the blazes it is that a rather pricey building would lay unopened for so long. Well those with an interest in matters nautical may well have been able to use it as a glorified storage shed, but the revenue generating elements have pretty much lain idle. And all the while we’re reasonably sure the banks haven’t waiting to get their mortgage payments. It’s not nearly at the level of being a white elephant but there has to be a question mark over how the gap

and consequent shortfall between the costs of construction being incurred and the cash coming in from the revenue generation portions will be overcome.

Now the blame can’t be put on the current administration but it does raise the question of why so coy about previous officers, is it simply a culture thing that sabbatical officers don’t say bad things about previous officers even from generations ago? Just what is now likely to be the long term viability of the boathouse as a venue? Will people trudge down there for lunch for a scoop if they don’t have some watery reason to be down there? We’re not looking to spook anyone either but that pathway along by the river after dark is pretty damned unnerving; our Doberman has been startled by a cyclist more than once. Let’s remember that the present day Scholar’s is a much smaller venue than the previous version, so the demand for on-campus frivolity and merry making are not what they were when the boathouse was first mooted. Whither long term planning, eh!

Speaking of long term plans, we noted the report in the last An Focal of the ongoing treasure hunt around the college pitches to find any that were remotely playable. The going, as they are prone to

saying in national hunt circles, was yielding going on soft, going on quicksand. We’re given to wonder when the penny will drop with the powers that be that the profits of the Arena and other campus entities aren’t actually going to benefit the overall deficit of the college itself. Sure there are master plans for loads and loads of Astro-turf pitches on the north campus, or the northern resource areas as those who still dare dream of the Asian co-prosperity sphere are wont to calling it. We wouldn’t be amazed if one idea kicking around the college’s mental loft space is to use the current pitches as landfill as a means to level them out. Clear off the top soil and once there is enough rubbish to fill it back in. Some methane vents and Bob’s your male relation of indeterminate origin that your mom sees for a few hours when your dad’s out of town (I go by other names too but your mother preferred Bob).

When speaking of self contained commercial entities that operate on campus, the college has some unfortunate history with such units that run well initially but then run loose across the land. There was a body a good while back whose board members decided that it was their little baby rather than that of the college. Over time the board

realised despite having been appointed by the college authorities that they weren’t actually legally accountable to the college. Once in situ they could do pretty much as they pleased. This caused no head of hassle as they sought to compete with the college itself while using college facilities that they didn’t have to pay the going market rate for. It all got very tangled indeed and we’re sure Egyptian blackjack dealers from Vegas had to be sent for in the end to clear it all up.

We’re convinced that eventually the light is going to go on in someone’s head that either the Arena should just full on lease the premises from the college or buy out the university’s stake in the Arena. After all why have a publicly funded resource that exists to benefit primarily private usage? Another curiosity to the proposed expansion is the notion that students will only be able to use resources which were paid for out of the public purse as allocated from central government during lecture hours. These would be the same hours when they’re supposed to be in class, lectures or lab.

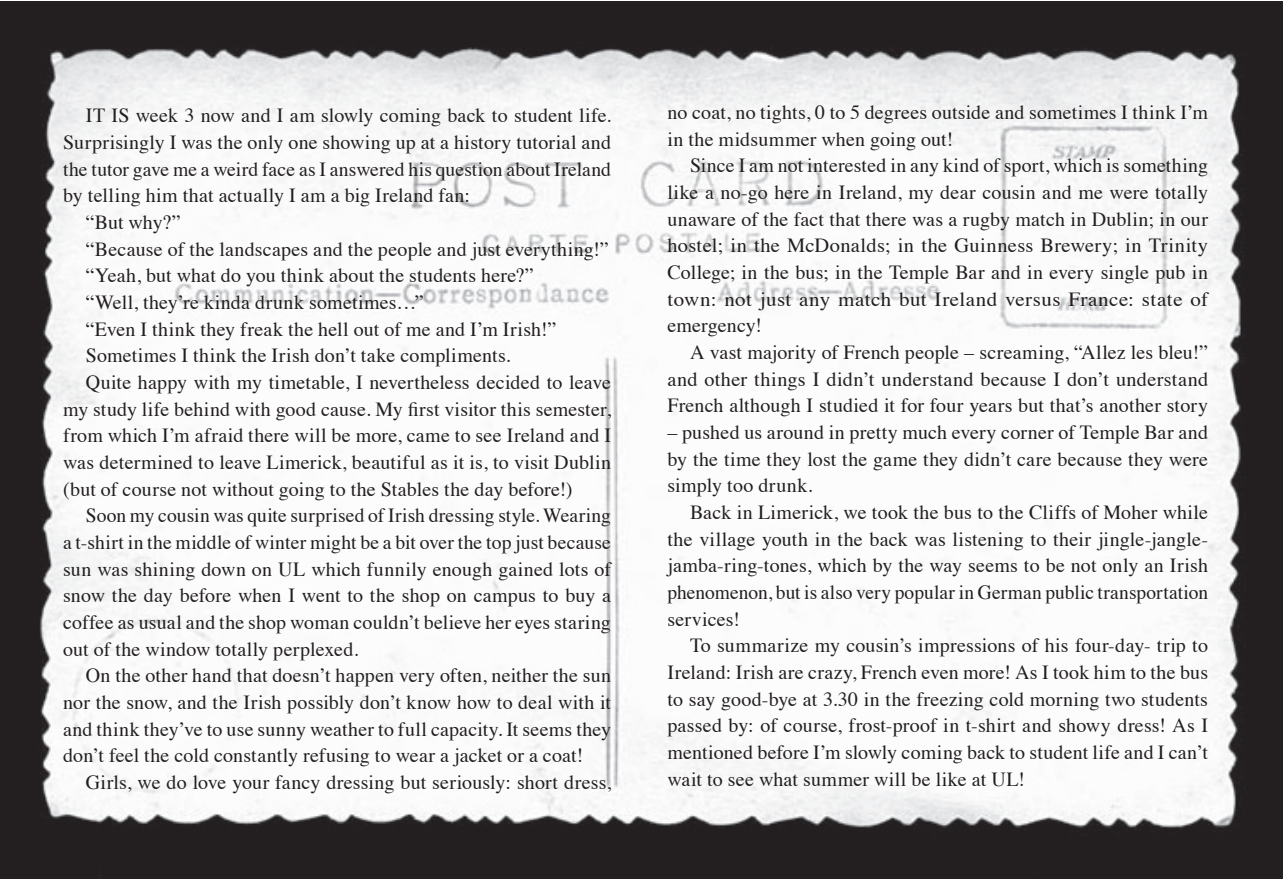
With the expansion of the Arena building to encompass even more of the existing public car parking space, one does think that the university should just charge the Arena the market rate for the site, and for accessing other college resources like the car parks which were intended for the college itself! And the old car parking chestnut has gotten another airing and roasting in recent times. Fact is that many campus members (students and staff included) could use alternate means of transport; secure accessible bike sheds are still not available (the ERB bike area is not accessible after 6pm), the bus services is unreliable, and security leaves a little something to be desired – physically capable security personnel for one.

Oh and has anyone noticed that in recent weeks we’ve eliminated the knowledge economy? Yep, it’s been replaced by the smart economy but no one has yet worked out what smart in this case is meant to stand for, is it like smart bomb or smart arse or sm. I’m sure someone in sharp suit will be along shortly to explain it to us. As always UL Prevails! Contact us at thethroat@gmail.com

Postcard from UL

Notes from a German Erasmus student

Alexandra Gdanietz



A Fresh Approach

Diary of a First Year

Jason Kennedy

There really aren’t enough hours in the day. A constant barrage of meetings and events seem to be taking over my college life. I leg it straight from lectures to SU meeting rooms and do you know what? I love it!

Last semester, I’d walk home, put on the dinner and use broadband (when it was still a novelty), and chill out for the night. Now it’s a case of get home, make myself look halfway decent and walk back to the Students Union. It doesn’t bother me at all because I get on well with everyone, and we actually manage to have a laugh. Not the mention the obligatory trip to Scholars afterwards.

Now that I mention it, I seem to have adopted Scholars/Javas as my new local. The Stables used to be my haunt of choice, hitting the place at least once a week, only going to Scholars after the odd meeting that I’d go to. So far I’ve only ventured to the Stables once, briefly. Two of us went in, looked for people we knew, failed and went back to Scholars. Anyway, any place where you can get a stein is pretty nifty by me.

I’m also lucky enough to have been cast in another video for UL. Following on from my casting as Tommy, the uninhibited bisexual stoner, I blagged myself a part in an addiction video. Each video focuses in on a particular addiction, from alcohol to gambling. I somehow managed to get the role of the sex addict. I think I’m starting to get typecast now. Seriously though, do I actually have the head of a sexual deviant or what’s the story? I know a few people doing them as well, so it’s all good really. Still, they don’t have to talk like some filthy jokeshop, who gets his kicks by looking at young wans in uniforms. Next stop, the academy awards, surely.

Speaking of filthy young wans, ULTV’s Turkish oil wrestling was great craic. After some pre-event panic, due to wrestlers backing out (tut tut!), the event went really well. I think most of us were surprised by the decent crowds that hovered around the Stables for the two hours. The good times kept going later that day with Alternative Valentines. It kicked off with a round of rather sleazy speed dating, including hand kissing, unwanted footsie and the tender line “vote for me or I’ll shite in your handbag.” Could you imagine how sleazy the person who won would have to be? This was followed by a very interesting slave auction. Drama soc must’ve made a small fortune out of the night.

Letters to the Editor

Not insulted by
Lisbon II - Response

Dear Madam,

Frankly, I had to laugh when I read the responses to my article “Lisbon II.” They made me fear for the lucidity of Messrs Michael Burke and Loughnane. Both of them did raise some excellent and valid points, but I must take issue with certain assertions.

Firstly, and most importantly, the picture placed beside my article without my knowledge perhaps confused both men. I am by no means anti-European or anti-Lisbon. As I wrote previously, I believe strongly in the principles and ideology of the Union and I view the Lisbon Treaty as an essential vehicle of procedural reform, to which I will in all likelihood vote Yes in a second referendum.

However, I am an Irishman first and a European second. Like any intelligent person to whom I have spoken, I accept the democratic necessity for a second vote but I am deeply resentful that one is required due to the embarrassing incompetence

of the Government.

But we cannot have our cake (i.e. development grants and subsidies) and eat it, and Ireland cannot hold up the rest of Europe in such an urgent matter. Mr Burke seems to think that we the people should never have had a vote in the first place. That says a lot about his respect for our Constitution and our democracy. Methinks he would be more at home in France.

Not since the aftermath of the Second World War has there been such a pressing need for unity in the face of adversity. I acknowledge my mistakes and accept without reservation the slurs on Ganley’s character (he himself might not, particularly the Hitler comparison which is rather OTT).

Mr Loughnane rebukes me for my lack of economic knowledge. Fair enough; I never studied economics and perhaps it shows. But has it ever dawned on him that our small open economy was built upon nothing but the whims of fickle

multinationals and the building of avaricious property developers?

And might he care to realise that Ireland is now the poorest and most abject nation in the Union, having once been the richest and most arrogant? The house of cards has crumbled.

Does he believe that a massive rescue package is coming from the Central Bank? I myself am hopeful that we will get something, but there are twenty-six other countries also in dire need of sustenance, and money

is painfully scarce. Do not expect miracles, Mr Loughnane. Reliance on others is not the full solution to our woes.

Both correspondents displayed a risible ignorance of the agricultural sector. Mr Burke’s hyperventilation about Ireland becoming a version of 1970’s Cambodia in my “plans” would lead me to encourage him to take up a career in crime fiction should all else fail. He really does have a talent for the bizarre.

Has he ever heard of a small

“...it ever dawned on him that our small open economy was built upon nothing but the whims of fickle multinationals and the building of avaricious property developers?”

country called New Zealand, tucked way down below Australia in the South Pacific? It has a First World economy based almost entirely on agricultural exports. It also happens to be one of the major food suppliers to the European Union, despite its distance from Europe. I have visited the country on agricultural research tours and also lived there, and I have never seen Maoris been whipped and bludgeoned to death as they toiled in the fields from dawn till dusk.

Closer to home, Leaving Certificate geography lessons might have informed him that agriculture and industry co-exist and flourish in central France and northern Italy, while farming is the backbone of Denmark. Are they Cambodia in disguise?

Ireland has the potential to rival New Zealand as a wealthy food producer. Needless to say, due to bureaucratic interference and over-zealous construction we are not a serious threat.

I am not advocating the foolish claim that we should all swap the pen for the plough; my statement “to hell with the free market” was an exasperated comment that a country thousands of miles away should detract from the livelihoods of European farmers while the Union pays these same European farmers not to produce food. Something is

wrong there, no, Mr Burke?

Does Mr Loughnane vote for the Green Party? It might explain his reluctance to criticise the Department of Agriculture (where Trevor Sargent is a junior minister) for its consistent failure to properly inspect feed processing plants, and also its hasty cancellation of all pigmeat exports without fully assessing the danger and thus impacting upon the livelihood of farmers.

