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The following document has been compiled on behalf of the UL student field-playing sports; namely the GAA, rugby (men), rugby (ladies), and Ultimate Frisbee, soccer, softball and the American football. As a result of a request to the Clubs & Societies Council on the 4 November, 2008 by representatives of the aforementioned sports, these clubs mandated the Students' Union to facilitate meetings to coordinate a constructive document to relay the problems and obstacles to their respective club development due to the sub-standard quality of the pitches that make up the 10 acres of playing fields and the Maguire's training pitches. It was requested that this be brought to the attention of senior management of the University and all interested parties. Through this consultative process it was agreed that a number of generic questions would be posed to all of these clubs to assist in the formulation of a coherent and professional document.

## Quality of Training Grounds and Playing Pitches

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It is acknowledged that the overall sporting facilities at the University of Limerick operate at the highest level on an international scale, but that the playing pitches are worlds apart in standard and quality of investment.

The 10 acre facility operates a drainage system (clay tile) which has long been surpassed by more effective technologies, while on Maguire's there does not seem to be any functioning drainage system in place. As Maguire's pitches are largely unplayable during the students' playing seasons, there is increased pressure on the 10 acre site which is leading to increased surface degradation. The increases in intensity of usage, coupled with an outdated drainage and maintenance scheme, is allowing standards on the 10 acre and Maguire's to fall below those acceptable in many of the associated governing bodies, let alone on a campus with the sporting pedigree of the University of Limerick.

The soccer club are of the belief that that Maguire's, as a training facility, is simply not in the required condition for top collegiate training. As a result of this, they choose to train on the Astroturf, but are often given unsuitable times which clash with student lectures, labs and tutorials.

The GAA club had no alternative this year, in particular, but to do all their training off-campus at a significant cost. They have many inter-county players on their panels who would not train on such a sub-standard surface due to risk of injury. They cite the fact that there is no adequate training pitch on campus as a massive disadvantage to them.

Ladies' Rugby contends that the facility is a, "third world training facility in comparison to what our members are used to". They have also incurred unnecessary equipment costs with boots and jerseys lasting only a matter of weeks due to extreme conditions of pitches during the first semester of this year.

The UL Vikings have had to cancel numerous training sessions as a result of pitch conditions.

In the context of quality of training pitches, certainly the clubs feel their needs come second to the commercial considerations of the maintenance of the Bowl in light of the minimal attention paid to Maguire's and the 10 acres in comparison. There is a palpable sense of embarrassment and frustration amongst the student clubs about their

own facilities on campus when forced to play off-campus or on sub-standard surfaces on campus.

A common theme throughout the submissions by the clubs has been the steady deterioration of the training area known as Maguire's which has exacerbated the deterioration of the 10 acres of playing pitches and heightened health and safety concerns. Once the pitches are cut up and waterlogged, concerns for player welfare are heightened because the surface water conceals the dangerous holes and depressions underneath.

The Ladies Rugby Club, in particular, attributes two serious leg injuries during one training session on Maguire's in the Autumn Semester of 2008 to these pitch conditions.

The Men's Rugby Club have expressed concern due to large bodies of water in the try scoring area and aquaplaning by students which they ascertain has attributed to injuries. The most obvious hazard to the sport of rugby is during scrimmaging and risk of neck injuries.

The American Football Club are of a similar view and their concerns are elevated from the point of view that their visiting teams have commented on the standard of their pitch and have complained about injuries their players have sustained because of its condition.

The specificity of softball as a field sport means that sliding is an important part of the games and that sliding into a base is done as a safety precaution, preventing the player from being struck with the ball which is capable of doing serious injury. Unfortunately, surface water and concerns on the quality of the soil integrity make sliding extremely dangerous in UL. Special pegs to anchor the bases which had been sliding out from underneath players had been purchased, but these pegs, which are almost a foot long, have been totally ineffective.

Umpires have declared Maguire's unplayable in past events for softball and likewise with the Soccer Club.

From a GAA perspective the lack of nets on both ends of Pitch 1 poses a risk to passers-by and other pitch users and although there appears to be no recorded incident of people being struck by balls, it would be regarded as a standard requirement for GAA clubs nationwide to have nets as a health and safety precautionary measure.

The damage the horses do to the surface has been a concern expressed by all the clubs through their individual submissions and, on a more serious level, the safety of home

and visiting teams alike as horses have been known to gallop within yards of players. This was evidenced during a Softball Intersivity Tournament April (2008). The fouling of the pitches by the horses and this open access has also been mentioned verbally in terms of residents using the playing pitches as an area to walk dogs where fouling also poses a risk which, in the context of an overall review, should be considered.

The soccer club have had very limited access to the Bowl, even though it is meant to be their first pitch of choice. They played only one league game on it this year. With regard to the 10 acres, it has been deemed unplayable by FAI referees on several occasions.

This was the situation with the Garda College fixture, as one example. The club incurred the cost of the referee, forfeited home advantage and had to travel to the Garda College to play the fixture. Given the importance of home advantage in any sport this is an unacceptable disruption to their playing schedule.

A match against Mary Immaculate was postponed twice and re-scheduled twice, but the ten acre was unplayable on each occasion; eventually the game was played off-campus.

This also occurred in the club's biggest game of the year, the league quarter final. Once again, they had to travel off-campus for what should have been a significant event in the UL sporting calendar.

The UL Soccer Club has had to train on the Astroturf due to Maguire's being unplayable, but have outlined that the times allotted on the Astroturf are too short and unsuitable for their members. They also believe that the fact that Ultimate Frisbee are allowed to *train* on the Bowl while they rarely get to use their premier pitch is unacceptable. Training on an Astroturf surface is a very different physical requirement to training on a grass pitch and leaves UL teams at a distinct disadvantage for the players' physical competition preparations.

The GAA club has incurred huge costs in their preparation and matches this year. They are unable to train on campus which causes untold disruption to their team. Many members are unable to attend training due to the round trip to Newtownshandrum in Cork. They believe that they are at a significant disadvantage not having a training facility on campus.

The GAA Club do not play home games on campus anymore and constantly travel away for home games. In the table attached (Appendix 1, page 21), we can see these instances and the significant costs incurred due to Maguire's and the 10 acres not being up to standard.

The Men's student rugby carry out training sessions in Annacotty at an additional cost to the club which is difficult to justify in the context of UL owning over 20 acres of grass surfaces on campus.

UL Ladies' Rugby were initially forced to move their training sessions from the evening to early in the day due to the only area of Maguire's under floodlighting being in a dangerous condition. Once the winter evenings were shorter in terms of natural light, training had to take place on that floodlit area and was cancelled on numerous occasions. As a consequence of sub-standard pitch quality, the training sessions were rescheduled to 7.30am so they could get a higher quality training session, one which would not be marred by "mud, water and misery". They were eventually compelled to move some sessions indoors to the PESS Building. This level and changing of schedules and training plans had a hugely negative effect on participation in the club.

The UL Ladies Rugby was grateful to be granted use of the Bowl for two of their three home games this year – coincidentally, both of which were subsequent to the issue of pitches becoming public knowledge. They only have three home games per year; their third was played on the 10 acres.

UL Softball planned to host the Softball Intervarsity in August 2008, but Maguire's was deemed unplayable. For their second intervarsity, they were only able to invite half the number of teams who wished to take part due to Maguire's again being sub-standard. Softball Ireland have since moved the intervarsity competitions from UL and have given them to QUB Jordanstown.



## Financial Implications arising from Disruption to Playing Season

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### *Soccer Club*

The Soccer Club have incurred the following expenses due to the standard of the playing fields:

- Bus Trip to Garda College: €400
- 3 postponed games: €75 each
- Food for Garda College: €10
- Corbally as back-up for Harding Cup: €850
  - *Totalling €1435 of avoidable expenditure.*

### *GAA Club*

The GAA Club has a table of expenses occurred which is attached at the end of this document (Appendix 1, page 21). They cite the many instances of hiring off-campus facilities and the “crippling costs of being forced to do this”. They add that these costs are not met by the Sports Department and that the implications of this are that the Club is not amply resourced to properly implement its development structures in areas such as coaching and player welfare. The performance of UL teams suffers accordingly.

