

# AN FOCAL

26th January 2010  
Tuesday

Official Paper of the University of Limerick Students' Union

Volume XVIII, Issue 8  
FREE

## No light at the end of the tunnel for pitches

By Aoife Ní Raghallaigh - Editor

The Students' Union and Club representatives have expressed their dissatisfaction at the "Draft Development of Sports Pitches Brief", which was presented in December 2009, after it emerged that no provision had been made for the installation of floodlights on UL's already substandard pitches.

The Brief was the result of a consultation performed by Richard Hayden, a Pitch Construction Specialist with Sports Turf Research Ireland (STRI), a specialist that the Students' Union brought to the attention of the University at the outset of these discussions.

The issues surrounding the pitches have been ongoing since October 2008 when a number of complaints were raised at a meeting of Clubs and Societies Council by both students and staff of the University.

Upon hearing of these grievances from then ULSU President, Pa O'Brien, UL President, Don Barry, requested that a Playing Pitches Committee comprised of KCM, the Universities Project Managers, John O'Connor former Acting President & VPAR, the Sports Department, Buildings & Estates and the Students' Union, would come together to discuss this issue. At each of these meetings ULSU representatives highlighted the inherent need for floodlighting on the pitches. ULSU also submitted a formal report on the pitches in May of last year which included data from individual club submissions all of whom use the playing pitches. In this report a number of the clubs stated their explicit need for flood lights. This report was answered by an interim report from the STRI in July which the Students' Union found to be "extremely useful and comprehensive report in its finding and recommendations". Following the receipt of this report, discussions stalled temporarily until ULSU requested the Committee to meet once again to rejuvenate discussions.

The Playing Pitches Committee subsequently met in December of 2009 at which the "Draft Development of Sports Pitches Brief" was presented. On initial inspection of the brief

Students' Union representatives were happy with report until it was noted that it simply focused on upgrading the surfaces of the playing pitches and contained no mention of floodlighting. It also states that the current inadequate floodlighting would be removed from all pitches following the construction of the All Weather Pitches on the North Campus leaving clubs with no option but to train during class time or off campus.

Furthermore, it was stated at the December meeting that the North Campus All Weather Pitches would be entirely commercial with no allocation of time to student clubs. When the need for floodlighting was raised by ULSU President, Ruán Dillon McLoughlin, and Clubs&Socs Development Officer, Paul Lee, it was stated that the surfaces would need to be further upgraded to accommodate floodlighting which would increase the cost of the project significantly. In an email to the Playing Pitches Committee regarding the Brief, Mr Dillon McLoughlin highlighted the undeniable need for floodlights on the pitches: "When you consider that daylight hours currently are from 8.15am - 4.30pm...with a backdrop to an official class timetable of 9am to 6pm... the brief in its current form is not cognisant of this fact." Without floodlit pitches UL students are extremely limited in their ability to train, particularly during highly competitive times.

Despite his dissatisfaction with the brief Mr Dillon McLoughlin noted that the University have agreed to look at the problem of surfaces and are committed to finding a solution but "as of the meeting in December it has transpired that floodlights would not be included".

This has resulted in increased pressure on the Students' Union from the affected students and clubs. Following further consultation with the affected clubs, Mr Dillon McLoughlin has contacted the Playing Pitches Committee to inform them that the Students' Union cannot support the "Draft Development of Sports Pitches Brief" in its current form and are looking for the redrafting of the brief to include flood lights.