Next time, ask those who actually know something about farming, and not a civil servant. Better still, buy and read a copy of the Farmers Journal (on sale every Thursday from all newsagents).

I have a deep sympathy for all those in the secondary and tertiary sector who have lost or are in fear of losing their jobs. As a law student myself, I am realistic about my chances of long-term employment here. Perhaps I’ll emigrate to New Zealand and milk cows for a while. Thanks to the negative agricultural policies of the European Union, I know I’ll make money.

I have better things to do with my time than qualify myself to two whinging and ignorant urbanites. I wish them both well in their careers, and I hope to purchase Mr Burke’s debut novel before long. Move over, Jack Higgins, your time is up.

John Condren
4th year Law and European Studies

The
Glucksman
Library:
Castletroy’s
newest
after-school
club for the
local
community.

Cartoon by
Larissa Mirtschink.



Editorial

An Focal

University of Limerick

Students' Union

University of Limerick, Plassey, Co Limerick

Volume XVII, Issue 9

Tuesday, 24 February, 2009

Letters to the editor (Aoife Breen, 2008/09) may be sent to the above address or alternative may be emailed to editor@ulsu.ie. Please note that submission of a letter does not guarantee publication, but you never know, you may be lucky. Recycle An Focal (and all waste paper) in blue skips located at the rear of your building.



Generalising the General Meeting

There are four motions going before the students of UL tomorrow at this semester's Union General Meeting.

One of those is a purely operational change to the ULSU Constitution to amend the dates on which the Union's accounts are drawn up to bring them into line with the University's financial calendar, but the other three have come from the ground as real issues mattering to, at least, the fifteen students who signed each of the motions.

It comes as no surprise that two of the motions relate to fees, although at completely opposite ends of the spectrum.

The first asks that Union hold a multiple-choice referendum to ask students what their preferred alternative to third level tuition fees. It hopes that the result from this would allow the Union to "constructively engage" the Department of Education "in a manner of maturity not heretofore displayed by any singular or pluralistic body affected by the issue".

There are students who are disgruntled by the position chosen by the Students' Union in relation to fees and there are students who would not object to the return of third level tuition fees.

This motion is mandating the Union to ask all its students what they would like it to argue as the second best option if the necessity of third level funding exceeds the Exchequer's ability to pay third level tuition fees for all Irish students.

The Students' Union found themselves in a position last August where they had to decide where they would come down on the fees argument: for or against. It seemed the logical decision to start the campaign against fees on the grounds that a return to tuition fees would impede access to third level education and would create a two-tier system.

As the whole debacle grew, and the economic status of the country sank into the doldrums, funding to the university sector was cut and the registration fee took a massive jump up to €1500.

Then the word came through that county councils were being directed not to supplement the grant to cover this 67 per cent hike.

It became apparent that the move to go against fees was probably the wisest stance to take in the last lazy days of the summer in the absence of any students.

The second motion on fees asking to be carried tomorrow is on the opposite end of the scale to the first. The second wished to mandate the

Union to take more radical action "to defeat the threat of third level fees". The bottom argument of this motion is for a referendum asking students if they would like the Union to organise "a 24 hour shutdown of the University".

If this referendum goes ahead and is passed, the Union must also lobby the University's staff and their trade unions for co-operation on the shutdown.

Two opposing views of the fees argument and how it should be approached. The Union's own stance so far has been somewhat in between. Although the first motion accuses it of not displaying a 'mature' method of opposing fees thus far, the second is calling for a much more serious form of action.

Where the balance is to be struck is up to the students to decide.

The final motion on the agenda for tomorrow relates to the consumption of alcohol in the Students' Union building.

Alcohol and alcohol policies have long been massive areas of controversy on campus; on one end the concerns for well-being of students and the promotion of there not always being a need for drink to have a good time prevail and then at the other side the practicalities of such policies have resulted in a limp campus atmosphere because the reality of Irish culture – and student living, in particular – is that alcohol plays a huge role.

The motion asks that the SU allows alcohol to be consumed on its premises. Leaving the issues of permission from the University aside, there are still other pros and cons to such an allowance.

The SU's own Alcohol Guidelines Policy states that the building should be an "alcohol-free area, with the exception of specific functions at which food is being served".

The SU has a constitutional obligation to look after the welfare of its members. But at the same time its members' interests are paramount.

Tomorrow's meeting will give all students the opportunity to express what they feel on these issues. Tomorrow's meeting is not about the Students' Union; it is about the student. This is one very defined event that any student can come along to and tell the body that represents them in what direction he or she believes the Union should move for the betterment of all students on campus.

This is a general meeting discussing general items that have direct relevance on every student.

Pa's Propaganda

Time is running out for students. In April, Batt O'Keefe will present a plan for the reintroduction of fees to government. Our time, to show our opposition to this, is running out.

The government obviously believe that we aren't worth investing in.

They think they can turn the economy around without an educated workforce.

They think that by barring the way to education at a time when we need it most, that they will solve all our problems. Well do you know what I think, I think they're f**king crazy.

We intended to show our opposition to fees by picketing Willie O'Dea in Week 4. Unfortunately, "Where's Willie?" was the question on everybody's lips. He was a no-show for the University's event – maybe we scared him – but it's not like Willie to dodge a bit of confrontation, so hopefully he'll do the decent thing and show up at our UGM tomorrow, Wednesday, 25 February.

We are inviting all the local TDs who should be up representing us in Government. This is your chance to question those who need to be held accountable. Come along, ask questions and have your say (Jean Monnet, 2pm Wednesday, Week 5).

Dishonourable mention goes to the University presidents who believe that they will see any of the money that is raised through government imposed fees.

This comes, from a highly educated group of men, just months after the government introduced higher registration fees and cut University funding to the exact same level.

I think I see a pattern emerging there, Presidents!

The government will make us give, while they take and shift more and more debt onto us and these educated men are blind to it.

As I said, it's time now to act. This will affect everyone; everyone will pay. You will pay; join the fight against fees.

Pa

“Tomorrow's meeting will give all students the opportunity to express what they feel on these issues. Tomorrow's meeting...is about the student.”



In Focus: All different



Equality Week: do we really need one?

Caitriona McGrattan

EACH year the Students' Union aim to organise an Equality Week to promote justice across our campus, the Limerick community and further a field; each year those that are interested in the topics turn up and listen to the talks, attend the seminars and participate in the workshops. But what about the rest of the UL population; do they need an Equality Week?

The Students' Union aim to promote a campus in which all members of the campus community are treated equally and with respect. The SU is mandated by its own Equality Policy, enacted in 2007, which, "resolves to actively work towards and encourage a working and learning environment in which all members of the campus community are treated with dignity and respect"; we are ultimately bound by the Equality Act, 2004.

The Equality Act, which is an amalgamation of the Equal Status Act 2000 and the Employment Equality Act 1998, came into effect on 19 July 2004. It aims to promote equality, prohibit harassment and sexual harassment, victimisation and certain kinds of discrimination,

it also provides for the requirement of reasonable accommodation of people with disabilities while allowing for a broad range of positive action measures.

Under the Act discrimination is prohibited across the following nine grounds; gender, marital status, sexual orientation, religion, race, membership of the Travelling Community, disability, age and family status. But in 2009 does Ireland really need an Equality Act? Taking our campus of 14,000 people (students and staff) as a microcosm, equality and discrimination are two words that can stir strong emotions and even stronger reactions.

Are we an equal campus when there are homophobic attacks by students on fellow students? Are we an equal campus when the number of female students in the College of Science and Engineering is far below that of their male counterparts and they same can be said for many faculties? Are we an equal campus when mature students are chastised for doing their work diligently? Are we an equal campus when there are less than five members of the Travelling Community enrolled in courses

here?

Taking the nine grounds of discrimination into consideration there are four specific departments within the Student Affairs Division dedicated to supporting students and their needs (the Mature Student Office, the Access Office, the Disability Support Service and the Chaplaincy), what about the other five grounds?

Students and staff, both male and female alike, from different ethnical backgrounds, with differing family and marital statuses and varied sexual orientations are often left wondering who and where to turn to when they feel that they have been discriminated against.

Although it is true that many students may never experience any form of inequality during their time in UL, does that mean they should not be exposed to the injustices endured by others; injustices that are carried out by the staff, students and the institution as a whole? People may not actively want to participate in Equality Week, but by ignoring the issues of discrimination around us are we as guilty as the perpetrators of injustices?

Why is my dad in class with me?

EVERYONE starts off their time in UL pretty much the same: new faces, new places, a new way of life even. For most, it's all about the newest thing they have to experience: freedom from parental control. All in all, it's a pretty new life filled with parties, sleep and pizza/beer at your will.

But with an increasing number of mature students every year and their presence in all classes the life of many is not really the same.

When I started in UL I was 24, had some very done some cool stuff with my life and more not so cool stuff. My "first day of school" was when I realised that I was entering an organisation that was predominately younger than me.

These people, my future classmates were actually one year junior to my brother, who, to me, was a kid.

Funnily enough I did meet another mature student, the same age as me, at the back of the concert hall on the day of orientation.

"Thank God," I thought, "some one I could relate to".

Little did I know that this guy was a complete tool and I was actually going to go on and become best mates with a large number of other people in that room who were in fact "true first years".

The make up of my class was, as I said, mostly 18 year olds; that year although classmates' ages ranged from 18 all the way to people in their 50s and 60s.

What we would learn in time was that we were all actually the same: just a bunch of people who wanted to get through the course and graduate.

That said, it wasn't easy to realise that, from all parties.

Mature students may have thought of the younger students as kids and in turn some students didn't feel comfortable with parental like figures in this new environment. What was earned was a mutual respect for each other. Mature students cannot meet up in the Lodge every night and forge friendships with new people.

They have, perhaps, jobs, families, lives in general, that have been already shaped which means that their sole raison d'être in this University is to get an education.

On the other hand, not every 18 year old does go out and party on daddy's chequebook, and therefore needs to knuckle down and come out with the best results they can.

So we learned that books cannot be judged by covers. I knew mature students whose parents were financially supporting them to a level that made me jealous. I personally

worked days, nights and weekends for four long years just to end up with huge debts but also a degree.

There were first years at 18 who were in identical situations to me: mom and dad couldn't bankroll them so they did it themselves.

Then there was the whole issue of mature students being nerds, always having the answer in a tutorial. By 4th year everyone realised that we all knew the answers, but with age comes that bit of confidence to speak up. And personally, I answered because I hated that awkward silence!

One last stereotype which eventually died out, but may have been the cause of hostility, was that mature students get everything, like grants, exemptions and higher grades.

Not true although I may have inferred the higher grade whenever I did work my magic on an essay with a late deadline.

It wasn't really until 4th year that the lines disappeared and age didn't matter. Maybe it was co-op that gave the younger students that bit of self confidence to deal with us, or maybe mature students stopped being dismissive once the others had earned their stripes in the real world. Overall, my message from this piece is this: we are all students of this university, with a common goal – graduation!

Name: Alibhaoise Corkery
Course: : 1st Year Psychology and Sociology

What groups, if any, do you think might experience difficulties at UL?
Mature students and American students.



Name: James Crowe
Course: Psychology and Sociology

Do you think the campus is an equal place for all?
No, because people who don't live on campus don't have as much opportunity to interact.



erent, all equal

Surely we're more enlightened than this...



Aoife Finnerty

WHEN I left for college, I had this idea in my head that it was the place where anything goes. I came from a small parish, in a small county close to a small town. Not only did everybody know everybody else's business, but many people felt justified in judging the choices of others. I thought when I got to college, that judgment would end. I thought that college would expand my experiences and the experiences of every student around me, to the point where each and every one of us were enlightened enough to minimise or even eliminate our prejudices. But sadly college hasn't had the effect that I would have hoped and expected on many students in UL.

Many among you would be stunned and horrified to hear that the reason some students are attacking other students is sexual orientation - I know I was. I still can't describe the shock that I felt when I heard the stories of students, men and women, who had been physically assaulted, verbally abused, hassled, stared and pointed at, all because they were gay. I'm not just telling generic and non-specific stories of homophobia escalating to violence in a college far, far away - I'm speaking about the stories of a number of UL students and what happened to them this year, in venues as close

to the college as the Lodge.

If a group of guys started to harass two of your close friends on the dance floor of a nightclub, what would you do? The majority of us, male and female, would step in, either by standing up for them outright or going to get one of the bouncers. Now imagine those two friends were being hounded purely because they were kissing each other. Surely, you'd wonder what problem this group of guys had, given that if you look around the Lodge or Trinity Rooms or Icon or Angel Lane or any other nightclub, all you see is kissing couples. You'd wonder why these guys were picking on your friends. One UL student did exactly what most of us would and stood up for his friends. As a result he was attacked outside the Lodge by a group of guys who had a problem with the fact that he stood up for his two friends, a female couple.