### *Rugby Club*

UL Men’s Rugby spends between 10 and 15 per cent of its budget on external training and cites that, for a small club with limited finances, it is a big burden on them.

The Ladies Rugby Club also has limited finances. Because of this, it says its members often have no choice but to train on Maguire’s. For them it is a question of opt out or just get on with it. They cite that the Arena is €40 per hour to hire and this is beyond their financial capabilities. The club insists that it could not justify spending this money when proper outdoor facilities should be provided to those who choose to represent the University of Limerick. Other financial implications arise from the rapid deterioration of various sports gear.

### *Softball Club*

The financial cost to UL Softball arises from their inability to host their regular tournaments as a direct result of the national body deeming Maguire’s as not being up

to standard. The club has an annual expenditure of approximately €9,000, of which the intervarsity competition which they can no longer host would offset €3,000. This is a significant loss to the club and it says that it is finding it difficult to function without this income.

All the clubs that regularly use the pitches (excluding the Bowl) believe that the reduced enjoyment of the sporting experience due to sub-standard surfaces is impacting on their collective club development in the form of a reduced membership base. In addition to this concern, many believe UL students are unable to reach their full sporting potential due to pitch quality.

The soccer club have suffered from this already as their UL ladies second team, who they believe had enough talent to win their respective league, were eventually withdrawn due to dwindling interest which that club relates to the, “dreadful training conditions and lack of facilities offered to that squad”.

Club development is further stunted due to the fact that, because of the standard of Maguire’s, all slots that are available for their club on the Astro turf are currently taken up by their first team duties, which leaves no time for the non-elite club members who are interested in recreational activities.

The UL Vikings American football club feel that, despite being the Shamrock Bowl champions for the last two seasons, the active membership is at a much lower than their expectation and members’ feedback is attributing this to training for eleven months of the year on poor standard pitches.

Ultimate Frisbee is a new club to UL but, as a sport, is played the world over as a simple and demanding game that requires a high degree of speed, stamina and agility. Their regular access to the Bowl and its general consistent pitch quality result in this club offering the most positive assessment of the campus playing fields and believe the club can grow with access to more pitches of high quality.

In terms of participation rates and the opportunity this sport has to offer in physical fitness and fun, the potential for this activity is huge and offers many of the traits that make tag rugby so popular. This is evidenced in a recent competition in February 2009 which involved players travelling from England, the Netherlands and Canada and involved 6 pitches on the 10 acres being utilised.

The membership figures for softball have suffered greatly this academic year which is not attributed solely to the condition of the fields but was complicated with the closure of the Astro turf early last semester which resulted in the cancellation of seven of their first 9 training sessions. As such, having access to playing surfaces at the start of the first semester are imperative for the Softball Club’s promotion and

development and would have negated these problems had this been a realistic option in semester one, 2008.

The student rugby clubs, too, have difficulties as outlined in the health and safety section which interferes with their ability to develop. Set plays from the scrum and ruck are a key component to their tactics but cannot be regularly achieved during their season which is an obvious impediment to developing their players and clubs.

## Expectations for future development on campus

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Clubs feel that the balance between commercial and student sports is not in their favour when it comes to:

- Grass pitch access
- Access at times appropriate to students
- Regular pitch maintenance

As such, there is a call for the upgrade of playing pitches to be “student-centred” and “student-specific” and that the University would acknowledge and address these concerns.

All clubs have requested for fully floodlit training and match facilities to take account of the sheer volume of students’ clubs’ membership, training, matches and to spread the footfall more evenly across the pitches.

Fencing of pitches has been raised by most clubs in an individual capacity relevant to their own discipline.

Perimeter fencing to deter access from the roadside is mentioned and also as a measure to prevent the consistent problem with horses.

Additional storage facilities and dressing rooms also form part of individual submissions and requests for better access in the form of upgraded footpaths to and from pitches.

A final consideration was that any proposed development would be on a phased basis to minimise disruption and to keep the losses of home fixture (with increased financial burden to the clubs’ own budgets) to a minimum.

Sports-specific club requirements are detailed below.

### *Ultimate Frisbee Club*

At least two dedicated and maintained Ultimate pitches. The dimensions of an Ultimate pitch are one 100 metres by 37 metres, so it is possible to fit two Ultimate pitches in the same space as less than one and a half soccer or rugby pitches.

The club also agrees that a quality path to the pitches would be good and would make the pitches more accessible and welcoming to beginners.

During their annual international tournament the Ultimate Frisbee club need at least six pitches. This is a minimum and would involve all six pitches being used from 9am until 5pm for two straight days which is not desirable. It would be much easier on the pitches and more efficient if they had the use of nine or more pitches.

### *Softball*

Two softball diamonds are required on the current playing fields. Ideally these would have an artificial infield (80 by 80 feet), but they would like one made slightly larger to allow the club to alter pitches to play baseball (100 x 100 feet). A long term plan is to establish baseball to progress the club and its active membership. This has started in the southwest and it is their view that it would be short-sighted not to factor this consideration into their long term plans.

They have also requested a backstop to be included (20 to 25 foot fence behind the batter): this both prevents lost balls and protects spectators.

The Softball Club have concerns for the future of their sport on campus regarding the discussion of fencing-off pitches. Softball fields require 70 metres in each direction at a right angle from home plate. This means that when playing on a soccer field the line going in one direction is long enough, but falls 15 metres short going the other direction. As all field sports in Ireland are played on rectangular fields and the softball field has sides of equal length, the issue will arise on any fenced playing field, making them obsolete for the promotion of softball.

### *Soccer*

In order for the club to develop on campus, they feel they will need a suitable synthetic surface and access at student-friendly suitable times. The club suggested the bottom half of Maguire's to be upgraded to a FIFA standard.

The North campus development is acknowledged, but therein lies concerns of commercial-versus-student club access and stunted membership development.

Ultimately, the club would like to see on campus two high standard, well drained and playable natural surfaces for matches and training (if needed), properly maintained by grounds men whose sole role is the maintenance of the pitches.

### *GAA*

This club has cited the upgrade of Maguire's as an immediate priority which should be a fully floodlit space with at least two sand-based GAA pitches.

The club has also requested that Pitch 1 be equipped with floodlights and have its superior standard preserved by an outer fence.

*Rugby*

Both men's and ladies' rugby requirements are for one match pitch and one training pitch where scrimmaging could be practised.

### **Brief History of UL GAA**

The University of Hurling and Football Club (formerly Thomond College) was founded in October 1974 by Tom Doheny (Tullaroan, Co. Kilkenny), Tom Hogan (Lisdoonvarna, Co. Clare), Jack O'Regan (Ahane, Co. Limerick) and Felix O'Regan and Pat Galvin (Clonakilty, Co. Cork) all of whom were then students of Thomond College. 1991 saw the amalgamation of the NIHE and Thomond College which became the University of Limerick. The club was renamed the UL GAA Club but remained the exact same in every sense of the word. This year sees the UL GAA club celebrate its 35<sup>th</sup> anniversary.

Over the years both codes have enjoyed considerable success both on and off the field. This success has enabled UL GAA to build very strong active clubs and a supportive following both on and off campus.

At present, the clubs have a combined membership of over 1,000 students – 9 per cent of the UL student population – and fields 15 teams across various grades in intervarsity, national, provincial and Limerick county competitions. Therefore, it is the largest club from both a membership perspective and also from the number of teams it fields.

Since the foundation of the GAA Club 35 years ago, the respective codes of Gaelic Football and Hurling/Camogie have won a combined total of forty national third level titles.

The most memorable occasions for the hurling club were the winning on the Fitzgibbon Cup in 1989, 1994 and 2002.