At least the substandard pitches are suitable for something

## Commercial projects take precedence over student facilities

By Aoife Ní Raghallaigh - Editor

**REPORTS that the new All Weather Playing Pitches, which will be built on the North Campus, will be an entirely commercial project has left ULSU President, Ruán Dillon McLoughlin, "very shocked".** Building will commence on the All Weather Pitches in September 2010 and it was hoped that approximately 20% of the time would be allocated to student use. The plan for the All

Weather Pitches proposes building the largest group of synthetic playing pitches in Europe. This grouping will include full sized GAA and Rugby pitches as well as a number of soccer pitches. The project will also include the building of a North Campus Pavilion Bar. The project will cost €9 million to build and the University Arena is contributing almost 75% of the total funds. *Story Continues on Page 5.*



## An Focal Digest

# In Brief

### Christmas Days raises over €20,000

Students raised a total of €26,500 during Christmas Days, which took place in the Stables at the end of Semester 1. The week long event is always highly anticipated by students and everyone involved was very thankful of them for donating so generously.

Amongst the charities that benefited from the money raised are the Special Olympics, St. Gabriels, Milford Hospice and Fr. Gerry Daly's Annual Appeal.

### Registration open for Student Media Awards

Pre-registration has opened for the Student Media (SMedia) Awards which will take place later this semester. Students wishing to enter the competition much pre-register online at [http://www.oxygen.ie/smedias\\_2010.PAGE2875.html](http://www.oxygen.ie/smedias_2010.PAGE2875.html) before February 19. The closing date for entries is March 10. If you have any questions or queries please email [sucommunications@ul.ie](mailto:sucommunications@ul.ie). An Focal has previously won the People's Choice Award in 2006 and last year UL student James Bradshaw won in the short story category.

### New addition to accounts department

Mairéad Berkery has joined the accounts department to take the place of Sheila O'Driscoll who is currently on maternity leave following the birth of her baby boy, James. The Students' Union would like to wish Mairéad all the best with her new role and express their congratulations to Sheila. The SU would also like to welcome back Admin Secretary, Roisín Monaghan, who has recently returned from maternity leave.

### Follow An Focal on Facebook

An Focal recently joined Facebook and needs fans. Visit [www.facebook.com/anfocal](http://www.facebook.com/anfocal) today!

## And thanks to...

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Diarmuid Lucey	Enda Dowling
Nicole Ní Ríordáin	Cian Gallagher
John Rainsford	David McMahon

...and anyone else I've forgotten

Next An Focal deadline is Friday, January 29 for Opinion/Features/Columns/Arts/C&S and Sport. News deadline is Monday, February 1. Email submissions to [sucommunications@ul.ie](mailto:sucommunications@ul.ie)



Presenting the cheques following Christmas Days

## Gearing up for a new semester

**WELL** it's the start of a new semester for all you students but we Sabbatical Officers have been back since the beginning of January, working away to plan the next semester for you.

This semester there is a lot to look forward to. The big one for most people is Charity Week, formerly Raising and Giving Week (more on that on the next page).

We're hoping this year it will be better than ever and that everyone will dig deep and donate. We can't expect you to donate money if we're not doing anything ourselves so the Sabbatical Officers will be getting in on the fundraising too. Stay tuned for more information on that.

Aside from that, a lot of you will be putting plans in place with regards to the sabbatical elections which will be coming up in Week 9. Hopefully, if we get enough people to the UGM in Week 3, we'll be able to change the dates of the elections to Week 10 which will make things easier on everyone involved.

Check out page 6 for more information about the UGM. As always, we'll be working hard to make sure you, the students, are having your voices heard at every level in the University, as well as making sure you have a great time here at UL. If you want to give some feedback, or have ideas for the next semester, email [sufeedback@ul.ie](mailto:sufeedback@ul.ie) or why not start a discussion on the ULSU Facebook ([www.facebook.com/ulstudentsunion](http://www.facebook.com/ulstudentsunion)).



NUI Galway  
OÉ Gaillimh

## Graduate Studies Fair NUI Galway

TAKE A  
CLOSER  
LOOK

Wednesday 3 February 2010

12.30 pm to 4.30 pm

Bailey Allen Hall,  
Áras na Mac Léinn  
(Student Centre)

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# True meaning of RAG lost in abbreviation

By Aoife Ní Raghallaigh - Editor

**RAISING and Giving week is set to get a new look after the Students' Union felt that the true meaning of the event had been lost. The week, which will now be called Charity Week, will be re-branded to help students reconnect with the fundraising aspect of the week.**

ULSU President, Ruán Dillon McLoughlin, explained: "Week in, week out students are doing great deeds for charity and raising vital funds for organisation. This work culminates in RAG Week but the majority of the student body are unaware of the true meaning of the week."