Not only that, but the same student has been harassed for kissing a male partner in public. I wish I could say that these were isolated incidents but they're not. This treatment is something that some gay and lesbian students have endured from their fellow students on a number of occasions.

However it's not just negative comments and actions towards homosexual couples that can be out of line, it's also "positive" ones. If a straight couple were

kissing in public, is it acceptable to walk up to them and tell them that they're great and they really turn you on? I think the majority of people would say, "No, it's not really". Then why doesn't the same boundary seem to apply to gay couples, particularly lesbian couples? Why do some guys feel the need to walk up to a lesbian couple and make lewd comments about them and the way in which they choose to display affection to each other? If you wouldn't do it to a straight couple, then why are gay couples any different?

And that's where the issue really lies. It is a major problem when people can't see a gay couple as the same as a straight couple. It shouldn't be necessary for bars to describe themselves as "Gay friendly" - they should already be that way. People shouldn't feel the need to congratulate gay couples on their bravery and the "choice" that they've made because they haven't "made a choice". You don't decide to be who you are, you just are that person and you shouldn't feel like you're being defined by one aspect of who you are - sexual orientation. To put it more simply, would you come up to a relative stranger and say, "Well done on that whole being straight thing, it's really brave of you"? If the answer to that is no, then why would you do it to somebody who's gay?

Students Supports

ULSU Based Supports

Welfare Officer; provides a listening ear and can take action on your behalf if you feel you have been discriminated against
welfare@ulsu.ie Phone: 086 0435301

Out in UL; Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgender Student Society. Organises workshops, conferences and social events.
outinul@yahoo.ie

Connect; Student Society based on the idea of peer mentoring but is more about encouraging friendships among students
connect@ul.ie Phone: 086 7283131

UL Based Supports

Student Counselling; provides a FREE and confidential service to all students. Daily drop-in sessions between 11-12am and 3-4pm CM070
Phone: 061 202327

The Chaplaincy Service; works to meet the many and varied religious needs and backgrounds of a global university campus. Its offices in the main building (where a waiting room is shared with Counselling), a drop-in centre (Teach Fáilte) and the Contemplative Centre in the Student Square.

The Mature Student Office; provides support and advice to mature students. Drop-in between 10.30-12.30 Monday to Friday at DM034
mso@ul.ie Phone: 061 202735

The Access Office; promotes and supports the participation of students from groups which have been under-represented at University.
access@ul.ie Phone: 061 213 104

The Disability Support Service; promotes and facilitates entry to and participation in the academic programmes and the student life of the University by people with disabilities. The Disability Support Service is located on the ground floor of the Library.

Name: Niamh O'Donovan

Course: 4th Year Law and European Studies

What groups, if any, do you think might experience difficulties at UL?

Single parents, the crèche is not adequate to meet the demand for places.



Name: Seán Patchwell

Course: 4th Year Law and European Studies

Do you think the campus is an equal place for all?

No, long term international students (not including Erasmus/Exchange students) are not integrated or supported although they pay up to €11,500 to study here per year.



The Advice Bureau

Education In Focus Tutorials

Eamonn Gardiner - Education Officer

“Why do I have to get up for a feekin’ 9 o’clock tutorial?” I overheard this query from a first year student in the Stables one afternoon last semester.

“I mean all they do in there is ask questions all the time,” my colleague continued reflectively as his friends plumbed the depths of academia through the bottom of their pints.

I began to wonder, at that point, exactly what that young person hoped to gain from their college experience. I mean did they, or do you the reader, expect to get everything you need to know from your lectures?

University is a big change from secondary school! On entering university, we make the transition from small classes to classes of 300 to 450 students overnight! And in undergoing that change, it is readily assumed that you can make the leap in learning styles and cognitive reasoning from spoon-feeding to solid foods, academically speaking at least.

So where in this quagmire of lecturing (sometimes hectoring) do students, like you, get to ask questions? Surely not in front of all those people, I mean what if they laugh at me? What if my question is stupid? What if the girl I fancy is, like, three rows back and she splits herself at the idiotic question? Ah it probably isn’t that important.

And then the point which you didn’t get turns out to be the most important aspect of a topic. And it’s in the exam. And you can’t do the bloody question you want to do because you don’t understand the small bloody thing! And you fail over a tiny part of a question.

Tutorials are where you ask your questions. This is where you and usually about a dozen of your classmates are put in a small room with a tutor or a lecturer and you get to ask the questions which you wouldn’t normally be able to ask in the regular lecture.

In a relaxed setting with your peers and often friends, questions and answers come much more easily!

These are the questions you very well might need to fill in the blanks between the lectures and the exam. The lecture notes will pass your exam for you. The notes you make in tutorials and the questions you raise, especially regarding things the lecturer didn’t really explain fully or glossed over, will get you your B, or your pass if you’re really stuck

To break it down to its lowest common denominator, lectures give you the information. They give you all the raw data, all the dates, the empirical formulae, the grammar. Tutorials on the other hand allow you to interpret that data, the inflection, the means to filter out the dross and retain the gold.

Tutorials are designed to break down the size of the group and address the problems, the queries and the issues at a much lower, much more personalised level. In a semi-contradiction, tutorials actually provide you with a quasi-support structure, a framework to allow you to go about addressing your own difficulties regarding learning.

Lower staff-student ratios are proven to help information dissemination and retention. Tutorials allow for actual teaching, rather than lecturing, to take place! Tutorials make sure that you are given your fair chance to ask the hard questions; the questions you need to be able to answer yourself. They also provide invaluable help when researching, structuring and writing essays.

To the student who didn’t know why it was a good idea to attend tutorials, it’s simply because you will learn more there by asking questions. Now the question truly is how do they get the figs in the fig rolls?

For what its worth, I would try to attend everything, but tutorial attendance is truly vital if you are to ever understand what you’re talking about, rather than simply learning. Tutorial attendance produces 1.1 Honours students: fact.

Next Time: Labs – a guide to not burning down the Main Building!

Show me the money!

Rent Relief Tax Refunds

What is it and how much is it?

The rent relief tax refund is a tax credit than can reduce your tax bill by 20 per cent; aka you will have to pay 20 per cent less tax in the year

Who is eligible? As always terms and conditions apply...

If you live in private rented accommodation in Ireland and pay income tax, you may be eligible for tax relief on part of your rent. Rent relief tax credits are available to those renting accommodation from a private party i.e. not from the council or state supported housing authority. This rented accommodation must be your main residence. Rent relief tax credits cannot be claimed for rent paid under a lease agreement for 50 years or more.

The rent relief tax credit is based on your age and martial status. If you are under 55 the maximum amount a single person can get is €400 (€2,000 x 20%) for rent paid in 2009. The maximum amount a married couple or widowed person can get is €800 (€4000 x 20%) for rent paid in 2009. However if you are over 55 the maximum amount a single person can get is €800 (€4,000 x 20%) for rent paid in 2009. The maximum amount a married couple or widowed person can get is €1,600 (€8,000 x 20%) for rent paid in 2009.

How, when and where to apply?

Tax relief on private rented accommodation is available whether your landlord lives in Ireland or abroad.

If your landlord or agent is resident in Ireland, a receipt for rent you have paid must be provided if and when it is requested by Revenue. This rule applies regardless of whether you pay your rent directly to the landlord or to an agent on behalf of the landlord. Each receipt must show the following:

- Landlord’s name, PPS Number and address
- Amount of rent which you have paid
- Period of time covered by the receipt

If your landlord lives outside Ireland and you pay rent directly to them or to their bank account located in Ireland or abroad, you must deduct tax at the standard rate (20%) from the gross amount which you pay. This deduction is not your tax relief, it is tax payable to Revenue from your landlord’s income. For example, if your landlord lives in Germany and you pay him/her gross rent per month of €1000. Firstly, calculate the amount of tax to be deducted (€1000 x 20% = €200). Now deduct the tax due from the gross rent you pay (€1000 - €200 = €800). Your monthly rent paid to your landlord is €800 per month. Your monthly return paid to Revenue is €200 per month.

You must account for the tax you deduct by making a tax return to Revenue and paying over the tax you have deducted from your landlord. You can make a return immediately but in practice this rarely happens. Instead, if you are a PAYE employee you can pay over the tax deducted when you submit your annual Tax Return Form 12 to Revenue. If you pay tax by self-assessment, you can account for the tax you deduct in your annual self-assessment Tax Return Form 11 which you send to Revenue.

At the end of the year you must give your landlord a completed Certificate of income tax deducted - Form R185. If you fail to deduct tax from rent you pay to a landlord living outside Ireland will mean that you (and not the landlord) will be liable for any tax which should have been deducted.

Whether you landlord lives in Ireland or abroad, to claim rent relief you must complete Form Rent 1 and send to your tax office. Copies of the form are also available from your local tax office. If you have any difficulty completing the form or supplying any of the information requested, staff in your tax office will be happy to help you.

For more information on rent relief and other tax credits please look at www.revenue.ie or www.tax123.ie.

Let’s talk about sex baby!

An Focal sex columnist Annie Glyde-Dammes

Recently, I’ve taken issue with a plethora of flavoured contraception. This is mainly because the makers lie to me on a regular basis and consistently fail to be, in any pleasant way, flavoured at all. I’m beginning to get annoyed.

Take flavoured condoms for example: I had high hopes when I walked into Boots to buy my first box of flavoured condoms. Surely tasting strawberry instead of rubber would be an incentive to increase the frequency with which I would make a boy’s day.

Alas, I was disappointed. There was a faint and frankly strange taste of synthetic strawberry for approximately five seconds and then it was just a bright red condom that tasted of the standard plastic/rubber combination.

But I was still hopeful though. Maybe the condom that I got was just a bad one, or maybe strawberry just wasn’t the easiest flavour to replicate.

So I tried again, this time with orange, but no dice. Now a box of mostly unused flavoured condoms sits on the shelf in my room. I considered bringing them back to Boots under the Sale of Goods and Supply of Services Act. I mean they weren’t really as described, were they?

Then I concluded that would be like bringing a half eaten apple back to Dunnes and asking for a refund, with the justification that it didn’t taste like the last apple I had.

But it’s not just in the area of male contraception that I was disappointed, but also with the female variety. I tried out my first dental dam recently, again strawberry flavour, and found that it didn’t really taste all that like strawberry. I’ve yet to try out the mint, vanilla, grape and banana flavours, but I fear it will be the same outcome.

However it’s definitely worth pointing out that there are some advantages to using contraception for oral sex in spite of the disappointment when it comes to flavour. For one thing, I felt much more comfortable when I used a condom with a partner because I knew there was no chance of me picking up any infection.

Once you’ve seen a sexual health video that features some instances of oral gonorrhoea, as I have, you begin to appreciate just what condoms do. As well as that, I feel more comfortable when a partner uses a glide dam with me. The sensations are much the same but I relax more because I presume the other person feels more at ease.

So all that’s left to do is to lobby the makers of these various contraceptives until they make some that taste like Hubba Bubba, apple lollipops or Stiffy shots... Then I’ll be happy!

STIs Uncovered: Gonorrhoea

Description:

It is a bacterial infection.

Cause:

- Intimate genital contact.
 - Unprotected vaginal, anal or oral sex.
 - Infected fingers to eyes.
 - Unprotected rimming (mouth to anus).
 - From an infected mother to her baby at birth.
- Treatment:**
- Antibiotics – for you and your partner(s).

Prevention:

- Don’t have intimate sexual contact
- Or
- Have safer sex – always use a new condom correctly and put it on before you have sex.

Effects:

- You can pass it on to your sexual partner(s).
- You can pass it on to your baby

at birth.

- It can cause problems such as pre-term labour and low birth weight.
- Other long term complications include pelvic inflammatory disease and infertility.