In 1977/78 the football club won Munster & All Ireland Club championship. In 1997 we reached the Sigerson final but lost out to Tralee IT.

### **Notable Hurlers**

- Martin Comerford
- Brian Lohan
- Seanie McMahon



## **Notable Footballers**

- Pat Spillane
- Brian Talty
- Brian Mullins
- Dara Ó Cinneide

## **Introduction**

The University of Limerick GAA club is one of the largest and most successful clubs in the University. The club supports all levels of participation in ladies football, men's football, hurling and camogie with up to fifteen active and participating teams including fresher's, juniors, intermediates and seniors. All of these panels would have approximately 25 members.

The overall aims and ambitions of the club are deep-seated in maintaining its well established proud tradition of producing competitive, successful teams and players, developing and improving performance through professionally supported training methods and management structures and sustaining an effectively run club that is intrinsically linked to its members.

Gaelic games, enjoying the national ethos that they epitomise, always maintained a popular status among students and continue to form an integral part of the social and educational lives of the campus community.

Club membership remains at a consistently high level year in year out, as GAA players seek to pursue the sense of pride and identity associated with involvement which is part and parcel of belonging to an active and successful club.

For some, the UL GAA club provides an opportunity for students to improve their game through active participation in high-profile and coveted Higher Education competitions such as the Sigerson Cup, Fitzgibbon Cup, O'Conner Cup and Ashbourne Cup, while for others the social element and enjoyment of the games is sufficient.

However, recurrent and perennial concerns over training and playing facilities on campus has led the University GAA Club to believe that there is a lack of interest and support from the Sports Department in the development of the GAA club and other student based sports clubs on campus.

This is evident in the consistent lack of training opportunities available to teams, players and coaches. Priority is often given to commercial clubs such as the Irish and

Munster Rugby teams, the FAI and not to UL students who are donning the university colors week in week out and actively representing the University.

This crucially results in a diminishing sense of pride in wearing the UL jersey; the value attached to it, and also the challenge of attracting quality inter-county players into the University and out on to the playing fields. There needs to be a sense of restoration and refocusing the pride and value in representing the University and this can only be achieved through a more student orientated approach from the Sports Department in prioritizing the university over external teams in terms of the availability of quality training facilities.

### **Development, Membership and Performance**

It is the belief of the GAA club across its four codes, that the serious lack of adequate training facilities on campus is now critically hampering the overall development of the club.

Maguire's is now generally regarded as a totally unsatisfactory and unsafe training facility and this is fundamentally due to its outdated drainage system as well as a serious lack of proper development as a sports facility. The current drainage system is 15 years old, it is completely obsolete, and has resulted in a surface which is of such an appallingly low standard that is it potentially totally unsuitable for the various GAA teams to train there.

Concern has now been frequently raised regarding the potential dangers to Health and Safety in the poor quality of Maguire's. Thus, members of the GAA club who are preparing to represent the University at a national level have no option but to begin training on pitch 1, situated on the ten acres. This pitch is supposed to be reserved for competition and has subsequently, due to wear and tear and overuse, been diminished to a substandard quality.

### **Quality of Training and Playing Pitches**

The lack of a training pitch has an immediate impact on the club as a whole; its negative implications are dramatically noticeable in the substantial cost incurred. The UL GAA club is left with no choice but to organize home matches and training sessions off campus, in external venues. Table 1 highlights the many instances of hiring off-campus training facilities, and the attendant crippling costs of being forced to do this. These costs are *not* met by the Sports Department, the implications of such being that financially, the club is not amply resourced to properly implement its

development structures in areas such as coaching and player welfare and the performance of the UL teams suffers accordingly. The regular non-availability of a suitable training pitch on campus is of immediate disadvantage in terms of preparation and undoubtedly leaves our teams at a clear disadvantage, behind our competitors. The general performance of the club is weakened further by the drop-out levels of players due to dissatisfaction with training facilities.

At present, it is most disconcerting to compare the training and playing facilities here in UL with all our Higher Education counterparts, in Munster and further afield. LIT, UCC, CIT and WIT not to mention UCD, NUIG, AIT and IT Sligo all can now boast far superior facilities for Gaelic Games and perhaps other codes as well.

But the primary concern of this document is to impress on the UL authorities, the now clearly evident disadvantages under which our clubs Gaelic Games activities are forced to operate.

### **Record of UL GAA Clubs Achievements in Recent Years**

#### **2008/09**

- Fitzgibbon Cup runners up
- Fresher 2 hurlers won the league.
- Fresher 1 hurler's lose first round of championship to LIT.
- Fresher 1 football beaten by DCU in Q/Final of the league and beaten by AIT in the Championship
- Fresher 2 football lost first round of the championship to UCD.
- Senior hurler's beaten in the league final by UCC.
- Senior hurlers are through to the Fitzgibbon Cup quarter final after beating current holders WIT and drawing with DIT.
- Senior football beaten in the McGrath Cup final by Cork and beaten in the Sigerson 2<sup>nd</sup> round by UCD.
- Camogie beaten in the Ashbourne Cup first round and losing finalists in the Ashbourne Shield.
- Ladies football beat NUIM in the 1<sup>st</sup> round of the O'Conner Cup and advance in the competition.

#### **2007/08**

- Fresher 2 hurlers won the league and championship – first time in UL's history.

- Fresher 1 hurlers failed to get out of their group in both league and championship.
- Fresher 1&2 football both failed to get out of their groups.
- Junior hurlers won the league.
- Ladies footballers lost the first round of the O'Connor Cup
- Camogie win the Ashbourne Shield.
- Senior footballers beaten in the 2<sup>nd</sup> Round of the Sigerson Cup by GMIT and were also beaten by Clare in the McGrath Cup semi final.

### **O'Connor Cup Winners**

1993,1994,1995,1996,1997,2004,2007

### **Ashbourne Cup Winners**

1995,2004,2005,2006

### **Fitzgibbon Cup Winners**

1989, 1994, 2002 (beaten finalists 2005, 2009)

### **Expectation of Future Development on Campus**

With fifteen active teams at present, this document outlines the substandard conditions that the GAA club is currently operating under. The condition of Maguire's pitches have deteriorated so much in recent years that it has left us with no option but to train on Pitch 1 which is meant to be the premier GAA pitch on campus.

The student members of the GAA club expect the University to provide adequate training & playing facilities to reflect the effort they are putting into their club.

With much talk of the University spending €9 million on the proposed North campus sports facility, which no student club have been consulted on, the student members of the GAA would expect the University to provide them with adequate facilities before any future commercial development to the University takes place.

The upgrade of Maguire's is needed immediately. It should be a fully floodlit space with at least 2 sand based GAA pitches.

The upgrade of the outer fence of the University Campus is also needs to look at stopping the recent invasion of horses to the pitches.

*Pitch 1* needs to be equipped with floodlights.

An outer fence around the *pitch 1* also needs to be installed so the pitch can be maintained to the superior standard the students of the University of Limerick GAA club need.

The lack of nets on both ends of *pitch 1* not only has a financial implication on the GAA club with the loss of footballs and sliotars, it is also becoming an increasing *health and safety* concern. It is only a matter of time before a passer-by is struck by a ball and is seriously injured.

It is the expectation of the student members of the GAA club that the University provide us with the facilities that we can be proud of and that may allow us to reach our potential as student athletes in our time here at UL. It is envisaged that these upgrades could be made to the current playing pitches at a fraction of the cost of 9million.

With a world class Arena on campus and the Bowl, it is about time that the University and the Sports Department show some interest in developing student-specific playing pitches.