He also went on to say that the aim of the re-branding "is to send a clear message on the true meaning of this week". The decision to rename the week came after a Students' Union survey showed 35% of current first

years did not know what the "RAG" abbreviation stood for. Mr Dillon McLoughlin also stated: "Year on year the great work and achievements during the week and the lead up to it have been overshadowed by antisocial behaviour". Last year, €20,000 was raised for charity while €60,000 was spent by the County Council on clean up. It is hoped that, by making students aware of the charity aspects of the week, they may be prone to make more donations, and less inclined to tarnish the week by engaging in antisocial activities.

In addition to the new name, Charity Week will also feature four "Challenge Days", one day for each of the selected charities. Each day will feature challenges which relate specifically to one of the four charities. This year's Raising and Giving Charities are

the Limerick Youth Service, Mid-West Simon Community, Make a Wish Foundation and Irish Heart Foundation. Students can donate money for the charities throughout the semester by leaving a donation in the box at the Students' Union reception. They can also email [sugetinvolved@ul.ie](mailto:sugetinvolved@ul.ie) to volunteer, or if they have ideas for fundraising activities.

The Students' Union has been aided in the re-branding to date by 3rd year Marketing Communication students, led by lecturer Maurice Patterson. The students were asked to re-brand Charity Week in a way that would make students reconnect with the charity and fundraising aspects of the week. They responded by creating a number of innovative posters which will be displayed around the University over the coming weeks.



**RECONNECT WITH  
THE REAL MEANING OF  
RAG**




**UL Arena**

**Term Membership rates**

**Student €100**

**Staff €125**

**University Arena**  
AIRÉANA NA hOLLSCOILE

# UL gears up for Special Olympics



By Aisling Hussey

**PLANS for the Special Olympics are in “full flow”, according to Students’ Union President, Ruán Dillon McLoughlin. The University of Limerick launched the games back in September 2009, and is currently gearing up to the five day event taking place from the 9th to the 13th of June.**

According to Mr Dillon McLoughlin, no drawbacks have been experienced in the run up to the Games, but more volunteers will be needed to make the event a success. “UL students have been heavily involved in the preparations to date. However, more volunteers will be needed. Students who are interested in getting involved with these rewarding games are encouraged to e-mail [limerick2010@specialolympics.ie](mailto:limerick2010@specialolympics.ie).”

Mr Dillon McLoughlin describes the games as a “great opportunity for the University to get involved with such a wonderful and a great opportunity for the UL community to give a helping hand on their doorstep.”

Special Olympics Ireland needs a team of 3,500 volunteers to help run the games. Anyone over the age of 15 can apply, but must be able to commit to the five days of the Games. Fundraising and Marketing manager for the Games, Gaye Moore stated that there is a great need for more volunteers to come forward. At the moment there are just 1,000 volunteers. Despite problems finding volunteers, Ms Moore is delighted with the University’s participation. “The staff of UL and the Students’ Union couldn’t be more helpful. This is going to a major sporting event in Ireland and it’s great that it’s taking place in Limerick.”

She advises students to attend training sessions that will be taking place throughout the month

of February in Limerick. Dates for these sessions can be found on the Special Olympics website, [www.specialolympics.ie](http://www.specialolympics.ie). Volunteers will have to take responsibility for their own accommodation and attend training sessions in Limerick. With this in mind, Special Olympics Ireland would prefer to recruit locally.