Symptoms:

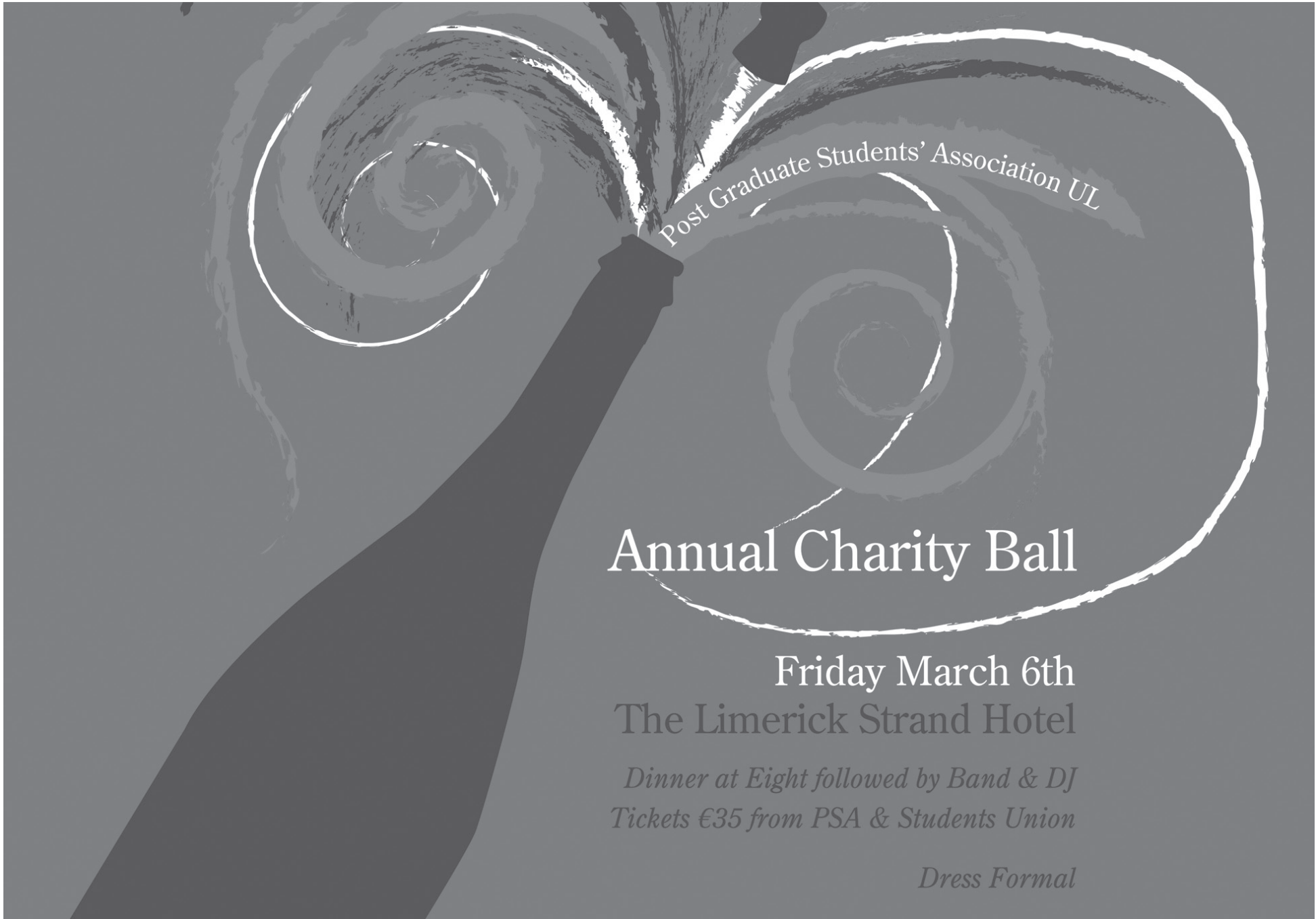
Around 70 per cent of women and 5 to 10 per cent men who are infected will have no symptoms.

Women:

- Abnormal vaginal or anal discharge
- Burning or stinging sensation when you pass urine
- Pain during or after sex
- May be bleeding between periods

Men:

- Abnormal discharge from penis
- Burning or stinging sensation when you pass urine



ULSU Nitelink - Timetable for Academic Year 2008/09

Route A 19:00, 20:30, 22:00,

- Stop 1: Dromroe Village
- Stop 2: Thomand Village
- Stop 3: Cappavilla Village
- Stop 4: Plassey Village
- Stop 5: College Court
- Stop 6: Groody Student Village
- Stop 7: Courtyard Student Village
- Stop 8: Brookfield Hall
- Stop 9: Parkview Hall
- Stop 10: Park Mews (Kielys)
- Returns to UL via Flag Pole Entrance

Route B 19:45, 21:15, 22:45,

- Stop 1: Kilmurry Village
- Stop 2: Elm Park
- Stop 3: Oaklawns
- Stop 4: Kilmurry Lodge
- Stop 5: Brierfield (Back of the Estate)
- Stop 6: Woodhaven
- Stop 7: Annacotty (Synotts)
- Stop 8: Spar (Dublin Road Bus Stop)
- Stop 9: Courtyard/Brookfield Roundabout
- Returns to UL via East Gate entrance

Route C 23.30 Only

Route A+B Stops on Request
Drop off only

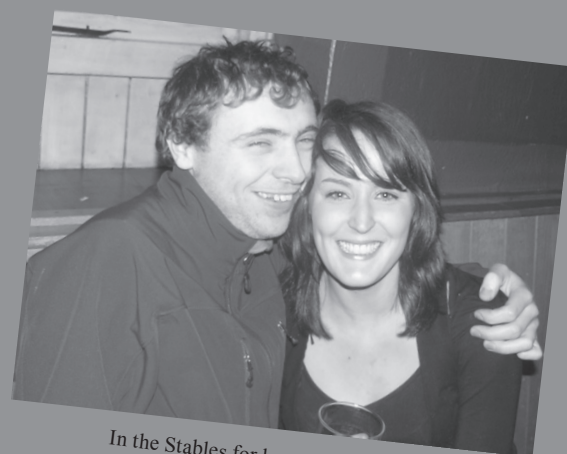
Caught on Camera



Third Year Science Ed students in the Stables in week 4 for their class party



Getting locked into the stocks during the anti-fees rally



In the Stables for karaoke in week 4



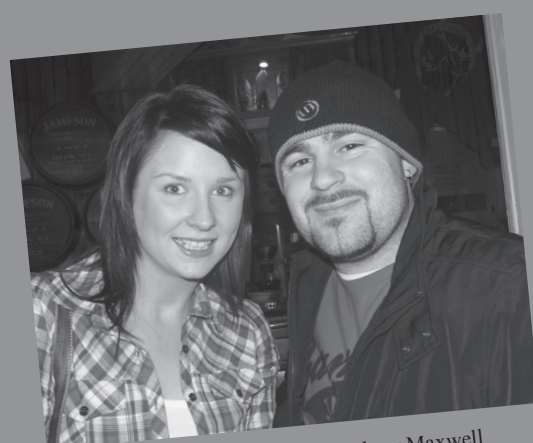
Signing the letter asking for better placement opportunities and pay at the placement protest in week 4



Not the real Willie



Sperm... but no Willie



In the Stables before Andrew Maxwell



Pants or fees: the only options for some



In the Stables in week 4



ULTV members get ready to wrestle in week 3



Getting vicious in the oil ring

Out & About: Rag Week 2009: how to get there

Ok, so you’ve seen the posters...

You’ve deliberated over the contents of your bank account (or lack there of!),
You’ve made the decision and you’ve got your tickets...
What’s left to do??
Well, with any festival, a little thought is needed as it gets closer to the big event, like what will I need, what are my plans, and so on. But who needs to do that kind of thinking when we’ve gone ahead and done it for you!
Da da nah nah, da da da da nah nah... it’s **“The Essential Rag Week Guide”!**
We’ve even made it into a little checklist, so you can hop it up on your wall or the fridge and tick the items off as you get them – let’s face it, who doesn’t like being able to tick things off a list!
Apologies for the title, we got a little carried away.

The Super Fun Happy Magic Essential Guide to Rag Week 2009 extrvaganza occasion of the millennnium...Event!
...kinda got a ring to it though doesn’t it!

CHECK LIST

1. Tickets:

Just a quick recap on that list...
Christy Moore Tribute – Mon 30 March in the Stables ☐
FRED – Mon 30 March in the Stables ☐
Sash! – Mon 30 March in Trinity Rooms ☐
Hells Bells AC/DC Tribute – Tues 31 March in the Stables ☐
Derek Warfield & The Young Wolfe Tones – Wed 1 April in the Stables ☐
Rag Ball on the big stage in SU Courtyard – Thurs 2 April ☐
Wonka (now you can tick all of the above!) ☐

2. Merchandise:

Offical Rag Week 2009 mechandise will be on sale in the Students’ Union in two weeks’ time. Available in black or yellow, t-shirts and hoodies will be ready and waiting for you to snap them up. Prices haven’t been confirmed just yet, but those of you who nabbed yourself one of those lovely line-up lanyards will bag themselves a discount on their purchases!
T-shirt ☐
Hoodie ☐

3. Your dos and don’t list: And we’ve got this for you too! Dos & don’ts

Do...

- Make sure to pop into the Students’ Union to pick up your tickets if you haven’t got them yet; nothing worse than seeing your buds hoppin’ along to a sold out gig you ain’t got a ticket for!
- Eat before drinking...otherwise things get really messy – in an bad way! A bit of lining will help you to last longer and you’ll be more likely to survive your hangover!
- Knock plenty of water into yourself – nothing fights a hangover better or keeps you going longer, and your health and appearence will thank you for it!
- Remember your phone. Handy little gadget: keeps you in touch with your friends and we’ll be keeping you updated with what going on each day via bluetooth.
- Drink at your own pace, and don’t be pressured into getting involved in rounds – money doesn’t grow on trees, and would be way better spent on getting yourself into another gig or towards the day-time antics!
- Use the bus or a taxi to get from A to B if you’ve been drinking, and never get into a car with someone who has – drinking and driving is way too ridiculous and your life and the lives of others ar way more valuable than the money you’ll save.
- Be safe getting home – taxis are easy to come by at the archways into the courtyard and the SU runs a free nitelink shuttle bus going to all the local residential areas (details at SU reception). If you do decide to walk, stay in a group; whether you’re a lad or lady, wandering off on your own just ain’t safe.
- Spare a thought for your neighbours – they might have really early starts or young children, so as much as you feel you need to sing the ‘Fields of Athenry’ on the dawn walk home, give a thought to the people you’ll be living beside for the remainder of the semester – you never know when you’ll need a loan of a tea bag or a bottle opener!
- Keep your drink in sight and never unattended. If you feel odd/nauseous or very drunk after only a couple of drinks and you know that you shouldn’t be, there’s a chance your drink has been spiked. If this happens, approach one of our lovely Ents Crew (the guys and girls in the red get-up) and they’ll take care of you.
- Avoid playing catch up, or you’ll be passed out in bed before you know it. Bit daft after spending money on the ticket!
- Be aware of a pending beer goggles situation – this could get you into a coyote ugly scenario – there is nothing worse than waking up the morning after and being petrified to look at what’s underneath the covers in the bed next to you! But it’s way easier to deal with that than it is to deal with an itchy surprise or a life-changing conversation, so be safe and use a condom – they’re free from the welfare office and were included in your SHAG week packs, along with advice on safe sex and contraception.
- Get involved in helping to raise money for the rag week charities – you’ll have a blast, the charities will benefit and you’ll create rag week memories to remember.
- Be sensible...to a degree anyway! Ending up in A&E with your leg hanging off or the Garda station ringing mammy for bail money is so not the route to go down – think before you leap (or climb that tree/down that fourteenth shot/streak through your neighbourhood/punch the guy or gal giving your squeeze the glad eye, etc!)
- Have a blast, we intend to!

Don’t...

Don’t? Who likes being told they can’t do something!!



Rubber Bandits



Arveene

Event Updates

Rubber Bandits, Limerick’s answer to phonejacker, will be playing in Trinity Rooms with DJ Sash! on the Monday night of Rag Week – if you’re not familiar with them, check out www.bebo.com/rubberbandits. Monday’s looking real good!

The offical line-up for the rag ball on the Thursday night looks as follows - The Blizzards, Dirty Epics, Vesta Varo, Walter Mitty and The Realists and Baby Jenx.....and now with the addition of Arveene! The man with the skills to pay the bills, he’ll will blow you away with his funky blend of tunes with a mix of electro, funk, techno, reggae and beats – Thursday’s looking even better!

And for anyone who feels like doing something a little on the wild side, they should contact damien at damien.cahill@ul.ie and sign up for the bungee jump! We need 70 people to express their interest to go ahead with this, and we need to know as soon as possible, so get cracking!

Student Speak

With the countdown to Rag Week on, we find out what exactly UL students are looking forward to the most...

Andy Hyde
1st Year Law and Accounting
Lushing while laying out in the sun!



Aoife Harney
4th Year Law and Euro
I've honestly never taken part in Rag Week so I'm looking forward to the new experience and the Hypnotist!



Ed Kelly
1st Year Law and Accounting
Young Wolfetones and the Sunday Slodge!



Eoghan O'Shea
1st Year Mechanical Engineering
The Rag Ball – But it's too close to exams for me!



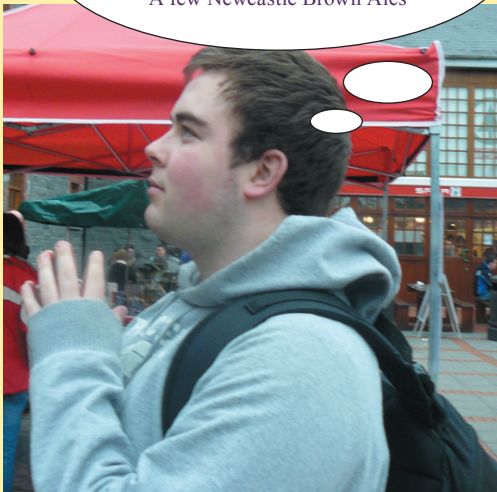
Megan O'Sullivan
1st Year Psychology and Sociology
Duck Race and 5 nights in a row!