### UL Home games played away due to unplayable pitch 1 conditions

Date	Team	Competition	Opposition	Venue	Reason	Pitch €	Food €	Transport €	Total Cost €
13/01/2009	Senior Football	McGrath cup	WIT	Newtown	Night game	150	256		406
10/02/2009	Int Football	Challenge	Newmarket	Ballyhooley		50	n/a	cars	50
03/12/2008	Senior Hurling	League Final		Newtown		150	300		
11/01/2009	Senior Hurling	Waterford Crys Cup	CIT	Newtown	Night game	150	280	cars	430
05/02/2009	Senior Hurling	Fitz	WIT	Newtown		150	n/a	cars	150
28/02/2009	Senior Hurling	Fitz	St Pats	Newtown		300	800	60	1160
11/11/2008	Int Hurling	League	CIT	Newtown		150	180	370	700
19/11/2008	Int Hurling	League	WIT	Newtown		150	135	n/a	285
28/01/2009	Int Hurling	Championship	WIT	Templederry	Pitch 1 water-logged	50	160	150	360
06/11/2008	Junior Hurling	League	CIT	Newtown		150	n/a	400	550
19/11/2008	Junior Hurling	League	WIT	Newtown		150	n/a	n/a	150
11/11/2008	Fresher 1 Hurling	League	CIT	Newtown		150	180	n/a	330
03/11/2008	Fresher 1 Hurling	Training		Newtown		150	n/a	380	530
20/11/2008	Fresher 2 Hurling	League	Tralee	Newtown		150	Walkover from Tralee		
28/01/2009	Fresher hurling	Challenge	UCC	Garryspillane	Pitch 1 water-logged	150		300	450
24/11/2008	Senior Ladies Fball	League final	UCC	Newtown		150	170	180	500
12/02/2009	Senior Ladies Fball	Challenge	Tipp seniors	Newtown		150	n/a	n/a	150
04/11/2008	Int ladies fball	League	CIT	Newtown		150	180	400	730
12/11/2008	Int ladies fball	League	Garda	Ahane		n/a	n/a	n/a	
04/11/2008	Senior camogie	League	CIT	Newtown		150	n/a	n/a	150
18/11/2008	Senior camogie	League	UCC	Newtown		150	150	n/a	300
01/02/2009	Senior camogie	Challenge	Limerick	Ahane		n/a	n/a	n/a	
<b>Total €</b>						<b>2950</b>	<b>2791</b>	<b>2240</b>	<b>7381</b>

**Introduction:**

The UL soccer Club currently has 267 registered members with 100 actively participating in University teams. We feel that due to a lack of facilities and poor training conditions, there has been a loss of interest and in turn a loss of quality from our sides. We feel that with better facilities we can increase both active and non active members and offer more to recreational users. Even with these disadvantages UL Soccer is a formidable force in national Soccer. Below are our honours from the two years just past. We think that with proper facilities we can grow and improve on our honours to date.

**2007/08**

- Men's Collingwood Runners-Up
- Men's Harding Cup Winners
- Men's Crowley Plate Winners
- Women's Premier League Winners
- Women's Freshers Winners
- Women's Senior IV Winners
- Women's Indoor IV Runners-Up

**2008/09:**

- Men's Farquhar Cup Winners
- Men's CUFL Premier Winners
- Men's Harding Cup Runners-UP
- Women's Premier League Winners
- Women's Freshers Runners-UP
- Women's Senior IV Winners
- Women's Indoor IV Winners

**Quality of Training Grounds and Pitches**

In its current state Maguire's is not suitable for training as it is waterlogged a high percentage of the time and unplayable as a result. This water logging and poor quality

surface increases the threat of injuries, minor and major. As a result of this, we are forced to use the Astroturf for our training sessions. We are grateful to have this facility, but we are assigned ridiculous times for training. We have players either missing or turning up late as assigned slots clash with many of our member's timetables for lectures or tutorials. The length of our time slot is also unacceptable if we wish to undertake a full and intensive training session.

Another problem that arose from the Astroturf was the fact that it was closed for resurfacing for the six weeks of semester one. Because of this we were forced to train on the dangerous pitches on Maguire's which had a negative affect on our preparation for our season and also affected player and team development.

Another factor that hindered our development as a team was the lack of access to the Bowl pitch, our supposed number one pitch. So far this season the only matches our club have played there include a league game against C.I.T., and this was only as a result of Pitch 1 being deemed unplayable by the referee. The second game was an exhibition game organised as a result of the visit of the Ireland Senior Soccer Team manager. The only other matches were played during the Harding cup which was run over 4 days. The fact that we have such little access to our main pitch is laughable, but the fact that the Ultimate Frisbee club are allowed train on the bowl weekly when all clubs are supposedly banned from training on the Bowl pitch is disgraceful.

Although it may be against college policy, in order to keep the pitches maintained at a FIFA regulated standard, we feel the pitches should be rolled at designated times, but this is only a suggestion.

### **Playing Season and Disruption to Schedule**

As regards our playing season, we were embarrassed when the referee deemed our pitch unplayable after the Garda College had arrived on UL Sporting Campus. They were surprised that we could not host a home game. We offered the Garda college food as we do to most teams who travel to play us, depending on distance travelled. The fixture was rescheduled but the pitches were never in a playable condition on the dates picked, so eventually the tie was reversed and we had to organise and pay for a bus to travel to the Garda College to play the fixture.

Another fixture which fell victim to the pitches was against Mary I, which was actually postponed twice, and ultimately led to the fixture being played in Corbally, costs incurring. Finally we had to a League Quarter Final off campus. This was one off our biggest matches of the year where we would have hoped for fellow students to watch us



and support us. Yet again we were forced to travel off campus to play where UL students would not see or hear of the game. Surely this is unacceptable for a university of our size, standard and reputation.

### **Financial Implications**

Financially we have been affected by the standard of our pitches in the following way:

- Bus Trip to Garda College: €400
- 3 postponed games: €75 each
- Food for Garda College: €10
- Corbally as back-up for Harding Cup: €850
  - *Totalling €1435 of avoidable expenditure.*

### **Health and Safety**

So far we have had four shin splints injuries on the Astroturf as it is not a suitable surface for soccer purposes. In relation to the pitches, the lack of maintenance leads to the pitch being cut up and waterlogged and this could lead to ankle damage or ligament damage due to the condition of the pitch. Also the appearance of horses is unacceptable and the hoof marks not only ruin the pitch but could lead to injuries, and, if worst comes to worst, if the horses actually kicked any person, not just a club member, it could lead to legal action.

### **Development, Membership and Performance**

In relation to development, membership and performance of our club, it is impossible to reach the standards we would want with the current conditions and surfaces. For example, UL ladies second team, who had enough talent to win the league, were eventually pulled from the league due to dwindling interest which can be related to dreadful training conditions and lack of facilities.

Due to the standard of Maguire's, all slots that are available for our club on the Astroturf, are currently taken up by our first team duties, which leaves no time for the non-elite club members who are interested in recreational activities. We have neither the time nor facilities to offer non-elite players the chance to participate; this will lead to a decrease in membership, development and performance. We want to offer everyone who is interested in playing soccer a chance to play, but at the moment we just can't.

### **Club Expectations for Development on Campus**

In order for the club to develop on campus, we will need a suitable AstroTurf with a suitable surface. We need to be granted access to this pitch at suitable times. We can't have the hours of 6pm to 9pm sold as commercial hours as this is when it suits us to train as well. Surely as we are representing UL we should be given priority on UL facilities. We need two good, well drained and playable grass surfaces for matches. We need these to be properly maintained by grounds men whose sole role is the maintenance of the pitches.

### **General Comment**

We think that it is depressing that other Institutes and Universities are after surpassing "Ireland's Sporting Campus" facility wise. What we think would help improve the University, is if the bottom half of Maguire's was converted into an AstroTurf of FIFA standard that would suit all types of footwear. If we had this facility, membership, development, recreational activities and training times would improve. Also we would need a minimum of two, regularly maintained grass pitches, which would be used as match pitches but, with regular maintenance and care, could be used for training if they were needed.

Overall our main aim for our club is that with the improvement of facilities, we would be able to attract more members, be able to offer more recreational activities and therefore have an increased number of active members in our club. Even though we are already a successful club trophy wise, we feel we can be even more of a success if we get more active members in competitive terms and recreational terms and to the community in this University.