Eimear O’Donnell, who is the Head of the UL Kayaking club, would strongly urge students to get involved with this “very worthy cause.” She first became involved with the Olympics through her father who was heavily involved in the 2008 Games. When she heard that Limerick was hosting the Special Olympics she was eager to volunteer. “It’s a great chance to help people who otherwise wouldn’t have the opportunity to compete. They can show that they are as good as the next person. There are a lot of good people involved. Everyone is looking forward to this huge event.”

Special Olympic athletes from all over Ireland will travel to Limerick to participate in 13 sports competitions. Six of these events will take place in the University of Limerick. Other venues include Limerick Golf Club, Clonshire Equestrian Centre, Funworld, MIC and Murroe Pitch and Putt.

The 13 sport competitions are aquatics, athletics, badminton, basketball, bocce, bowling, equestrian, football, golf, gymnastics, table tennis, pitch & putt and kayaking. In addition to hosting games, UL will be providing accommodation for the 1,900 athletes and 650 coaches.

Anyone who wants to find out more about the Games or interested in volunteering should visit [www.specialolympics.ie](http://www.specialolympics.ie) or e-mail [limerick2010@specialolympics.ie](mailto:limerick2010@specialolympics.ie).

# Gardai apprehend man responsible for Castletroy burglaries

By Aoife Ní Raghallaigh – Editor

**LOCAL Gardai have arrested a man on suspicion of breaking and entering following a number of home invasions in the Castletroy area over the Christmas period. The man, who was apprehended on New Year’s Eve night by the Community Gardai, was caught as he attempted to enter another unoccupied house.**

Speaking regarding the arrest, Locality Sergeant, Seamus O’Neill, explained that investigations into the break-ins are ongoing but Gardai are satisfied that the suspect is responsible for a number of burglaries which occurred in Castletroy throughout the first semester. These break-ins normally took place at the weekend when the home was unoccupied and as such student houses were particularly targeted.

Mr O’Neill also stated that in addition to apprehending the man, a good quantity of stolen property was recovered as a result of follow up investigations, which is good news for the students affected. Mr O’Neill said that the Gardai can’t guarantee that they have recovered all the stolen property, but they have recovered a number of mobiles, iPods, docking stations, camera memory cards as well as some items of clothing. This property will be

on display in Room 3 of the Students’ Union, on Thursday of Week 1 (January 28) and any student who had property stolen is invited to attend.

Mr O’Neill also commented that the suspect was not a University of Limerick student and he also did not live in the Limerick area. He explained that the man had been travelling to Limerick at the weekend to commit the burglaries and this is why it took so long to apprehend him.

Commenting on the arrest, Students’ Union President, Ruán Dillon McLoughlin said: “I’m delighted with the Gardai’s ongoing efforts to ensure the security of students in the Castletroy area.

Despite the arrest the Students’ Union urges students to remain vigilant and the Gardai have asked students to report any suspicious behaviour. In the past, reports of suspicious behaviours have lead to arrests in the area.”

Any student who returned after the Christmas break to find their home had been broken in to is asked to contact the local Gardai in Henry Street on 061 212458 between 9am and 5pm. Mr O’Neill asked students to report “any kind of break in, even if things weren’t taken” as any information may relevant to the investigation.

# Co-Op position filled by 3rd year Business Studies student

By Brige Newman

A THIRD-Year Business student, Julieann Evans, has taken up the vacant Co-op position within the Students’ Union. According to Aoife Ní Raghallaigh, Communications Officer, her job involves “a bit of everything”. Ms Evans role will be mainly focused at the Communications Office and will be directed at keeping the on-campus screens and Facebook page up-to-date. She will also be involved in other aspects of the SU.

Ms Evans main responsibility, according to Ms Ní Raghallaigh, will involve implementing suggestions from the winning marketing projects. These projects were created by 4th year Marketing students, and were designed to promote and educate the various roles the Union, and its officers, play within the University.

Over nine projects were submitted to the Union and presented to the Sabbatical Officers and Secretary General Tomás Costello. Ms Ní Raghallaigh said: “we

could take something from every group. I know I will definitely be using many of the ideas developed by the groups to improve my office.”