Michelle Walsh
4th Year Business
Free food and going to the lodge at 9 and coming home at one!



Neil Treacy
1st Year Journalism
DJ Sash in Trinity Rooms!
A few Newcastle Brown Ales



Orla Walsh
1st Year Journalism
Fred and a few social ones!



Neil Walsh
2nd Year Business
All day sessions and cheap beer!!



Steven O'Rourke
2nd Year Business
The Blizzards and the alcohol!





Seven medals for UL Kayakers at International Clash

Gardaí investigate as UL steal victory

Eimear O'Donnell

UL KAYAKERS rang in the New Year in style by winning the prestigious invitational-only Clare Glens Race on 24 January, 2009. The race took place on the infamous Clare Glens River located just fifteen minutes outside of campus.

UL Kayak Club was proudly represented by two teams which showed incredible stamina and skill, taking both first and third place.

Kayakers Kevin Egan, Sean McTernan and Shane Lynch scooped top place and brought home gold and the trophy, showing ULKC's true colours. Bronze also went to the UL trio of Tom O'Donoghue, Mickie Brennan and Conor Bredin.

Organised by enthusiastic ULKC paddlers, John O'Rourke and Ross Redmond, this event saw 50 of Ireland and Britain's top paddlers battle it out for first place.

The Clare Glens is a solid Grade 4 run, challenging to even the most elite of the kayaking community. The two trophies up for grabs were

for Team and Individual divisions. The rules were simple: paddle as fast as you could through multiple waterfalls and rapids from top to bottom.

The day began with the Team Race. This saw a kaleidoscope of the country's finest kayakers pushing the limit in teams of three, trying to beat the clock. Flying down the river rapid after rapid, paddles flying through the air, landing massive drops, – it was hard not to get caught up in the adrenaline fuelled environment.

The individual race saw the teams disband and it was every man for himself. This event unleashed a few surprises when the river claimed a few egos through a couple of unexpected swims from some of the more experienced paddlers. ULKC's Conor Bredin took home another bronze medal and bringing the ULKC tally up to seven medals, and a brand new shiny plaque.

The event was an undisputed success and showed the true potential of UL clubs and society members on an international level.

Fiona Reidy & Tomás McCarthy

UL – 22 Gardaí – 16
THE UL Ladies rugby team recorded a vital league victory over Garda on 11 February. In a high quality contest UL pulled out all the stops to defeat a Garda side that looked destined for victory.

The home side got off to an ideal start. On three minutes after some solid build up play Danielle Ryan made a break from deep to skate over for a try that Amy Gueiran converted.

UL, though, were giving away too many penalties at the ruck and were punished. By the 15 minute mark it was 7-6 and the Guards were looking dangerous in the backs. The UL backs were also causing havoc and this resulted in Jo O'Meara going in under the sticks for try number two on 17 minutes.

The two sides were giving it everything much to the enjoyment of the small crowd that had gathered. UL led 12-9 at the interval.

The second half saw the Guards lifting the tempo and they began to dominate territory. A try was just reward for their efforts as UL now trailed 16-12 and looked to be struggling.

However, the Garda defence was shaky and Danielle Ryan took full advantage mid way through the second period. Again she made a break from half way and went on a mazy run to the corner to put UL a point ahead.

Then disaster struck when Anna Caplice was sin binned. Through lots of hard work UL survived the onslaught and Caplice had the last laugh touching down with less than ten minutes remaining. This left the score 22-16 but the Guards were not finished.

UL were forced to defend a five metre scrum and also escaped with a few hairy moments in the closing stages.

Inspired by player of the match Danielle Ryan though, UL ran out six point victors after a fantastic battle.

Before the Garda game UL recorded their first win of the season beating NUIG comprehensively on Wednesday of Week 2. UL were the dominant team throughout and it never looked like NUIG would be victorious.

UL's scoring opened early on with debutant winger Eileen Shanahan crossing the line out wide after a well worked passage of play between the forwards and the backs. Laura O'Mahony scored the next try one which could only be described as pure brilliance.

O'Mahony received the ball just past the half way line and with some fancy footwork, evaded the wall of defenders in front of her and scored

under the posts. UL then defended for a long period of the second half holding NUIG scoreless up to half time. NUIG came storming out of the blocks after half time and after some strong hard running from their centre they scored a try.

UL regained control once more with O'Mahony scoring another try, after the forwards set up the backs with clean fast ball. NUIG responded with a try of their own one in which the UL players felt was a soft one to concede.

UL's full back Aisling Hutchings scored the final try of the game one which gave UL a crucial bonus point victory. Everyone preformed well on the day and it was a win which came from an all round solid team performance. Final score UL 20 NUIG 10.



Making a dash - UL ladies rugby players chase down the Garda opposition (photo by Violeta Reimunde, UL PhotoSoc)

UL upset Fitz champions

Tomás McCarthy

*UL 0-16
WIT 0-12*
UL HURLERS stamped their authority on the opening day of the Ulster Bank Fitzgibbon Cup with a four point win over WIT on 5 February. This victory over last year's champions now makes UL serious contenders to claim the big prize at Trinity College at the end of the month.
Due to the poor condition of the UL pitches, the game was played at Newtownshandrum in Co Cork. UL had first use of a strong breeze that was

blowing at the venue.
Despite this, the first half exchanges were close and hard fought. Brian Carroll and Ray McLoughney were locked together in a free taking battle for much of the half. All of WIT's scores came from placed balls with five courtesy of McLoughney and one from midfielder Stephen Lillis.
UL led at the break by only two points 0-8 to 0-6. It didn't look to be a sufficient lead going into the second half.
That second half saw the sides level on three separate occasions. However, UL

had the greater will to win and hit a crucial purple patch. Five points followed including three from Carroll to leave WIT in trouble.
During this time John Greene and substitute Jim Bob McCarthy made a vital impact.
The champions tried hard through the likes of Lillis, TJ Reid and Fintan O'Leary but it simply wasn't enough.
The UL rearguard with Kieran Joyce and Tom Stapleton providing stability in the centre prevented any danger of a goal. In the end that five point scoring

spree in the second half of a tight game coupled with Carroll's accuracy was sufficient for UL to commence their campaign on a winning note.
Ger Cunningham must be very satisfied with the strides his side are making this season. A greater consistency is being brought from the league through the Waterford Crystal and now into the Fitzgibbon. The most important thing off all though is that the big players are now stepping up to the plate on the big days.
In this game Brian Carroll, Seamus

Hickey and Kieran Joyce, probably UL's three top players, made a telling contribution. If they continue to do so talk of a Fitzgibbon becomes more than realistic.
UL's next assignment in the group section was an away clash with Dublin IT in mid February. WIT defeated DIT 1-18 to 0-4 to stay in the competition while NUIG and Cork IT also progressed to the next round.

UL: J Dempsey, B Fox, K Joyce, M Verney, S O'Brien, T Stapleton (0-1f),

M Walsh (0-1), S Hickey (0-3), M Gleeson (0-1), B Carroll (0-7 5f), R O'Dwyer (0-1), J Greene, D Hayden, S Ryan, A Egan (0-2). Subs: P McCormack (35) for Dempsey, JB McCarthy (39) for O'Brien, N O'Murchu (40) for Ryan, M Ruth (54) for O'Dwyer.
WIT: A Power, B Kenny, R McCarthy, C Cooney, PJ Rowe, E Barrett, J Ryan, S Lillis (0-3 2f), M Dunne, R Good, TJ Reid (0-2), F O'Leary, T Hammersly, S Fives (0-1), R McLoughney (0-6f). Subs: J Gahan (35) for Dunne, E Hickey (45) for Hammersly, K Grehan (60) for Good.

Comment

Bohs continue their up and down season

Conor McGrath

INCONSISTENCY has become the bane of UL Bohemians and their silverware aspirations this season. They needed to start the New Year with a bang and they did just that.

Home wins against Dungannon

and Clontarf made up some ground on the leaders and it put Bohs in a favourable position in the league standings.

However, their mini streak ended in an unlucky 20-18 defeat to Garryowen in Dooradoyle, which is always a tough fixture for any side.

The game was a tale of two halves. Bohs were twenty points down at half time and the game was seemingly over. A fight back ensued with tries from Paul Grenelle and Mark Doyle, whose try was apparently identical to Maradona's solo effort against England in Mexico '86.

Unfortunately, the crucial late conversion was missed and Bohs suffered another defeat. They are currently seventh in the League with an extra game played. They are only five points behind the leaders, Cork Con, and there are five games left so a play-off place can be acquired.

On the other hand, the U20s are continuing their irresistible form. They recently overcame Cork Con 34-8. Six tries from Finbarr Ryan, David Kilcoyne and Finbarr Aherne helped the U20s overcome a bogey team of recent years.

Corinthians of Galway will have a major sword to dodge. Joy

Neville's season seems to be getting better by the month. She recently captained the Irish Women's team to victory over France in the women's Six Nations championship. This was their ever first victory over the French and it represents another milestone for Irish rugby.

Balls flying every where

UL SOFTBALL Club hosted Ireland's first ever international indoor softball tournament over St Valentine's weekend.

Club President Eoghan Reade explained, "Well, softball, a game similar to baseball and rounders, has been a field sport for quite a while but this venture into the indoors is relatively new – but inevitable in this lovely Irish weather!"

"As with indoor soccer, the balls in indoor softball smack off the walls and rebound with great speed. This makes for a very fast-paced, exciting game."

Saturday saw the Ori-Ginals, the 55's and the Sticks & Chicks play some very tight games.

The Sticks & Chicks eventually saw off the 55's in the semi-final on Sunday by just one point and so went on to the final against the Ori-Ginals. It was a well fought game but nicely won by the Ori-Ginals in the end.

"Hats off to the Belfast team and Team Deadly also; both had some smashing games.

The next indoor tournament has yet to be arranged but in the meantime the Softball Club has inter-varsities in Dublin on the 28 February to 1 March and our own here in UL at the end of March," said Mr Reade.

The club trains on the Astroturf every Wednesday and Friday from 2-4pm and beginners are always welcome. Softball is a very easy game to pick up and anyone who comes along will be well able to play in the inter-varsities.

For more information email ulsoftball@gmail.com.

UL represented at national handball IV

THE annual influx of young handballers in Kingscourt Co. Cavan continued again this year from Thursday, 29 January, to Sunday, 1 February, as students battled it out for the ICHA All-Ireland 40x20 Singles Inter-varsities. UL were well represented by 16 men and women across 12 divisions.

Cathal Hannon got proceedings got underway for UL on a positive note on Thursday evening in the Men's Open Division with a tie-breaker victory over GMT's Dara Reid on a score line of 12-15, 15-14, 11-5. There were mixed emotions for UL in the Men's B-C grade as wins for Jamie Geraghty and Neil Crehan were cancelled out by defeats for Charlie Nolan and John Peppard. The evening's fixtures for UL concluded with a victory for Fiachra Hayes over Colm Grace (DCU) but defeat for Mark O'Donovan, James Fitzgerald and Gary Hassett.

On Friday morning in the Men's Open Ollie Cassidy scored a comfortable victory over James Brady (DCU) 15-12, 15-2 while Cathal Hannon went down 15-8, 15-9 to Darragh Daly (UUJ).The Men's B-C grade produced a defeat for James Geraghty while Neil Crehan received a walkover. Charlie Nolan and Fiachra Hayes emerged victorious from the next round of fixtures in the C-Contender division while John Peppard suffered defeat. Gary Hassett and Mark O'Donovan were successful in two close games in the Contender-Challenger grade while James Fitzgerald suffered a heavy defeat.

In the ladies Deirdre Donohue

led the charge with a battling victory over LIT's Pauline Gallagher, after which she succumbed to the eventual Ladies Open Champion Marianna Rushe (UCD). In the ladies A-B-C there were resounding victories for Lisa Falvey and Karen Lawlor. This promoted both to the A-B grade where Karen defeated Pauline Gallagher and Lisa unfortunately lost to DIT's Katie Costello. In the ladies B-C Edel Finnegan and Therese Hearn both bowed out to stiff competition in the form of Laura Keaver (DIT) and Joanne Logan while in the Ladies C-Challenger Mary Glennon faced a similar fate.

On Saturday morning Ollie Cassidy eventually bowed out of the Men's Open at the quarter-final stage to Padraig McGlinchey (UUJ) on a score of 12-15, 15-11, 11-6. Cathal Hannon repeated this feat in the A grade where he battled hard against UCC's David Walsh 15-10, 15-2. In the Men's B Neil Crehan was stopped by David Smith (DCU). This unfortunate sequence of events followed through to the C division where Fiachra Hayes and Charlie Nolan also crashed out of the competition. Finally the downward spiral was halted by John Peppard and Mark O'Donovan who recorded resounding victories in the Men's Contender division putting them through to the quarter-finals. In the same round Gary Hassett lost out to Micheál Moran (NUIG). John and Mark continued their good form with wins over Enda Fitzpatrick (CI) and Eoin Cleary (UCD). In the semis Bernard Reilly (CI) and Declan Smith (UCD) felt the full force of

this momentum as John and Mark advanced to make it an all UL final. In the Men's Challenger quarter-final James Fitzgerald suffered a tie-breaker defeat to Peter Clinton (UCD).