### **Introduction**

UL Softball club is one of the oldest softball clubs in the country and was actually formed before the national governing body. Steadily growing over the years it is now recognised as one of the best clubs in the country, providing both successful teams and individuals of outstanding quality. This has been well reflected in recent years; the club has won the last three Irish Softball Intervarsity Championships and currently has three representatives on the Irish National Squad.

To put that in perspective, UL Softball club is one of just over 40 clubs in the country and yet our players make up three of the sixteen strong national squad. The success and strength of the club led to the foundation of the Munster Softball squad, who quickly found themselves competing at the highest level.

This meteoric rise culminated last summer with a silver medal in the world championships held in London. Of the 13 players competing in that tournament, 12 were UL students/alumni, as were both the head and assistant coach. The 13th player, the one and only with no tie to the University, is a vastly experienced Canadian player who now offers fortnightly coaching sessions to members of the softball club, ensuring that our success continues.

The club is not solely interested in silverware. We prioritise the social aspects of club membership. Currently we have over 120 registered members, only about 20 of those are of competitive intervarsity standard but that in no way hinders the involvement of the other members.

When it comes to the intervarsity tournaments, which are held over three weekends, competitive and recreational divisions are run concurrently. UL Softball club will only ever enter two competitive teams (10 players per team), the rest of the members to play in the recreational division allowing them to enjoy their weekend without any pressure to perform. The sport itself is simple for beginners to pick up and to encourage students to try it out, all the equipment is provided so students can come and try it out before committing to the club. This makes us fairly unique in UL, as we don't follow a strict training regime, there are no trials, attendance at training is not compulsory and if a student feels like joining in week 12, they are more than

welcome. We promote fun, friendship and participation so any student, whether experience or not, can come and play with us whenever they like.

The final, and what I feel is the most important aspect of the club, is the service that I like to believe we provide to international students. UL is famous for its study abroad programme and our club greatly helps the North American students in particular integrate into the student body here.

Softball is in the USA what the GAA is here; the majority of American children play softball from a very young age. This means that many of the students that come here, have played at some point in their lives, and as is well known, joining a club or society is the best way to get to know people. Because of the popularity of softball in the US, students that come here feel less shy about joining and when they do, they meet a great group of Irish students that all go out of their way to make them feel welcome in our University.

Just to throw out some little tid-bits to strengthen this claim, this semester a student who played for us a year ago has returned to UL for another semester. The softball club has had one US-Irish marriage, there's one more engagement, and, at the end of March when we host our leg of the intervarsity championships, four players from last spring are flying back, at great personal expense, to experience playing with UL Softball club once more. A further three are researching postgraduate opportunities here.

### **Quality of training grounds and playing pitches (including maintenance)**

Our weekly training sessions are unaffected by the current condition of the grass pitches as we train on the Astroturf. Our fortnightly training session with the Munster coach has been greatly hindered. Conditions on the grass pitches are barely playable for our sport. Unlike most field sports played here, sliding is an important part of softball. Sliding into a base is done as a safety precaution, preventing the player from being struck with the ball, which despite the name of the sport, is quite hard. Unfortunately, surface water and extremely soft soil make sliding extremely dangerous. We had purchased special pegs to anchor our bases which had been sliding out from underneath players, but these pegs, which are almost a foot long, have been totally ineffective.

We normally host one leg of the Intervarsities and two summer tournaments, unfortunately Softball Ireland umpires declared Maguire's unplayable during our tournament in August 2007, we were forced to slash the schedule as we were reduced

to 4 softball fields instead of 9. As Maguire's has deteriorated since then, we now plan our tournaments assuming that we will only have use of the 10 Acres. Unfortunately, the 10 Acres is quickly approaching an unplayable condition.

I first stepped foot on Maguire's three years ago, and even then it was unplayable but the 10 Acres was in good condition as it was used purely for matches. The problem now is that many clubs, including ourselves, are refusing to train on Maguire's due to concern for our members safety, training sessions are now being held on the 10 Acres, and with the hugely increased usage, the 10 Acres is going downhill at an alarming pace. I can see difference in the quality of the fields on the 10 Acres from last April up to now; I feel that at current usage levels, the 10 Acres will reach a condition as bad as Maguire's within the next few years.

In terms of the maintenance, I have rarely seen any work done outside the bowl. We highlighted the issue of horses on the playing fields early in November and despite four months passing since, nothing has been done to prevent them getting on the field. We have already held a training session this semester, where the highest priority of players was avoiding horse dung. The fence separating our playing fields from the public road is, quite simply, non-existent.

### **Playing Season and Disruption to Schedule**

As previously mentioned, we host one leg of the Irish Intervarsities in late March /early April and until recently, the Munster Invitational Softball Tournament and Irish Open Softball Tournament during the summer. However, with Maguire's unusable for softball, we are limited to inviting around 10 teams to our tournaments, instead of being able to cater for up to 20. Because of this, Softball Ireland have looked elsewhere to stage the Irish Open Softball Tournament, which this past summer was held in the outstanding sporting facilities of QUB in Jordanstown. The Munster Invitational Softball Tournament was not held at all. We hope to host it again this July, but the Irish Open Softball Tournament will not be held here.

We train twice a week during the college term, and also train along side the Munster softball team every second Sunday. Generally we require two softball diamonds for training, and although our numbers have been reduced this year, we expect our membership to recover next year.

### **Financial Implications**

As with most clubs, a huge chunk of our annual expenses are recouped from hosting tournaments. Both spring and summer tournaments carry a €100 entrance fee per team. Where we previously would get €2000 per tournament, times two tournaments a year (Irish Open's income went to Softball Ireland), we now are reduced to €1000 in total. Our annual operating costs can run as high as €9000, and having our annual income drop by €3000 makes it extremely difficult for us.

### **Health & Safety**

I have already outlined the issues surrounding sliding on the extremely soft soil on our playing fields, and surface water is even more dangerous. Umpires have declared Maguire's unplayable in past events and horses grazing on the fields are still an issue. Apart from the damage horses do to the surface, they are extremely dangerous. I have access to photos showing horses galloping within yards of our players during our Intervarsity Tournament last April and I will be more than willing to share. Thankfully, we have had no injuries as a result of the fields, but with no option but to continue hosting tournaments on the 10 Acres, we feel that it is only a matter of time.

### **Development, Membership & Performance**

Our membership figures have suffered greatly this academic year. In the previous two years, we had 120 to 140 registered members with between 60 and 70 remaining active throughout the year, this year we have over 120 registered members, but less than 30 remain active. We will not attribute this solely to the condition of the fields. I feel that we lost a huge number of members because of issues with the closure of the Astroturf early last semester which resulted in us cancelling 7 of our first 9 training sessions. As our training sessions can only be held during the day (no floodlit facilities), I could not ask our members to train on the 10 Acres, as many of them return to class immediately afterwards and that surely wouldn't be comfortable in muddy and saturated clothes.

### **Club Expectations for Development on campus**

I see no reason why the playing fields here have not been developed already. As a whole, the University and the Arena have developed top class sporting facilities, with a gym, pool and indoor courts that are the envy of Universities all over the country. The grass pitches on the other hand, have been totally neglected in terms of development. The fact that there is literally only half of a field floodlit says a lot on its own.

In terms of the needs of the softball club that we would like to have included in any potential future development, we feel that it would not be excessive to have two softball diamonds developed somewhere on the playing fields. Ideally these would have an artificial infield (80 x 80 feet), but we would like one made slightly larger to allow us to alter it to play baseball (100 x 100 feet). We are trying to get baseball started in the southwest and it would be foolish to develop fields that would be useless for baseball if we do succeed. To give us a fully usable, year round field, floodlighting would be necessary. We would like to have a backstop included (20-25 foot fence behind the batter); this both prevents lost balls and protects spectators. The club holds a large amount of equipment, and would like to see storage facilities included in any development, but I am certain that this request will be common among many of the clubs. Over the years we have forged links with many individuals in the US who are more than willing to advise us on how to properly develop a softball field. Due to the obscurity of the sport in Ireland, there are no professional developers here, but rest assured, developing a softball field is relatively easy when planned correctly.