It will be up to Ms Evans to see that the Union is properly marketed to the student body by using various suggestions from each project.

When asked how Ms Evans was hired Ms Ní Raghallaigh said: “we briefly discussed hiring a Grad Student.” However, after some consideration, the Sabbatical officers decided to hire a Co-op student, to support the University and its students in these difficult economic times.

Ms Evans’ CV was chosen from 29 others. She also took part in an interview with SU President Mr Ruán Dillon McLoughlin, along with several other candidates. She was then chosen by all the Sabbatical Officers.

The position was previously held by Andrea Gallagher.



# Haiti Appeal

By Finn McDuffie – News Editor

**I WRITE this in a sense of urgency as my head is all over the place thinking about my cherished memories of Haiti and that the horrifying situation my friends face at this moment. Some will be dead; others trapped beneath rubble clinging onto life; others will be frantically looking for loved ones. I just cant imagine the pain.**

I volunteered in Haiti for the summer of 2007 with St Vincent De Paul Society at UL. It was a most worth while experience and one that I will treasure for the rest of my life. I often thought about my time in Haiti but no more so than now with all these emotions running through my head. We were based in the second City of Haiti called Cap Haitien and we volunteered with Street children.

I can tell you from first hand experience that Haiti truly is the poorest country in the Western World. There is no infrastructure and houses are basic shacks with no running water or sanitation. Don't get me wrong, there are houses and buildings with water and electricity but the vast majority of people do not enjoy these luxuries. Roads are dirt tracks so there must be chaos trying to get machinery in to lift the rubble.

I worked with street children who were

outcasts of society. They were regularly involved in crime and abused substances such as glue and paint thinner. As I got to know



these children they were just like me. They loved sport, music and, hanging out over the weeks, we developed a friendship, but I know once I left it would be more than likely that our

paths would not cross again, but they were not to be forgotten and they would always bring a smile to my face.

chance of getting work or unfortunately get involved in crime. This dream of a new beginning was wiped out with the news and images of the devastating earth quake that hit Port Au Prince that has been described as Hell on Earth.

When I volunteered the country was in dire need back then. I can only imagine what it is like now with the devastation of the Earth Quake. As you are well aware it is a crisis at the moment. I am asking people to give what you can as every bit helps. There will be events taking place around the campus so keep your eyes open. Believe me every bit will help and will be greatly appreciated.

I am almost certain that one of my friends, someone who was living on the streets, who went to Port Au Prince to find himself a better life, is now lying motionless under rubble having being crushed to death. Soon he will be buried in a mass grave to be forgotten about except to have a picture stored on a hard drive in Limerick but which of my friends is it?

**Please help and give what you can to the donation buckets around campus. You can also donate online at [www.redcross.ie](http://www.redcross.ie)**

## Commercial projects take precedence over student facilities

By Aoife Ní Raghallaigh - Editor

*Continued from Page 1.*

Mr Dillon McLoughlin explained that up to 60% of the Arena membership is comprised of students and so it is clear that students have contributed greatly towards the funds the Arena is spending on the building of the North Campus Pitches.

It came to light that this venture would be 100% commercial in December 2009 at a meeting of the Playing Pitches Committee, which was set up to address the issue of UL's substandard playing pitches.

Before this meeting the Students' Union had

been under the impression that about 20% of the time would be allocated to student use. This would mean that members of UL Clubs would be able to use the synthetic pitches in the same way that they have been using the pitches currently available. Mr Dillon McLoughlin said he was "very shocked that

such a facility would be built on the UL campus with no provision for students. It would seem that students are quite low on the order of priorities for this University. The will to explore commercial ventures are having a negative affect on the student experience now and will have a lasting negative impact on future students."