Karen Lawlor got the ball rolling for the UL ladies with a tie-breaker victory over UCD's Hilary Rushe 15-8, 10-15, 11-1 which she followed up with a convincing victory over NUIG's Catriona Casey. In the other semi-final Deirdre Donohue overpowered Katie Costello (DIT) to set up another all UL final. In the Ladies B Lisa Falvey recovered from the previous day's defeat to make the final with victories over Rachael Gibbons and Michelle Gaffney. Edel Finnegan showed her worth in the Ladies C division as she notched up two big scores against Natalie Ni Shim (QUB) 15-1, 15-3 and Aileen Quinn (DCU) 15-4, 15-4 to progress to the final. Unfortunately Therese Hearn could not make it another all UL clash as she pushed Sinead Byrne (DIT) all the way in a tightly contested 15-6, 2-15, 11-5 defeat. Finally Mary Glennon qualified for yet another final as she brushed aside Sinead Carroll (DCU).

The finals of each division were played off on Saturday evening and Sunday afternoon. Deirdre Donohue picked up UL's first gold medal of the weekend in an exciting tie with fellow UL team-mate Karen Lawlor on a score line of 15-8, 15-7 . Next up was Lisa Falvey in the B final whose powerful serving allowed her to stroll to victory over Sarah Loughnane (NUIG) 15-1, 15-0. Edel Finnegan made it a treble for the

UL sports round-up



Tomás McCarthy & Fiona Reidy

Camogie

UL succumbed to quarter final heartbreak after they were beaten by a very good WIT side. The final score was WIT 2-10 to UL's 0-7. UL chased the game throughout with Niamh Mulcahy's accuracy keeping them just about in touch for the duration. UL are now in the Ashbourne shield for the second year in a row; which is being held in UCC during the weekend of week 5.

Basketball

The Ladies Varsity team is as follows: Merlin Byrne, Kelli Cahalane, Marie Deegan, Adamantine Droualliere, Cathy Grant, Miriam Leane, Edel Maher, Virginia McLoughlin, Amy O'Brien, Elaine O'Dwyer, Brenda O'Riordan and Fiona Scally.

Soccer

UL have advanced to the final of the Colleges & Universities Football League final. On February 10 UL defeated UCD 1-0 in Salthill Devon

to progress to a final meeting with Letterkenny IT.

Pool Intervarsities

The UL Pool Team recently entered the Pool Intervarsities in Birr Co Offaly on the weekend of February 7/8.

An Focal Five A Side

Think you can take on the likes of McCarthy, Condren, King, Reidy and McGrath in a competitive five a side soccer match? Now's your chance. The An Focal Sports team are putting their reputations on the line to take on a five a side team in UL. Interested? Email mossy.mccarthy@gmail.com to take up the challenge.

Comments

As always we appreciate all your views, comments and questions. The address as always is mossy.mccarthy@gmail.com or leave a comment on our bebo page www.bebo.com/anfocalsport. Give it a lash!

ladies when she came out on top in a thrilling contest when she recorded a 15-14, 15-14 victory over Sinead Byrne. Mary Glennon was unable to take this feat one step further as she suffered defeat at the hands of DCU's Orla Gaffney 15-7, 15-4. John Peppard brought home UL's only other gold as he overcame Mark O'Donovan in the Men's Contender

final in another titanic all UL clash 15-9, 15-14.

And so concluded the Kingscourt invasion for another year as the UL Handball Club cemented their status as one of the country's top intervarsity handball clubs with a haul of 7 medals; 4 winners and 3 runners – up, more than any other college.

UL ladies soccer inch closer to league title

Ruth Fahy

UL 4
SLIGO IT 0

WITH just three games remaining in the league, collecting three points away to Sligo IT was vital for the UL Ladies Soccerin their quest for the league title. With Sligo having remained unbeaten since 2001 on home ground it was never going to be an easy task for the visitors but UL made no mistake in capitalizing on a weak Sligo performance as they ran out four nil winners after the ninety minutes.

They say it is a sign of a good team to win well without actually performing well. Unfortunately some may say that this was the case last Thursday as UL struggled to regain their regular fluidity, although this was to be expected since it was a very depleted side that travelled. Four squad members had left for co-op, and another was absent for medical reasons. Therefore a true squad effort was required and it was a true squad effort that ensued.

From kick-off the UL intent was clear. For the initial half an hour the majority of possession occurred in the Sligo half and UL were unlucky not to profit from a shaky Sligo defence, who were finding it extremely difficult to deal with the pace of strikers Aoife Herbert, Lindsey McKee and Jenny Downey, all of whom created close chances but found keeper Tina Hughes in top form between the Sligo posts.

At the other end, skipper Siobhan O’Sullivan produced a Player of the Match performance as she consistently prevented Sligo striker, and notorious goalscorer, Emma Mullen from threatening the UL goal.

It was a only a matter of time before the deadlock was broken and about ten minutes before the half time whistle McKee and Downey combined to produce a smart stop from Hughes. The ball rolled out tantalisingly to Ruth Fahy, unmarked inside the edge of the box, and had the simple task of merely side footing it into a gaping goal.

The second half could have been considerably more stressful for the visiting side had Annie Lynskey, Sligo’s most energetic attacker by far, scored after embarking on a skilful run but her final shot dipped just over the crossbar.

UL’s response was superb when the ever reliable McKee turned on the edge of the Sligo box and curled a magnificent shot into the top left hand corner. When, a few minutes later, a deflected cross was turned into their own net by a Sligo defender to make it three nil to UL, it seemed any fight remaining in the Sligo side had been permanently deflated.

A fantastic corner from McKee that somehow bended into the far post to make it four nil marked the match well and truly over.

UL were due play UCC at home in Week 4 for the possibility of winning the league the following week when they play closest contenders UCD in their final match.

With the intervarsity tournament the week after in Castlebar, it is a busy few weeks in store for the team, with aims to complete a historical triple this season.

With coaches Mike Considine and Sean Hehir working hard to gel the side into the dynamic force it was last semester and with the talent and depth available hopes are high as the girls enter the final few weeks of the soccer semester.

The University of Jordanstown claimed the 2009 Harding Cup with an extra time victory over UL at the UL Bowl. The Harding Cup is the annual freshers’ soccer tournament which UL had the honour of hosting this year from 5 February to 8 February.

UL, the reigning champions, opened their campaign on Friday with a quarter final tie with DCU. It was glorious sunny morning at the Bowl but bitterly cold.

Martin Deady got the hosts off to an ideal start early on. His curling fourth minute free kick from the left wing missed

Ronaldson crushes UL’s Sigerson hopes

Tomás McCarthy

UCD 1-16 UL 1-15

MAYO’S Mark Ronaldson broke UL hearts in a dramatic and bizarre Sigerson Cup round 2 clash at Belfield on 12 February. UCD and UL needed three periods of extra time to separate each other and in the end it was a Ronaldson point that saw UL crashing out of the competition.

This match had been called off a week previous after a pitch inspection but this time Belfield was ready. However, UL didn’t seem to be ready for the first half onslaught from the home outfit.

The Dublin side led 1-8 to 0-3 at the break with Ronaldson finding the net. It appeared at that stage that UL were about to limp out of the Sigerson Cup without a fight.

In the proverbial game of two halves UL turned it around.

No doubt with Cian O’Neill’s strong words ringing in their ears the scores flowed. Enda Varley and Fiachra Lynch were pivotal to this incredible fight back. Varley was proving reliable from frees while Cork man Lynch buried a vital goal on 53 minutes.

Midfielder David Moran then found an equaliser to make it 1-10 apiece. Amazingly, Lynch had UL in front with an injury time point. UL had now scored 1-7 without reply and looked set for their greatest Sigerson triumph. That man Ronaldson though intervened to bring the game to extra time.

UCD moved three points to the good in extra time but once again UL didn’t give in. Two points from Enda Varley and one from Lorcan O’Dwyer left the two sides level once again. Another two periods of extra time five minutes a side had to be played to find a winner.

After ninety minutes of gruelling action, UCD found that winner through Ronaldson who finished with a tally of 1-7 to his name. As referee Gary

McCormack blew the final whistle it was harsh justice on a brave UL team to end up on the losing side.

There can be no doubt that UL would not have looked out of place in the last eight of this competition. Throughout this season they have shown that they are able to match the best.

Cian O’Neill was confident before this game that they were good enough to make a Sigerson weekend. His confidence was nearly justified as UL were so close to beating a traditional top four team like UCD. Near misses will be of little consolation to players or management but they can still be proud of their efforts.

Players like David Moran, Paddy Byrne, Stephen Lonergan, Enda Varley and Johnny Buckley to name a few have put UL football back on the map.

They have also been lead by a great management team headed by Cian O’Neill. UL can count themselves lucky to have a man of such dedication and integrity to coach the football team.

O’Neill is a passionate lover of GAA but he is also a true gentleman. His loss to this year’s competition as well as his team’s will be sorely felt.

UCD: S Gallagher; D Curran, M Loftus, Peter Kelly; Paul Kelly (0-1), C Brady, C O’Sullivan; C Murphy, J Fitzpatrick; J O’Loughlin (0-1), T Diamond, M McGowan; M Ronaldson (1-7), B ORourke (0-2), T Warburton (0-1). Subs: C Lyng (0-1) for McGowan (28 mins), M Gurn for Warburton (38 mins), C Kelly (0-2) for O’Rourke (57 mins), J Mulhare for Murphy (66 mins), N Brogan (0-1) for Paul Kelly (74 mins), F Canavan for OLoughlin (76 mins).

UL: K OMalley; S McKeown, C O’Mahony, R Brady; L O’Dwyer (0-1), M Moloney, D Rattigan; D Moran (0-4), P Byrne (0-1); S Lonergan, S O’Shea, D Bracken; E Varley (0-6), F Lynch (1-1), J Buckley (0-2). Subs: P Larkin for OShea (76 mins), K OBrien for Bracken (80 mins), B Mulvey for Varley (85 mins), P Hogan for Rattigan (89 mins).



UL versus NUIG in the Harding Cup on the Bowl

everyone and found its way to the bottom corner of the net. Deady gave a sparkling display throughout with his deliveries from set plays constantly threatening the DCU rearguard. The Dubliners offered little in attack with the likes of Bobby Tier and Nigel Stanley solid for UL.

The second period saw UL create chance after chance which included Alan Quill striking the post. David McGrath sealed a 2-0 win on 83 minutes after a goalmouth scramble following another Deady corner.

On the following day UL took on NUI Galway again in the Bowl. This game went all the way to extra time with UL eventually running out 3-1 victors. David McGrath, Bobby Tier and Deady all the found the

net to set up a clash with UUJ.

To reach the final UUJ had to defeat Mary I 2-0 after extra time and then impressively dismissed Trinity College 4-0 in the semi final.

UL knew they were in for a tough battle in the decider and that’s what they got.

UUJ full back Karl Hogg fired a shot against the crossbar early on to warn the hosts. Hogg though soon found the mark on 33 minutes after being set up by Colm Kirgan. UL responded and found the equaliser shortly after half time.

Striker Alan Quill hit the back of net on 52 minutes to level proceedings and bring the game to extra time. The first half of extra time was nearing an end when UUJ struck a decisive blow.

In the 104th minute Owen

Moody was the man to break UL hearts with a goal which ultimately saw UUJ claim victory. Moody was sent off minutes later to give UUJ some late, nervous moments. David McGrath had UL’s final chance but it was saved by eventual player of the tournament Matt Quinn.

Despite this defeat, the fresher soccer team can be pleased with their showing in this competition. Great credit must go to the UL soccer club especially Martin Hayes and Declan Rix, two fantastic characters who always represent UL with pride. Stephen Griffin, FAI football facilitator also should be mentioned for his efforts in clearing snow off pitches and cleaning dressing rooms that went above the call of duty on that Harding weekend.

UL Judo Club prepare for IVs

THE UL Judo club hosted an inter-college squad training session on Monday, 9 February to help prepare themselves for the Judo Intervarsities in Maynooth on 21 of this month. The training hosted 25 judo fighters on the mat on the night and consisted of fighters from UL and IT Tralee.

The training camp was held in order to provide beginners with the experience of competition style fighting and fighting players from other clubs while the more experienced fighters concentrated on peaking themselves for the upcoming competition.

“Even though we only started the club in September last year we have a great chance of success in the inter-varsities, some of our members are only beginners they are being helped by the members who have past experience of Judo including a number of Black and Brown belts”, the club’s assistant coach and secretary Kevin O’Sullivan said on the night.