### **General Comment**

I am glad to see some movement on this issue, and hope that Clubs and Societies, UL and the Sports Department can come together to develop fields that are to the same standard of the rest of the top class sporting facilities here. I find it hard to believe that development hasn't already been done, but I am certain that now that the issue is being recognised, a resolution will be in the mindset of all concerned for the near future.

We welcome the development of the North Campus facility, but unfortunately, we can not imagine it being of much use to us. If the pitches on the North Campus happen to be separated by fences, they will be totally useless for competitive softball. Softball fields require 70m in each direction at a right angle from home plate, this means that when playing on a soccer field, the line going in one direction is long enough, but falls 15m short going the other direction. As all field sports in Ireland are played on rectangular fields and the softball field has sides of equal length, this issue will arise on any fenced playing field, making them useless to us. Even in terms of developing the 10 Acres and Maguire's, should fences be erected around fields, as has been suggested, without allocating actual softball fields, our club would cease to exist.

**Brief History of UL Men's Rugby Club**

The UL Men's rugby club is steeped in a rich rugby history dating back to the days of the NIHE. Since then the Men's Rugby Club has sought to provide players of all levels and indeed those new to the brilliant game, with a serious and competitive mid-week alternative to their respective home clubs.

The University of Limerick Rugby Club's success throughout its history has been considerable, with many national third level titles on behalf of the university, including 2 national league titles since 1999. However between 2002 and 2006 the club became inactive. The launching of the UL Bohemian's academy system saw a considerable decline in numbers and, coupled with bad administration within the club; it led to no ICRU (Irish Colleges Rugby Union) league participation for 4 years.

Throughout its history the club has aided in the careers of many professional players, many of those having held the club in high regards.

**Notable Players:**

Paul O'Connell. (Second row) Munster and Ireland.

Eoin Reddan. (scrum half) Wasps and Ireland

Ian Dowling (Winger) Munster

**Introduction**

The UL RFC as mentioned was re-founded in 2006 by Former UL student John O'Grady. Since then, the student-run club has evolved into a successful young entity with an annual membership of between 40 and 50 active members and over 150 registered members. Training has been taken in the past two years by UL Bohemian's senior and former professional rugby player Mike Story. Prior to this, training was conducted by former Welsh international Mark Ring, currently head coach of Old Crescent RFC

Despite its disestablishment in 2002, the club has continued with the many traditions which would have been established prior to 2002, most notably the annual Colours game between UL and LIT. The Colours game honours the memory of two former



members of the respective clubs who tragically died in Boston in 1994. The O'Brien Brothers memorial Trophy was this year won by the UL team with a score of 31-13.

The club fields two teams, one at Senior and one at Fresher level, and competes in the Senior Division 1 ICRU league and the Fresher's O'Boyle Cup. A high standard of coaching is provided for those students who seek to represent their University. Indeed, those who wish to improve their rugby skill and fitness levels will undoubtedly feel very at home with our club.

UL RFC also acts as a social outlet for the UL students. It is as important for us that students develop close friendships with their fellow rugby enthusiasts as it is for the club to win trophies. The Club organises two annual nights out for its members and great nights are had by all who attend.

### **Development and Performance**

The Club trained until December 2007 on a Monday and Wednesday night at 6pm on the Maguire's pitch area. However since then, as a direct consequence of the deterioration of the pitch, the Club has moved its training to the rugby grounds in Annacotty.

The development of the club is being hindered as a direct result of the poor standard of field sport facilities which are provided within this University. By right, there should not be any reason for the UL RFC not to be current Fresher and Senior league champions. The University is in a fine position, being considered nationwide as the sporting campus of Ireland, to attract the highest calibre of athlete directly from second level institutions; however it is clear from our early training sessions that students become disinterested in our club as a direct result of the poor quality playing surfaces. Nobody should be made train in poorly drained surfaces, putting their health at risk. The resulting trips to Annacotty put many students in a difficult position to commit to the club also with many students in this current economic climate being unable to afford cars so as to attend training.

The low numbers, which result from the continued lack of interest from students, throughout the early training sessions leave our squads with little depth and as such hinder the competitiveness within the squad throughout the year. It is our hope steps are taken by the buildings and estates department to immediately improve the quality of drainage and flood lighting on campus. We would view this as an adequate start to overall pitch development.

### **Quality of Training and Playing Pitches**

A number of rugby club specific issues arose throughout the academic years of 2007/08 and 2008/09, with regard the quality of on campus training and playing pitches. Most specifically the Maguire's pitch area but also pitch no.1 found in the ten acres area

Most notably, the bad quality of the soil and the surface has not allowed our teams to develop their scrummaging techniques. While players attempt to push off one another, the ground literally comes away beneath them which is surely a health and safety issue. This leaves us at a considerable disadvantage to other clubs in our set pieces.

This is also a concern for students who attempt to perform any quick side step from left to right, the ground again coming away beneath them, leaving them where they attempted to push away from.

Any attempt to play any sort of training exercise on the Maguire's area is somewhat of a joke with students trudging through muck and water pockets in attempts to run in straight lines.

Pitch 1 is also of concern. On two occasions throughout the year, students playing on this pitch have had to be conscious of very large puddles, or small ponds which were found in the try scoring area at the Maguire's end of the pitch. It is clear that students will often slide in these areas. What concerns the Club is that a number of cases have been documented where aquaplaning by students in similar puddles has resulted in serious injury.

The impact of the poor quality of surfaces can also be seen to impact the finances of the club. So far this year, the UL RFC was had to incur costs of €240 to train off campus. These costs may not seem considerable but with an annual budget of approximately €2800 the additional cost is felt.

Certain issues external to the Rugby Club's activities has contributed in a large way to the deterioration of the playing surfaces.

Such as:

- The lack of flood lighting has resulted in a single area of the Maguire's pitch suffering footfall well beyond its capacity. A simple solution to this would be to upgrade the flood lighting in the Maguire's pitch area, therefore spreading the footfall over a greater area.

- The lack of security (most notably perimeter fencing) has resulted in the Maguire's pitch becoming both a walkway for students and a weekly grazing ground for horses.

### **Expectation of Future Development on Campus**

With the north campus development expected to exceed €9,000,000 in cost upon completion, we would feel it appropriate that, at the very least, each field team has its necessary requirements met. With regards the Rugby club a number of criteria must be met in order for us to excel as a club on a national level.

The playing surfaces must be brought up to spec, through whatever means. Decent ground integrity must exist so our training can resume on campus.

With regards the issue of security, the rugby club feels that repairing the perimeter fence is necessary and individual fencing for each pitch so as to prevent cross pitch walking and horse grazing.

In order to spread the footfall of the various clubs over a greater area, more space must be made available to train on after dark as such, an increase in the level of floodlighting is necessary.

**Introduction**

UL Ladies' Rugby Club was founded in 1998. In its short existence it has undoubtedly been one of the most successful field sports of the University in the past decade. The Ladies Rugby club in UL have won the intervarsity title nine years in a row, and were runners up last year losing out to the Garda college in the final.

They have also won the Ovalies title in 2005/2006 which is an international colleges competition which was held in France; and have also won the league title 6 times in the past ten seasons, doing the double in 00/02 and then winning it 4 years in a row from 2003-07 again being runners up in last years competition.

Hopes are high for a return to former glory this season. Currently, UL Ladies rugby are top of the division 1 table and have their sights firmly set on winning both the League and Varsity titles.

A key factor to this team is that talented players emerge and rise to International level during their time at UL. Each year a member or members of this team are called up to the Irish women's squad trials and this year Fiona Reidy reached the final 32 and although she didn't make the match day 22 it is a promising sign of the talent among our team.