***"It would seem that students are quite low on the order of priorities for this University"***

In conclusion Mr Dillon McLoughlin also said "At present our premier sports men and women are being asked to train on substandard facilities while a commercial venture is being prioritised. This leaves

UL students feeling dismayed and rejected by the University whose colours they wear on a weekly basis.

I am very disappointed that the University are putting the development of a 100% commercial venture before providing basic and essential sporting facilities for their students."

## Model EU comes to UL

By Emily Maree

**THE University of Limerick and the State University of New York New Paltz (SUNY) hosted Ireland's debut Model European Union (MEU) on the UL campus from the 7th to the 9th of January. The MEU is an imitation of an EU summit meeting, where all the member states are represented by groups of four students chosen from the Arts, Law and Humanities programmes.**

Over 140 students and 30 faculty members from Europe and the US attended this event. Our own University of Limerick team, co-ordinated by Erin King, who participated in last year's MEU in New York, played the role of "Spain2 and directed the affairs of the replicated EU summit. Ms King, a Law and Accounting student said: "This simulation is not only a great learning experience but also a fantastic way to meet and socialize with students from many different countries."

The simulation topic this year was "European Council Summit Spanish Presidency" and the Head of the European Parliament Office in Dublin, Francis Jacobs, gave the keynote speech at the launch event at the Strand Hotel, entitled "European

Union after Lisbon". Dr Ruan O'Donnell, Professor of History in University of Limerick said: "The simulation represents a new threshold in the long standing and mutually beneficial relationship between the universities of Limerick and New York and augers well for future developments."

UL has hosted many Study Abroad students from SUNY in the past through bilateral exchanges between the two universities. University of Limerick Vice President Academic and Registrar, Professor Paul McCutcheon said: "Ireland is deeply committed to the European Union and the recent endorsement of the Lisbon Treaty has strengthened our position among the member states". UL's BA in European Studies, established in 1974, has been one of the most renowned degrees of its kind in Europe for many years and the University's Centre for European Studies is a recognised Centre of Excellence by the EU. Professor Paul McCutcheon added, "It is the aim of this University to produce graduates who can make positive contributions to the Europe of today and tomorrow".

# Student survey results largely positive

By Julie Ann Evans

**THE results of a survey compiled by the Students' Union have shown a mostly positive perception of the Students' Union as a whole and the work it does. The survey, which was compiled in December, aimed to examine the common student awareness and sentiment concerning the Union.**

A total number of 1,831 student responses were recorded by the survey with respondents from all years voicing their opinions. 88.5% of the respondents were full-time undergraduate students, whilst the rest of the respondents were comprised of postgraduates, part-time, link-in students, etc. The survey's main objective was to review the general assumptions of the effectiveness of the Students' Union as a service provider.

