



Upping the game

UCD's sport strategy aims, quite simply, to advance Irish sporting achievement in the world. Paul Gallagher reports

SPORT AT UCD – A TIMELINE

1886 - First sports grounds laid out at Cowper Road, Rathmines
1909 - Formation of the Athletic Union Council (AUC)
1979 - First Sports scholarship introduced by the soccer club
1981 - Sports Centre opened at Belfield
1991 - UCD appoint first sport director - Dr Tony O'Neill
1991 - Sports Scholarship programmes expanded to other codes
1994 - National Hockey Stadium complete
2002 - UCD launches High Performance Centre for Elite Programme

SPORTS IN SPORTS SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAMME: Athletics, badminton, basketball (men), camogie, cycling, fencing, Gaelic football, golf, hockey, hurling, rowing, rugby, soccer, table tennis

UCD ATHLETES FOR THE BEIJING OLYMPICS:
Joanne Cuddihy - 400m, Fiona O'Friel - 200m, Rob Daly - 400m, Pauraic White - hammer, Deirdre Ryan - high jump, Adrian O'Dwyer - high jump, Lisa O'Callaghan - Javelin (POI)

UCD CHAMPIONS:
Rugby - Brian O'Driscoll: The British and Irish Lions captain is currently on tour to New Zealand

Golf - Peter Lawrie: Competes full time on the main European tour; first Irish winner of Henry Cotton Rookie of the Year Award in 2003.

GAA - Jason Sherlock (Dublin): Only player from the 1995 All-Ireland winning side still involved with the county panel. Sherlock had a soccer scholarship. Trevor Giles (Meath): one of the best forward players of his generation; made the All-Star team on three occasions in 1996, 97 and 99.

Athletics - James Nolan competed in the 800m at the 2000 Sydney Olympics and in the 1500m at the Athens Games last year

FORMER student James Nolan benefited from UCD's high-performance system - he competed in the 800m in the 2000 Sydney Games and the 1500m in Athens last year. UCD has also benefited many GAA players including Dublin's Jason Sherlock, the only player from the 1995 All-Ireland winning team to still be on the senior county panel. Meath talisman Trevor Giles and the late Cormac McAnallen from Tyrone also attended UCD.

Meath midfielder Nigel Crawford is a UCD graduate, while Paddy O'Brien and Paul Ormond, who line out for Tipperary, attend UCD.

Irish women's hockey international Ciara O'Brien is a UCD student - she should have little problems getting to the national hockey stadium which is on the Belfield campus. The stadium, adjacent to the sports centre, hosted the women's hockey World Cup in 1994, European Championship qualifiers in 2001 and will stage the 7th European Nations Women's Championship later this year.

In a wider context UCD continues to be at the forefront of sporting excellence in this country, a place where possible champions can realise their potential in their chosen arena.



Double Olympic champion Haile Gebreselassie with Lisa Regan, director of UCD's new High Performance Centre, at the opening of the new sporting facilities last April 2005

sporting ability and academic credentials at UCD. Students must make the grade academically before they are considered and become involved in the scholarship scheme. From there it's up to the students to manage their time for both."

THE scholarship scheme to which Mullins refers was first introduced at UCD by the soccer club in 1979 under the guidance of the late Dr Tony O'Neill, who later became UCD's first sport director in 1991. The initiative meant that for the first time talented sports people had a real alternative to moving abroad to realise their sporting potential while continuing in third-level education here. The scholarship scheme expanded to include elite athletes from other sports.

"Today we have over 90 students on sports scholarships across a whole spectrum of sports from Gaelic Games, Rugby, Soccer, Golf, Hockey, Athletics and even table tennis," explains Mullins. Several past students have gone on to reach the pinnacle of their sport after time

spent at Belfield. Among them is Brian O'Driscoll, captain of the British and Irish Lions now touring New Zealand. European Tour player Peter Lawrie is

also a UCD alumnus - the Dubliner has gone from strength to strength since becoming the first Irishman to win the prestigious Rookie of the Year Award in 2003. At present UCD has seven athletes bidding for places at the Beijing Olympics in 2008 - Joanne Cuddihy (400m), Fiona O'Friel (200m), Rob Daly (400m), Pauraic White (hammer), Adrian O'Dwyer (high-jump), Deirdre Ryan (high-jump) and paralympian world record holder Lisa O'Callaghan (javelin). These high performance athletes

UCD alumnus Brian O'Driscoll is now leading the British & Irish Lions tour in New Zealand

are dedicated to special training programmes on an ongoing basis. They prepare with guidance from their sport's national governing body, Athletics Association of Ireland (AAI) and under the supervision and leadership of Lisa Regan, HPC director and her staff. "Training and preparation is an ongoing process because these athletes have to gain sufficient qualifying times, heights or distances for Beijing," says Mullins, making particular reference to the UCD Beijing Programme which is sponsored by Irish-based company Enfer Scientific.