Head coach J.T. Deenihan captains the team, while Kevin O Sullivan, Dymtri Tairov, Mark Fairman and Milosz Wjocik make up the rest of the male team. The female team consists of Laura O Mahoney, Emma Phelan and Mags Foran. The team fighters will also be fighting in individual categories including weight and grade events.

The team will be aided in their endeavours to win some national titles by the presence of two assistant coaches Brian and William Power. The brothers who have both represented Ireland internationally will provide a huge boost for the team’s chances of success during the inter-varsities.

Comment

Buried in the Burren

Mary Foy, a 2nd Year American study abroad student gives an insight into a caving weekend with the Outdoor Pursuits Club.

ON SUNDAY, 6 February, twelve students of UL decided to take part in a caving expedition to the Burren, and it was a day trip that produced wet socks and good memories.

The packing list included rubber gloves, a towel, a change of clothes, and an €8 fee, paid to UL's Outdoor Pursuits Club (OPC), a club that aims to provide exercise, adventure, debauchery, and more.

After a "timely" start, the 12 members of the OPC caving group set out for the Burren. The countryside and the time flew by as new members exchanged names and origins. None had caved before, but all wanted to learn. The UL minibus, manned by Caving Officer Cillian Burke, parked along an uninteresting stretch of road. We saw no caverns, no signs, no holes in the ground.

Each slightly confused member was tossed a pair of boots, a caving suit, and a helmet with a headlamp. We obediently wiggled into the gear and snapped on our rubber gloves. Ignoring any and all 'Danger' signs, the group searched for the cave entrance, which ended up being a damp, rocky, wonderfully cave-y looking crevice.

One by one all twelve of us climbed down, and the caving officially began.



OPC members deep underground in the Burren

The Cullaun 2 Cave is a strange and beautiful thing to explore. The walls are narrow and winding, formed by centuries of water erosion. The cave follows the track of an underground stream past graceful, scooped walls and glistening rock formations. The path is narrow but not uncomfortable, and opens into caverns large enough for 12 cavers to have a picnic by the light of their headlamps.

Cillian Burke, our fearless leader, put his fresh, inexperienced cavers through their paces. Under his guidance we slithered through gaps on our stomachs, crawled under a natural bridge, crossed waterfalls, and waded up to our thighs in cave pools. The high ceilings echoed songs and shouts as we took turns leading the way. Headlamps illuminated muddy gloves, wet caving gear, and smiles all around. When we emerged, each untried and untested OPC member had become an experienced caver, and had the water-filled wellies to prove it.

After exchanging wet clothes for dry ones, the cavers were treated to a wonderful finish to their adventure. A visit to the ocean brought out the tourist in many.

The Cliffs of Moher could be seen from afar, and the crashing waves were a spectacular sight. In a local pub we cavers were reunited with the hillwalkers of the OPC, who had traversed the surface of the Burren while we explored beneath it.

Fish and chips, mussels, and drinks were devoured. We settled by the fireplace and listened, or if we were brave, danced, to some live, traditional music. The group returned to UL exhausted, happy, and with stories to tell about an afternoon spent underground.

Football needs a new kick-start

David Kelly

FOOTBALL runs the risk of being left behind as the technology age spreads from lab to pitchside.

When compared with technological advances in other sports, such as rugby, tennis and GAA, football has come off second best with little or no new changes within the past few years.

The beautiful game has long been overshadowed by referee blunders, which have engulfed the game week in, week out, and lead to furious outbursts by managers, who feel their team has been robbed of precious points.

Think back to all the times you have been denied a certain penalty and the opposing side has been awarded one after a blatant dive. Think of all the times you were a mile onside, yet to be flagged down when you were left one on one with the keeper. How many mistakes can be made before some action is taken?

Every week, be it in the Premiership or the Bundesliga, referees and their assistants make the same mistakes without any serious consequences (they may get a free holiday for next week's game; how rewarding!). Would it make more sense to apply the same technology used in tennis and rugby to football?

Football could learn a lot from these quarters. Perhaps a video referee or the 'man upstairs' could give the match referees a helping hand in making tough decisions or citing players. Referees should have the benefit of seeing a replay before issuing a yellow or red card and laser technology could help sort the 'was it or wasn't it' issue.

Think of all the infamous goals scored that shouldn't have counted. For starters look at Diego Maradona's 'hand of God' goal which sealed England's faith in the 1986 World Cup. Since then there has been nothing

but mistakes from match officials. If you didn't do your job properly what would happen?

Laser technology is a must. Not only would it solve the goal issue, where the whole ball must cross the line, but it could help assistant referees with the offside rule. Football used to be a simple game with the main objective to score a goal, however over time it has become complicated with over 130 pages of rules surrounding the game. Is this really necessary?

All we're looking for is some consistency here. Sometimes it looks as if referees don't even believe their own decisions, yet they stick with them like a spoilt child. If every fan in the stadium knows that a decision is wrong, how can referees still get the decision incorrect?

It seems as if they have too much power and frankly, it goes to their head. We want to help clean up the game and enjoy it, but how can we when the same faults of the last 10 to 15 years remain (I would go further, but I'm too damn young). What we want is a referee who can stand 100 per cent over his decision and at the end of the day can walk off the pitch the same way he entered it. Instead, we hear boo's from the stands and obscenities being thrown in his direction. I'm sorry to say it, but sometimes the fans have a point and such a response is warranted. Let me take you back to Liverpool's game vs. Chelsea last week. Even as a red I agree Frank Lampard's red card was, well out of the blue. How did Bosingwa escape punishment for a horrid lash out at Benayoun under the assistant's nose? Even more ironically, how did the assistant flag the decision in Chelsea's favor?

It truly is astonishing to see such inconsistencies in a modern game that dates back some 3000 years in many variations. It has also been argued that referees have and are

influenced by managers and that is something that Man Utd. And Chelsea have fuelled and tried to perfect over the past number of years. So the question remains about impartiality and hidden interests. I'm not going to suggest the game is dirty or anything like that, but you just never know and then again stranger things have happened.

Technology is key and it could help solve the problems that face the modern game. Experimental rules on a trial basis could help eradicate such problems as diving and consistent fouling. Referees need practical training as well as theoretical and this would make a great schools initiative. It is something the FA is looking into, but with the public ill-informed on its progress or lack of it, football will remain the way it is and inconsistencies will be here for the long term.

It's all well and good when a referee makes a mistake and then calls up the manager the next day to say 'sorry mate I got that decision 100 per cent wrong' and then the manager gets punished for criticizing the referee post-match. What good does that serve? A slap on the wrist solves nothing. Referees should be deducted money from their wages for a poor performance just like any worker would be.

FIFA must look to the future and join the era of technology. Perhaps technology is way down on their to-do list. A good idea would be to open a transfer market for referees across all continents or get every referee to serve in the military for a year to toughen them up. Referees are always protected from criticism and free speech. They use the FA as a shield in which to hide behind after making shocking and appalling decisions.

To my final point – referees are babbling on about respect. If they want respect they have to get the

basics right. You get what you give, eh?



Above: Too little to late as Rob Styles sees the errors in his ways after awarding Chelsea a dubious penalty vs. Liverpool at Anfield in 2007.



Above: Steve Finnan (Liverpool) shields himself from Malouda (Chelsea) in 2007, only to see referee Rob Styles award Chelsea a dubious penalty.



Above: Manchester United Keeper Roy Carroll sees the ball cross the line for Spurs would be winner, only for the referee and his assistant to fail to award the legitimate goal.

Ken hoping to pot his way forward

Neil Treacy

HIS career has been colourful, but one colour in particular springs to mind. Nine years ago, in the 2000 Masters Final, Ken Doherty missed the final black ball for a maximum 147 break, which would have earned him an £80,000 sports car had he made it.

Two years after his successive World Snooker Championship Final appearances and three years before his third, Ken Doherty's career went into freefall.

If the "Darlin' of Dublin" is to turn his career around like he did before the 2003 World Championships, time is most certainly of the essence. With just

a month to go until the qualifying rounds of the 2009 World Championship, Ken Doherty slipped further down the provisional rankings list after his second successive 5-0 defeat in ranking qualifiers.

In 1997, Doherty lifted the World Championship trophy after clinically ending Stephen Hendry's 29 match winning streak at the event, winning the final 18-12. "The Darlin' of Dublin" has won seventeen professional tournaments, has appeared in three World Championship Finals and is one of nine players ever to make over 200 career century breaks.

Doherty came back from the doldrums in 2003 and fought his

way to his third World Final, losing out to Welshman Mark Williams. From here Ken's career got its proverbial second wind, and by the 2006/2007 season he had climbed his way to top of the provisional world rankings.

Since reaching the top of the world rankings, his form has deteriorated, early exits at the last two World Championships evidently wearing down the Dubliner's confidence. Following recent 5-0 drubbings at the hands of teenage sensation Judd Trump and world number 55, Jimmy White, Doherty finds himself provisionally out of the top 32 in the world. He has failed to qualify for this season's China Open and more recently, Welsh Open.

The 39-year-old will take encouragement from the performances of 51-year-old veteran Steve Davis who, despite his age, continues to remain in the top 32 players in the world. Despite not having won a ranking tournament since 1997, Davis has consistently consolidated his place amongst the world's finest and is the benchmark for all approaching the latter stages of their careers.

All that remains to be seen is whether Doherty can pot his way out of the spiral his career seems to be headed for. One thing, however, is for certain. "Crafty Ken" must show shades of his 2003 determination, if he wants to be back amongst the world's elite.

Can Liverpool win the Premier League? Yes!

Liam Togher

ONE of my favourite songs from the last six months is ‘The Man Who Can’t Be Moved’ by Irish band the Script. When that particular chart hit was written, you can be damn sure it wasn’t about me.

A couple of An Focal editions back I stated that Liverpool’s bid for a 19th league title would have to wait until next season at least because of the quirks of manager Rafael Benitez. Just four weeks later, I firmly believe the Reds can end their 19-year wait for league glory. Fickle, am I not?

2009 began with frustration for Liverpool as they failed to win any of their three league games in January. Perhaps the defining moment in their season came at around 5.45pm on 1 February when Fernando Torres, already one of the greatest players ever to line out for this massively successful club, headed Benitez’s team into the lead against Chelsea before sealing the deal two minutes later with his second.

As if he hadn’t brought enough joy to Reds fans everywhere, El Nino pulled another rabbit out of the hat the following weekend against Portsmouth.

Even though Torres is more important to Liverpool than the foundations are to a house, this is no one-man band.

Captain Steven Gerrard tends to coast through many games in second gear but he usually picks the perfect moment to take his team forward.

Then we have Jamie Carragher, the most under-rated player in Premier League history (yes, even more so than the mercurial Denis Irwin), a solid goalkeeper in Jose Reina and the ingenious Xabi Alonso. With these five players on the field the Reds are capable of beating anyone.

Many pundits point to Liverpool’s wide men as the main barrier to winning the league, and while I wouldn’t consider the wings to be the Anfield team’s strong suit, they are not exactly scraping the bottom of the barrel here. Dirk Kuyt is often derided as a fish out of water, but any intelligent Liverpool fan will fully appreciate the Trojan work he does for the team.

He might not have as prolific a scoring record in England as with his previous clubs, but in the Premier League you don’t face cannon fodder defences like those of Heracles, Den Haag and VVV Volendam. Ryan Babel and Yossi Benayoun, when on form, also add something to the party although both have produced stinkers for Liverpool in the past.

If the canny Benitez chooses common sense over his frequent risky brainwaves that are harder to understand than quantum physics, Liverpool can definitely become just the fifth club to win the Premier League in its 17 year history. They are free to focus on this goal having been knocked out of both domestic cups and are unlikely to win the Champions League (even if they get the better of Real Madrid in the



Jamie Carragher

last 16).

It is not going to be a comfortable spring for Reds supporters, but if Gerrard hoists the Premier League trophy at Anfield on 24 May, who cares about the bumpiness of the ride along the way?

No!

John Condren

LIVERPOOL will not win the Barclays Premier League, 2008/09. There, I’ve typed it. I’ve been itching to do it for ages, but seeing those words in print makes me feel so much better. A cast-iron guarantee of sorts. A real thrill of biased journalistic opining. And I don’t give a fiddlers if I’m proved wrong. Because I know I won’t be.

Maybe I should back it up though. Liverpool won’t win the title because... heck, where do I start?

Their attack is woefully inadequate. Compare Torres, Kuyt and Ngog, their three recognised strikers, to Rooney, Tevez and Berbatov (Man Utd), Drogba, Anelka and Kalou (Chelsea), Adebayor, van Persie and Bendtner (Arsenal). Even Agbonlahor, Carew and the pub leaguer’s favourite player, Heskey (Aston Villa). Torres is by common consensus the best striker in the Premiership, but he is injury-prone. Kuyt has the ball control of a donkey on steroids. And Ngog – well, remember Bernard Diomedé? They look alike and share the same squad number. Surely not a coincidence.