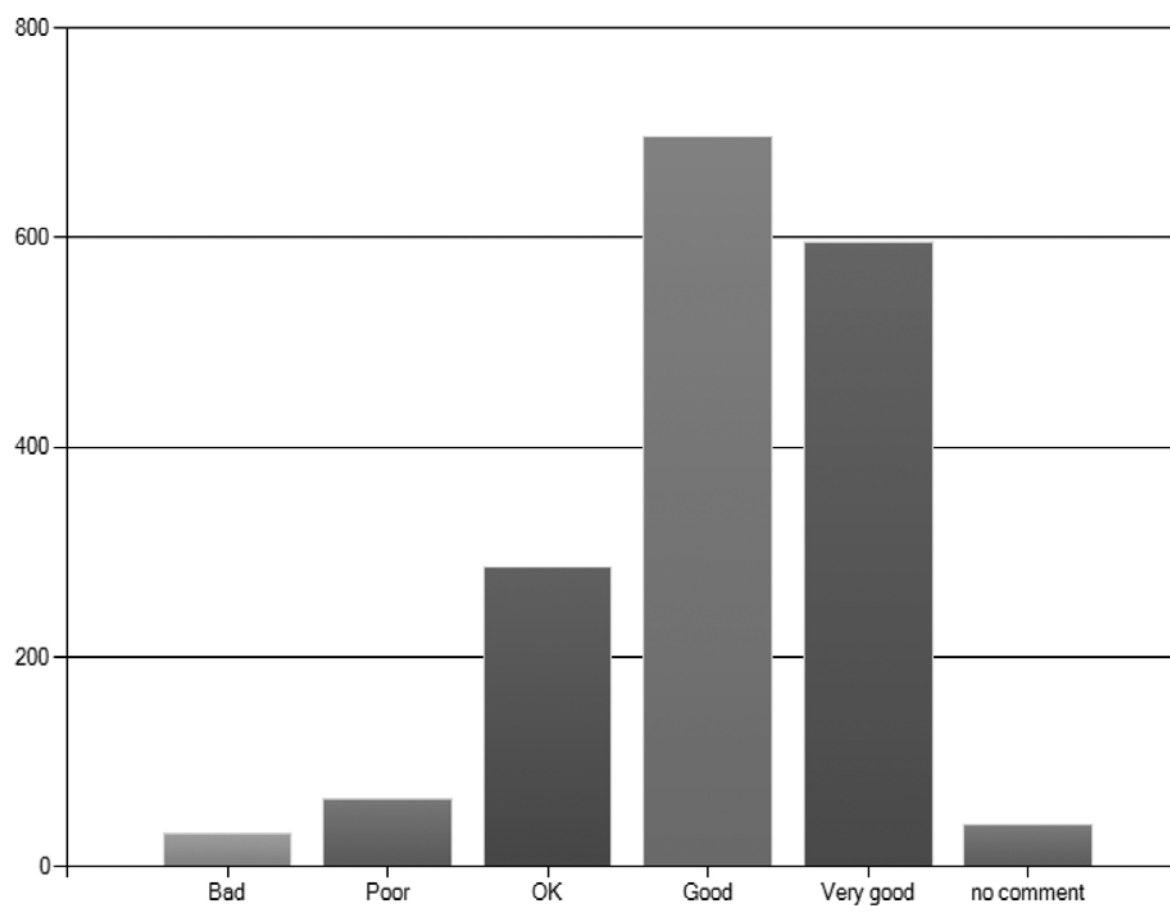
77% of the respondents stated that they found the Students' Union to be effective, with the vast majority happy with the way the students union represents their views to the university. In particular the Students' Union reception desk has been deemed helpful in times of uncertainty with 76.1% of the respondents claims the reception area is very approachable.

Only 35.2% of the respondents have never visited the Students' Union website, [www.ulsu.ie](http://www.ulsu.ie), which can be very useful for receiving Students' Union updates and has plenty of information on the wide array of services provided by the students union. 94% of respondents are regular Facebook users of which the Students' Union is now a regular subscriber and has many updates and news bulletins daily. Add us on [www.facebook.com/ulstudentsunion](http://www.facebook.com/ulstudentsunion).

Speaking about the results, Students' Union President Ruán Dillon McLoughlin said "As a Students' Union we are continuously working hard to provide the best service possible for students. The insight received by analysing the results of this survey will give further direction to the SU.

The 4,500 comments received on all aspects of the SU will be evaluated and investigated individually. We will be looking to update the student population on specific measures put in place in response to the survey. We would like to remind students that any comments or observations are always welcome at [sufeedback@ul.ie](mailto:sufeedback@ul.ie)."

What is your overall evaluation of the effectiveness of the Students' Union?



## Non-Sabbatical elections for semester two

By Danagh Roche

**STUDENTS will once again go to the polls to elect a Community Relations Officer and Equality Officer following the resignations of the incumbents.**

Daniel Reid is the second CRO in four months to resign from his position, meaning students will have to elect a CRO for the third time since the start of the academic year.

Mr Reid became CRO following a by-election last semester which took place after the previous CRO, Larissa Mirtschink, was deemed resigned.