Bringing world biomedicine to Belfield

William Powderly, a world expert on HIV/Aids, returned after 20 years in the US to UCD's chair of medicine and therapeutics. He talks to Daniel Labanyi

WHEN Professor William Powderly was offered a post at his alma mater after more than 20 years in the US, the key attraction was the potential to develop academic medical research.

Appointed last year as professor of medicine and therapeutics at UCD and the Mater Hospital, Powderly is regarded as a world expert on HIV/Aids.

He sees huge potential for biomedical research in UCD and Ireland. Opportunities are now far greater than 10 or 20 years ago, when he left Ireland after graduating in medicine.

While in the US, Powderly worked on improving HIV and Aids treatments as professor of medicine and head of infectious diseases at Washington University in St Louis, Missouri. This was one of a network of Aids clinical trial centres set up across America to respond to the virus.

New drugs have now led to people living for far longer with HIV/Aids. However, the treatments are also causing another set of difficulties.

"Treatments for Aids/HIV have become very successful and people clearly live much longer," says Powderly. "But they now get more chronic problems related to their treatment in relation to the emergence of diabetes and high cholesterol as complications of HIV treatment, and the emergence of heart disease."

His research is now focused on these complications. "Through research we want to see if we can better understand the nature of these complications - and predict who is going to get them so one can avoid them in the future."

To further this study Powderly has established a HIV clinical research programme in Dublin in collaboration with Professor Fiona Mulcahy at St James's Hospital and TCD. The programme has been granted funding from the Health Research Board and will start this October.

During the study data will be collected from among the 2,500 people estimated to have HIV who are in contact with the Dublin clinical hospitals. "We have proposed a number of studies that will try to characterise their viruses and the type of diseases people get in relation to the type of virus that infects them," he says. "This will be done in collaboration with Professor William Hall, head of the department of medical microbiology at UCD."

Patient information will be fed into a database to allow researchers see what drugs were used and the trends and outcomes from the treatment.

"From a research perspective it's a major collaboration between several hospitals and two universities in Dublin. That's one of the reasons I came back to

At the conference on HIV hosted by UCD's Centre for Research in Infectious Diseases - Dr Robert Gallo, left, and Professor William Powderley. Photograph: Brenda Fitzsimons



Dublin - to try and facilitate that sort of structure across disciplines.

"This is a very good example of the type of research that can happen Dublin in the biomedical area if people are willing to work with one another.

"Individually many of the centres are quite small but, if we put it all together, we can create an internationally competitive research programme."

Powderly's research will cross-over into different areas of UCD research. "Focusing on the problems, such as bone disease as a complication of HIV infection, or the diabetes issue, we will be linking in with other researchers in UCD. There is strong diabetes research at the Conway Institute in UCD. We are using strengths already available in UCD."

LOOKING forward William Powderly wants to see UCD able to "do things in a lab and bring them into the patient. I want the university to be a major focus of biomedical research across many different disciplines."

This will mean overcoming a number of challenges, not least the need for additional funding. "Yes, it would be ideal if there was more funding for that sort of research, but in Ireland it's still insufficient. But there is increasing awareness at multiple levels, including Government, that this needs high priority."

Looking forward 10 years Professor Powderly hopes Irish research infrastructure will develop to the extent where the "entire clinical research package is available here."

However, even if this is achieved he hopes Irish-trained researchers will still work overseas for a period of time. "Going outside your institution for a period is healthy and good," he says.

"It would remain a very positive experience for UCD to be able to recruit people from all over the world. But we also want to be able to provide the possibility here for people to get training in biomedical training in biomedical research and have high quality experiences at every level."

Professors Powderly and Hall were the organisers of the public conference, *HIV in the New Millennium*, held in the college last Friday as part of UCD150. The HIV virus has infected an estimated 60 million people and led to up to 20 million deaths.

Among the speakers was virologist Dr Robert Gallo, director of the Institute of Human Virology at the University of Maryland at Baltimore in the US. Gallo and his colleagues first discovered that the human retrovirus HIV was the cause of Aids and also developed the life-saving blood test.

Speaking before the conference Gallo said the HIV epidemic was still growing and a vaccine was desperately needed because HIV can develop resistance to drug therapies. He has also expressed the view that many countries needed to develop a proper health infrastructure to deliver the drug treatments effectively.

The conference speakers included Paul A Volberding, a pioneer in HIV treatment; Kevin M Decock, from the Centre for Disease Control in the US; David Apuuli and Charles Van Der Horst, who discussed mother and child treatment in Malawi.



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