Many more of our current team have played with Munster, Connacht and Leinster. Sixteen of our past players have international caps many of whom are representing Ireland in the current six nations. Forty players both past (30) and present (10) have represented Munster, Leinster or Connacht playing Interprovincial competition.

UL Ladies Rugby looks to the future with confidence. Six of the first years that joined the club this year were all part of the Munster U18 girls team last year, one of whom was their captain Anna Caplice.

We believe that Ladies Rugby has changed significantly in the past two years. Gone now is the tradition of learning to play when you go to college; many players now have previous experience which is a huge boost to any team. But all this talent and experience has to be nurtured and developed even more which can only be achieved by having quality training sessions on quality training surfaces – something this team is not accustomed to in UL.

### **Quality of training grounds and playing pitches including maintenance**

The quality of our training facilities has been an issue amongst our team for a number of years. Maguire's is infamous at this stage as being a muddy watery filled pitch with substandard drainage.

Having asked many past players who have trained on Maguire's what they remember from it, all the responses were of mud and misery. That is what Maguire's has been like for numerous years, there are holes throughout the pitch, many of which are covered with muddy surface water.

Players simply can't see what and where their feet are landing into while running. One does not have to be an expert to see that this in turn can increase the risk of injury to those who train on Maguire's, trying to train on Maguire's is impossible and dangerous.

Maguire's is like a third world training facility in comparison to what many of our members would be used to playing on with their clubs at home.

When one steps onto Maguire's you either step onto a pitch that had muddy surface water throughout and you simply cannot know where is an even surface or not, or else you step onto it and the water has eventually dried away due to no rain for a long time and it is still muddy and very soft underfoot. This simply is not good enough.

Most recently (26/02/09) while training on Maguire's there were two stray horses roaming around the pitch obviously causing damage on this delicate surface. There is in our opinion no maintenance of Maguire's and very little on ten acres also. These horses were on Maguire's they could easily go into ten acres and hoof up those surfaces also. Maintenance of pitches is vital and we feel Maguire's has been seriously neglected for years. People are being forced to train on ten acres as Maguire's is not in any condition to train on and this in turn is reducing the quality of ten acres.

### **Playing season and disruption to schedule.**

UL Ladies Rugby has just one team with 30 players and 115 members on the books. We have six league matches per year: three at home and three away and then the Intervarsity tournament also.

Fortunately we have been given use of the Bowl for two of our home games and we played the other home game on ten acres this year.

Our matches begin in October and finish in March with the finals and Varsities being held in a different venue each year at the end of March. We train two evenings per

week and also usually have a game midweek every second week. Our training begins in week 2 of the college year right through to week 12 of semester one and restarts in week 1 of semester 2 and continues for two nights every week until the Varsities in week 10 of semester two.

This year however, we encountered serious problems with training on Maguire's simply because of the condition of that pitch we were forced to move our training times to 5.30pm (normally we train at 6.30 pm so people are finished class for the day) in the evenings during semester one so we could train in the daylight on Ten Acres, this worked well until week 8 when it started getting dark earlier.

We then had no choice but to train on Maguire's once more some evenings we had to cancel training due to how muddy it was there other evenings we just had to train on it as there were no alternatives available.

Many members had to throw away their gear after one training session on Maguire's because it had simply been destroyed with mud. We made the SU aware of these issues we were facing.

In semester 2 in order for us to get through a lot of training we changed training times once more this time much more drastically. We collectively decided to train at 7.30am on Tuesday mornings on Ten Acres so we could get in a decent training session, ones which would not be marred with mud, water and misery. This worked well for us and we did this for a few weeks until our games resumed then we opted to train indoor in the PESS building the evening before games just to get everyone organised etc.

The chopping and changing of training times has disrupted our schedule significantly and we lost many players in semester one because of having training on at 5.30pm in order to avoid Maguire's mud bath.

### **Financial Implications.**

We are a small club in the scale of things and hence we do not have much extra money to be splashing out on hiring out training venues etc. We had to either just get on with it and train on Maguire's which really was unsuitable and counterproductive, or else opt for an indoor session and just work on ball handling and forget about the physical aspect of the sport. When ringing around on one occasion looking to see if we could use the Arena, we were told it was 40 Euro per hour. We didn't use this facility as we simply could not justify spending money for the use of a training facility when proper outdoor facilities should be provided by the University.

Other financial implications have burdened our members who have gone through football boots and gear at astonishing rates. One member bought new Adidas Rugby boots; they only lasted six weeks on Maguire's. Other members have had to throw away gear because of the state of it after training sessions on Maguire's.

### **Health and Safety**

Health and safety is a serious issue regarding the training pitch Maguire's. The current condition of Maguire's we believe significantly increases the likelihood of players going over on ankles and also sustaining other leg injuries.

On Maguire's, while running, it is impossible to see what you're running into most of the time with excess muddy surface water. It is simply hazardous and dangerous trying to train on Maguire's. We believe the amount of injuries sustained on Maguire's is unprecedented and we have not seen it anywhere else. Two of our players sustained leg injuries during one training session on Maguire's.

### **Development, membership and performance**

As we have said in the Introduction, UL Ladies Rugby is a highly successful team with an astounding record in its competitions. Every year our new members contribute hugely to the team's success and it is those new members then who help to develop the club even more in their remaining years in college. We strive for excellence and for each one of our players to achieve her potential. There is a good competition for places on the team which pushes everyone to perform to their best.

Our membership has always been strong and no matter what we always put out a team for every game. To develop our player even more we urge them to join the UL Bohemians Ladies Club team who are the best in the country. This develops every player who trains with that team as our members are then learning from the best.

### **Club expectations for development on campus**

UL Ladies Rugby would like to see student-centred and student-specific sports development on campus. We expect there to be world class outdoor training and match facilities available to students at all times. We would expect the redevelopment of Maguire's and Ten Acres and when completed it would be a world class student specific facility and only then would UL be "Ireland's Sporting Campus". On this facility there would have to be complete new drainage etc installed the pitches would have to be enclosed with paths and fences surrounding each.

Floodlighting is what is seriously needed; we at the rugby club would expect a fully illuminated training rugby pitch and also a fully illuminated match pitch.

We would also expect new dressing rooms to be installed with all the specs along with equipment storage facilities near the training pitches.



### **Introduction**

The UL Vikings American Football Club was set up in 1999 and since then, we find that the sport is becoming more popular amongst students, with the club signing up more than 200 people in September. Each year the club has been developing considerably in the way we play American football and we have been All-Ireland Champions for the previous 2 years with the high hopes of being able to retain our title again this year.

### **Quality of training and playing pitches**

Our hopes of retaining the title are being severely hindered by the state of the playing pitches in UL. Normally we use Maguire's field and each year it seems that the pitch becomes more difficult to train and play matches on. There is no drainage on the field and when it rains the field is reduced to nothing more than a swamp. This is owing to the poor placement of floodlight on the pitch. In the winter, a lot of clubs train every night under the lights of Maguire's and the pitch has not been given a chance to recover. Conversely in the Summer, when the field is dry it is full of holes, which also make training and matches difficult as players cannot get a proper footing whilst running.

This also creates health and safety problems on the field. American football is a high contact sport and there is a high risk of players obtaining injuries because they cannot handle the pitch condition. If players cannot get a grip on the field, this leaves them open to getting ankle and knee injuries when turning or making contact with another player. Normally American football players have a 16 per cent chance of developing Anterior Cruciate Ligament injuries. This study was done in America where the standards of playing fields are quite high. On a pitch like Maguire's this is increased further because player will struggle to get a proper footing on the field. Furthermore, other teams in our league have often commented on the standard of our pitch and have complained about injuries their players have sustained because of its condition.