They are managed by Rafael Benitez. A man who cannot see quality when it is right in front of his nose, who has not added a single youth player from the once-celebrated Anfield Academy to his regular first team in all his years at Liverpool, who buys and sells players as fast as the man in my local country market peddles sweets and crisps.

There isn’t enough room here to list all the decent players Benitez has had at the club, before discarding them with the petulance of a bored child when they failed to fit into his plans because (a) they weren’t loyal sons of Franco (i.e. Spanish, before I get accused of being fascist) and (b) because they were used to playing for attack-minded managers and not an anally retentive coach who wouldn’t know a counter-attack if it was running at him.

Think Cisse, Baros, Crouch, Pennant, Kromkamp, Paletta, Gonzalez, Bellamy and latterly Robbie Keane. Even the Spanish ones have struggled – Luis Garcia, despite being a Kop hero, was booted back to Espana, his loyal service conveniently forgotten.

Manchester United believe that they will win it. Liverpool don’t. Every week, United keep a clean sheet and scrap another win, waiting patiently for Rooney to return from injury and lash in the goals they have lacked in recent weeks.

For all their defensive prowess, Liverpool stutter against mediocre opposition and lose their concentration and their focus. Lesser teams aren’t scared of Liverpool in the same way they fear United.

And the Liverpool players know that which is why Gerrard hurls himself about aimlessly, trying to intimidate lesser midfielders. Liverpool are universally patronised in the media, every win heralded by a breathless-with-excitement Alan Hansen as a tactical masterstroke from Benitez.

By contrast, United have a flowing game plan, but they are well capable of altering it if necessary which is why they win far more often than they lose or draw.

Liverpool’s rivals are better than them. Aston Villa play in a beautifully nostalgic manner of reckless abandon and are a throwback to the great Villa teams of years gone by.

I for one am delighted to see them pushing the top four all the way. Chelsea are on the brink of recovery from their debilitating football illness and have a better all-round squad than Liverpool’s. And Arsenal – well, they have yet to visit Anfield, but I fancy them to get a result there especially with the classy Andrei Arshavin on board.

The greatest hurling game of all time

Tomás McCarthy

WITH the GAA celebrating 125 years in business, people are looking back at the great moments in the history of the association. A recent topic on a GAA online forum though asked a very simple but tough question, what is the greatest hurling game of all time?

It’s hard to know how good the matches of yesteryear were like compare to the modern game. No matter what way you look at it, though, Galway v Kilkenny 2005 would stand up with the best of them.

The final score line of 5-18 to 4-18 in Galway’s favour only tells you a small amount about this All Ireland semi-final. The match reflected just how good Galway

could be when they get their act together.

Niall Healy had the match of his life rifling a hat trick of goals against John Tennyson who was drafted in for the absent Noel Hickey on the day. Ger Farragher proved deadly from frees and also helped himself to two goals. These two were crucial to Galway on the day but David Tierney proved a lot of doubters wrong on that Croke Park Sunday.

As Michael Duignan pointed out in commentary, Tierney had cut the long hair and started to focus on his hurling and he produced his best performance in a maroon and white jersey.

Amazingly, though, Kilkenny could still have won this game. Eddie Brennan was on fire scoring a goal

inside two minutes and had the Galway defence in trouble all afternoon. The introduction of Ritchie Power revitalised Kilkenny’s challenge and in the end just came up short. It was Galway’s day but more than anything it was a great day for hurling.

Limerick fans will look back fondly on a summer’s day in 1996 at the Gaelic Grounds. Clare were All Ireland champions and they were favourites. It was a sweltering hot day and a great battle ensued but Clare just had the edge. They were ahead 0-15 to 1-11 going into injury time.

Then Barry Foley on as a substitute found an equaliser and the rest I’ll leave to the commentary of Ger Canning.

“Here comes Ciarán Carey. Carey leading the charge of the light brigade. 45 metres out he’s a chance to score. He’s put it high, he’s put it over!”

An inspirational point from a Limerick legend.

Fans of the Treaty County should probably stop reading now as I come to the All Ireland final of 1994. Fondly remembered by Offaly men as the five minute final there will rarely be a more dramatic end to a hurling game.

Leading 2-13 to 1-11 after 65 minutes, Limerick had nearly two hands on the cup as Johnny Dooley stood over a 21 metre free. He went for goal to everyone’s surprise rattling it low to the net and the comeback was on.

A matter of seconds later Pat O’Connor pulled on a long delivery past Joe Quaid for another green flag and suddenly Offaly caught fire. Limerick were shell shocked as point after point rained over at the Hill 16 end.

Johnny Dooley, John Troy and three from Billy Dooley wrapped up the greatest hurling comeback of all time. Martin Hanamy lifted the trophy with the Offaly fans celebrating in shock and sheer joy.

This piece wouldn’t be complete without mentioning Waterford v Cork. The 2004 Munster Final clash between the two will be recalled for many years to come. It will mainly be remembered for John Mullane’s sending off and a piece of sheer brilliance from Paul Flynn. What is

forgotten is the sheer quality of scoring that day. From the first minute to the last the pace never dropped. These two always seem to bring the best out of each other and they had three more classic tussles in 2007.

Here’s some more games that came up. The 1971 clash of Tipperary and Kilkenny which finished 5-17 to 5-14 to Tipp; the 2005 semi-final between Clare and Cork; the dramatic drawn semi-final in 2003 when Cork and Wexford locked horns or maybe the 1997 All Ireland final when Jamesie O’Connor gave Clare the spoils.

The choice is endless; opinions will clash but maybe that Galway-Kilkenny game just edges it. The Cats haven’t been beaten in the Championship since you know!

Just for fun

The Score

Liam Togher

United in reverse gear

What is with Man Utd players behind the steering wheel? If it's not Cristiano Ronaldo ploughing his gleaming new Ferrari into the wall of a tunnel, it's Carlos Tevez getting nabbed without a licence on hand. Maybe next season the club will scrap the medical and make new signings pass their driving test instead!

Look who's come crawling back

With Tottenham going back to the future three times over in the January transfer window, here's a mad guess at the team which will line out on the first day of next season – Robinson, Chimbonda, Naybet, Edman, Stalteri, Davies, Tainio, Mendes, Malbranque, Defoe, Keane. And perhaps they might spring Goran Bunjevcevic, Dimitar Berbatov and Edgar Davids from the bench.

Saints going to hell

Is it really only six years since Southampton were FA Cup finalists and establishing themselves among the top 10 clubs in the top flight? The Saints now lie second from bottom of the Championship with one home win in the league all season.

There's only one man who can save them now...Matt Le Tissier!

Do it! Be champions!

All of us here at An Focal Sport simply love 'Special 1 TV', which follows the Saturday evening footy on Setanta Sports. The five-minute comedy show, with brilliant impressions from Gift Grub genius Mario Rosenstock, is back in a new guise, with Jose the Special One, Sven and Wayne the Boy Wonder still featuring. Tha's brilliant, tha is! **No middle ground**

We've had Arsenal going a season unbeaten in 2003-04 and Derby managing just one league win last year. The La Liga table at mid-February shows that Sporting Gijon, after 22 matches, have yet to draw. So what if they've lost 6-1 (at home), 6-0 and 7-0 earlier in the campaign? We have admiration for anyone who simply doesn't do goalless games.

A tale of what could have been

A little bit of browsing Wikipedia can lead you to discover some amazing little-known facts. For some unknown reason I found myself reading about Greek-born Czech Republic striker Michal Papadopoulos, who had a trial with Arsenal as an 18-year-old in 2003? Remember him, Gunners

A Sports Writers Diary

Tomás McCarthy

31 Jan

What a match in Croker. Stephen O'Neill once again proves he is one of the best forwards in the country. Mulligan's goal celebration to the Hill was also the stuff of legend.

1 Feb

Togher gloats after Liverpool's win over Chelsea. "His armband proved he was a red Torres Torres! You'll never walk alone it said Torres Torres!....

2 Feb

The pool tournament in the Stables barely gets 16 people to take part. A few bar staff were given late call ups to make up the numbers!

3 Feb

"Mayo for Sam" "Mayo for Liam" some of the random quotations from El Lodginton. UCD take on UL in a blizzard on pitch one in the Fresher 2 football. The sports editor watches for 10 minutes then goes for cover.

4 Feb

A-boy Daniel Gosling! One of my housemates says it's only a game. Yeah right! The Sigerson match is called off.

5 Feb

UL emerge victorious in the Fitzgibbon game in Newtownshandrum. I defeat a classmate 2-1 in probably the worst game of pool seen in the UL games room. ITV apologise for playing an ad while Dan Gosling was scoring Everton's winner. An absolute shambles!

6 Feb

Very early start for the Harding Cup quarter final: 11 o'clock – pure madness. Despite the glorious sunshine, the sports editor requires a hat, scarf and gloves to keep warm. Martin Deady is outstanding in a 2-0 victory.

7 Feb

Fantastic game at Croker as Ireland beat France 30-21 much to my surprise. Torres saves lucky Liverpool again!

8 Feb

A depleted Waterford side go down to Tipperary at a very mucky Walsh Park. UL are edged out by UUI in the Harding Cup at the Bowl.

9 Feb

McGrath breaks the news of Scolari's sacking just after a lecture in the Foundation Building. Now that's journalism!

10 Feb

Another entertaining sports writers meeting is complete and John Condren is hungry for carrot cake!

11 Feb

Down in the Stables for Ireland – Georgia. Trapp may not be a good general but he sure is lucky! Photographer Hugh O'Brien makes a mad dash sprint from the SU to the rugby pitches, all for the sake of An Focal. Myself, Hugh and McGrath come up with headlines for the UL v Garda rugby game. 'UL Lays Down The Law' and 'UL Beat Pigs' narrowly missed out.

12 Feb

UCD get the better of UL in a crazy Sigerson game.

13 Feb

Unlucky for some. I've another An Focal to finish off as my email inbox is jammed to the gills.

Give It A Lash Quiz 1

Eoin King tests your sporting knowledge



- Where will the 2010 Ryder Cup be held?
- How many players make up an Australian rules football team?
- Who holds the record for the fastest tennis serve?
- Which English football team were the first to have an all-seater stadium?
- How many tries did the winger Denis Hickie score for Ireland?
- Second to Kerry, which county has the most football All-Stars?
- 7.Who is the manager of the Tipperary senior hurling team?
- In which sport would you see a 'jerk'?
- Who were the first international soccer team to win the World Cup in their own country?
- From which football club did Manchester United buy Roy Keane?

Quotes Of The Edition

Tomás McCarthy

"Sure camogie isn't a real sport at'all"

John Condren lets his thoughts be known when discussing an upcoming UL camogie game.

"Liverpool were like riding him."

Fiona Reidy gives us an interesting view on the Robbie Keane transfer to Spurs.

"Have you nothing better to be doing?"

Editor Aoife Breen is none too impressed when McCarthy asks for euros for the pool table.

"Stop being casual and start being more clinical."

UL fresher soccer boss Martin Hayes giving some concise analysis to his players during the Harding Cup.

"I'd love to know what training regime that ref is on."

A supporter at the Harding Cup spots a rather out of shape referee.

"I'm off to get some carrot cake."

John Condren makes a second appearance. He was a rather hungry man following another gruelling sports writers' meeting.

*"You f**kin Jewish c**t."*

A rather unusual insult to the match official during the Ireland v Georgia in the Stables.

"We are not going to win this game"

McCarthy bangs the table assuredly as he says these words at half time of Ireland v Georgia. Sometimes right, sometimes wrong!

Answers to Sports Quiz

- | | |
|--------------------------|-----------------------|
| 1. Celtic Manor, Wales | 2. 18 |
| 3. Andy Roddick (150mph) | 4. Coventry City |
| 5. 29 | 6. Dublin |
| 7. Liam Sheedy | 8. Weightlifting |
| 9. Uruguay | 10. Nottingham Forest |

Magic Numbers

John Condren


8 Number of career tries the legendary Brian O'Driscoll has now scored against Les Bleus. What a man. Yes, I'm from Leinster, so what?

10,000 Fans who turned up at the rally in Cork city centre to cheer for the dearly beloved 2008 hurling squad on Saturday 7 February. Why mourn for a team clearly past its sell-by date? Move on, the party's over, and they'll all be retired some day anyway.

1 Only one player has scored in every single Premier League season since its inauguration in 1992-93. You've probably already guessed that it's Ryan Giggs.

23 Number of lengths by which last year's Cheltenham Gold Cup winner Denman was beaten on his reappearance at Kempton on 7 February. Fear not ye ante-post backers, 'twas only a warm-up.

15 Golfing whizzkid Rory McIlroy's position in the latest world rankings. It won't be long before he's number 1, say I. And before you point it out I know nothing about golf.



OUT OF SERVICE

without a
class rep you have
no
voice



to become a class rep, email the SU education officer, eamonn.gardiner@ul.ie