



I have just come home from the U21 European hockey Championships in Valencia where I had the privilege to represent Ireland at the U21 level alongside an amazing group of women.

Although it was a challenging tournament on a number of fronts, the opportunity for learnings was immense and something that you really come to realise in the post tournament analysis. The tournament gave the team the opportunity of playing against France, Spain, Russia and the

Netherlands and that experience and opportunity is not something that comes around very often. Two years ago, I was also lucky enough to be part of the U21 womens team again representing Ireland in Valencia. But there were some significant positive differences this year on a number of different levels.

In asking myself what the difference was, apart from a little older with more experience, I have to give significant credit to the difference being part of the Ad Astra programme at UCD and how that has impacted me. Access to the UCD high performance gym twice a week with a coach allowed us to be more physically prepared as a team and better able to deal with the physical outlay a tournament of this level required. The improvement in my fitness levels was only possible with a sustained fitness programme tailored to help me maximise my fitness levels both by the programme itself, but also on understanding what is required to be perform consistently at a higher and sustainable level.

On personal reflection UCD and the support it has offered me has been a core positive influence in my development as a player, person and athlete. The overall approach to player welfare is transformative. The access to nutritionists, high performance gym, S&C coaches, physio, hockey pitch and the wellness centre is unparalleled and progression without this would be significantly harder.

I am very grateful and appreciative of all the opportunities afforded to me and very thankful to have the backing of UCD in supporting me in striving towards those goals.