These issues have proven to be a problem because we use the pitch eleven months out of the year. We train from September onwards and our playing season begins in

March and ends in July. Normally we will train on Monday and Wednesday evenings for two to three hours and after Christmas we train on the Sundays that we don't have matches. Because of the condition of the pitches we have been forced to cancel numerous training sessions because of the pitch being unplayable. This is severely hindering our efforts to prepare for our season and we will struggle to be of a standard which will allow us to challenge for the Shamrock Bowl again this year. Currently we are concerned about some of our home games this year also because should Maguire's be deemed unplayable we will be forced to play off campus and it often proves difficult to organise pitches for American football because of the dimensions of the playing area.

### **Financial Implications**

Currently we have not had any financial losses related to the playing surfaces. This year our club was not allocated a budget and hence, all our money was received through fundraising and sponsorship. We have received enough money to cover basic expenses of running the club for the season. This year we have to play one home match off campus due to unavailability of pitches and we were fortunate to be allowed to avail of such an offer free of charge. We have been very grateful to receive this generous offer. Should this number rise we will find it difficult to find pitches as we cannot afford to rent pitches and we feel it would be unfair to expect to get a pitch free of charge again as the organization who gave the pitch to us originally have been very generous.

### **Development of Club**

A lot of our club's income comes from membership subscriptions. As I have stated we had more than 200 people sign up this year, yet currently our active roster stands at 35 players. One of the main complaints we have from players is that they don't like training for eleven months of the year on a pitch with as poor a standard as Maguire's currently has. I am concerned that our future development will be further hindered by the pitches as people will not want to sign up if they believe that they will have to do all their training on a sub-standard and unsafe surface.

### **Expectation of Future Development on Campus**

In light of these problems the UL Vikings would hope that the pitches can be repaired and made to a playable standard so that all clubs can enjoy them safely. I believe it is

important to repair the South Campus pitches first because any developments on the North Campus would take a few years. It is also my understanding that it would be substantially cheaper to repair the South Campus pitches so organizing this first should be the main priority. We also have concerns about the new pitches on the North Campus not being made available to UL clubs on a regular basis. This year we have had to play one game off campus due to pitches not being available and we would hope to avoid having to relocate again in future. Furthermore, we would wish that, while repairs are being made on the pitches, that a section of Maguire's, which is away from the floodlights can be sealed off for our games as we have noted that this area is currently still playable for American Football and this would save us having to relocate or cancel any of our home games.

Overall, the standard of all of the playing pitches in UL are poor. We are supposed to be known as a sporting campus and while the large number of Clubs and Societies available to students may indicate this, the facilities available do not allow UL students to reach their full potential at any type of sport.

**Introduction:**

*What is Ultimate Frisbee?*

Ultimate is an exciting, non-contact team sport, played by thousands the world over. It mixes the best features of sports such as Soccer, Basketball, American Football and Netball into an elegantly simple yet fascinating and demanding game. To compete at the top level, Ultimate players require an unmatched degree of speed, stamina and agility. Yet the simplicity of the rules means it's easy and fun for newcomers to pick up.

*Club Information:*

- Founded in 2006.
- Hosted the Irish Ultimate Intersivity's in 2006.
- Began hosting its annual international tournament "The Siege" in 2008.

*Membership:*

The club has 89 members.

*Performance:*

- Beginners' Tournament "Whacking Day" 2008: Women's Team 1st. Open Team 2nd
- International Tournament "Cork Open" 2008: Team 1 12th Team 2 20th out of 22.
- International Tournament "The Siege" 2009: Team 1 13th Team 2 20th out of 20.
- Intersivity's League 2008/09: College came 4th

*Calibre of Players:*

Jim Heneghan and Terrance O'Shea represented Ireland at the 2008 European Championships of Beach Ultimate

**Quality of Training and Playing Pitches:**

The Ultimate Frisbee club trains on the Bowl from 6.30 until 8.30pm every Tuesday and Thursday. We find the Bowl to be an excellent pitch beyond the standard of what many other college teams train on. We are delighted to have such excellent training times on such a brilliant pitch. We have however noticed that recently some wear and tear has begun showing on the pitch. We believe this originated from when the Munster and New Zealand rugby teams trained on the pitch.

Also, the pitch is only floodlit from one side; this means we can only fit one Ultimate pitch on the area as opposed to two if it was properly floodlit. This means that at training we have to share playing time when playing full sided games. This hinders our ability to train at the highest level and discourages beginners as they have less playing time.

*Maintenance:*

The Bowl is in need of some light maintenance work but otherwise it seems to be well taken care of.

*Amount of Use:*

The Bowl seems to be used sparingly. Apart from ultimate Frisbee it is also used sometimes for soccer and rugby. The New Zealand, Munster and Ireland rugby teams trained on the pitch in the Autumn.

**Playing Season and Disruption**

The Ultimate Frisbee season does not involve a long league system of home and away matches like some sports but rather a series of individual tournaments. Therefore our playing season has not been affected by the pitches. We hosted our annual tournament The Siege on Saturday 14 and Sunday 15 February.

Two weeks before the tournament the club was informed that it would not be able to use the pitches as the Sports Department had forgotten that we had booked the six pitches. Only when we explained that players were travelling from England, the Netherlands and Canada and had already booked their flights did they agree to allow the tournament to go ahead.

If the tournament had have been postponed it would have had terrible consequences for the club. The reputation of our tournament would have been destroyed, the teams travelling from Holland and England would not have attended and the club would have many extra expenses as we had booked a marquee and barbeque for the event.

We used six pitches on the “ten acres” for the tournament and they held up decently for the two days.

Twice in this academic year, once in October and on Thursday 5 February, the team has been forced to train on Maguire’s pitch as the Bowl was being used by the soccer team. We found the pitches to be in a disgraceful condition as well as not being properly floodlit. It was nearly impossible to train on these pitches.

### **Health and Safety:**

There are many risks to playing on Maguire’s pitches but so far there have been no injuries.

### **Development of Club**

- The Ultimate Frisbee club would like to increase its membership to over 100 within the next three years.
- We would like these members to become more central members of the club and to have them compete at the highest level possible
- We hope to win the Irish intervarsity’s championship by 2011.
- We want to have at least one player on the Irish squad for the European Youth Ultimate Championships in 2009 and on the European Ultimate Championships in 2011.
- We want to host the 2011 European Ultimate Championships in 2011.

### **Development on Campus**

In the coming years the Ultimate Frisbee Club will need at least two dedicated maintained ultimate pitches. These pitches have to be fully floodlit. The dimensions of an ultimate pitch are one hundred metres by 37 metres, so it is possible to fit two ultimate pitches in the same space as under one and a half soccer or rugby pitches.

It would be desirable to have these pitches near the Arena and Sports Club so as to avail of the dressing rooms, also a path to the pitches would be good and would make the pitches more accessible and welcoming to beginners.

During our annual international tournament the ultimate Frisbee club would need at least six pitches. This is a minimum and would involve all six pitches being used from nine o'clock until 5pm for two straight days which is not desirable. It would be much easier on the pitches and more efficient if we had the use of nine or more pitches.

**General Comments:**

We at the Ultimate Frisbee Club feel that we have been overall treated fairly by the Sports Department and Arena, and that we have been given facilities many other college teams do not have. However other college teams are always improving the standard of their training facilities so as a young club it is imperative that we improve ours so we do not fall further behind the other teams.

The club would not be against the development of the synthetic pitches on the north side of the campus, as long as the regeneration of the pitches on the south side was given priority and that prime pitch time could be guaranteed for students on the synthetic pitches.

**Appendix 8**  
**Pitch usage in hours by club**

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<b>Club</b>	<b>Membership</b>	<b>No of teams</b>	<b>Hours per week</b>
UL GAA	1000 – 1400	16	24
UL Soccer	267	5	10
UL Men’s Rugby	100	2	4
UL Ladies’ Rugby	115		3
UL Softball	107	5	5
UL Vikings American Football	50	1	10
UL Ultimate Frisbee Club	89		6

Total current pitch usage: 56 hours per week with expected growth to between 60 and 70 hours.