Mr Reid was later deemed resigned as he missed two consecutive Executive meetings. Students will also vote to elect a new Equality

Officer following the resignation of Gina O' Brien. Ms O' Brien was elected without opposition last semester but needed to resign because she will be on Co-Op from the end of January, making it impossible for her to fulfil her duties.

"The most important thing for the new Equality Officer is probably Equality Week," Ms O' Brien said, "I'm sure whomever is elected will do a nifty job" she added.

There has been some speculation regarding who will run for the positions and it is unlikely that they will be uncontested. Both familiar faces within the SU community and less well-known figures are expected to make a bid for the jobs, which are sometimes seen as gateways to sabbatical positions.

The race to fill out nomination forms will no doubt begin as soon as college resumes this week, in what may be seen as a dry run for the sabbatical elections later this year. It is not yet known how students will react to a third election for CRO concurrently with a second election for Equality Officer.

Voter turnout may be affected by unexpected and repeated elections. Nominations for the positions opened yesterday and will close on Friday (Jan 29) at 5pm. Election, if necessary, will take place on the following Thursday.

## UGM date finalised

By Sharon Whelton

**THE University of Limerick's Students' Union General Meeting (UGM) is due to take place in Wednesday of Week 3, February 10. As of yet, nothing has been finalised in relation to the time and venue of the UGM, but more details will be published when available.**

Communications Officer, Aoife Ní Raghallaigh, stressed the importance of students to attend the upcoming UGM. "The most important thing about the General Meeting is that every single student, regardless of their type of study, has a voice and a vote at the UGM," she said. "Every student is also entitled to bring a motion to the UGM." If the meeting is quorum and the motion is passed the Union will be mandated to take the action or stance that is stated in the motion. This gives students the opportunity to make changes they feel are needed, and also to leave a lasting impression on their Students' Union. The deadline for submissions of motions is Wednesday of Week 2 (Feb 3) at 5pm and each motion must be proposed by five, and seconded by ten students. Ms Ní Raghallaigh also feels that students will miss a clear opportunity to voice their opinions

if they were not to attend this UGM. "The UGM needs 200 students to be quorate. Without 200 students no motions can be passed and nothing can be voted on," she continued. "It is a real chance for students to have their voice heard and their vote counted and missing such an opportunity would be very disappointing. "Students will also have the opportunity to question their Sabbatical Officers on the work they have been doing for the last semester, and that they plan to do for the rest of their term in office," she finished.

Currently Charity Week and the Students' Union elections are scheduled to take place in Week 9 which will pose a huge inconvenience for anyone wishing to run for a position. Constitutionally the elections must be held by Week 9 but the Constitution can be amended by a quorate UGM. The Students' Union is hoping to change the Constitution to allow the elections to be held a week later, during Week 10. The Union feel that an earlier date is not suitable as it will put out students who have FYPs and other coursework to hand up. Please check An Focal and [www.ulsu.ie](http://www.ulsu.ie) for further information.

# Water troubles for student accommodation

By Jason Kennedy - News Editor

**A NUMBER of students' houses off-campus have been facing water problems over the Christmas holidays, due to the big freeze. The houses, which were mostly unoccupied at the time, have had problems included lack of water and heating or burst pipes and boilers.**

First-year MMPT student, Laura Kerin lived in one such house in Briarfield. "There were four of us living together and we had a nice house and everything was going great. We then got a call saying the boiler had burst. When we arrived up, it was absolutely horrible. The place smelled terrible, everywhere was damp and a part of the ceiling

had collapsed. All the clothes that we left up were destroyed as well."

Ms Kerin claimed that if it wasn't for the kindness of her friends, she would still have no accommodation for semester two. "Obviously, the house was not liveable in, so we went on the search for a new one in the area, since we liked it so much. Our friends were so good to us. They helped us out by looking through all the listings and searching on property websites. In the end, we found a house that may even be nicer than the last one." Although water has caused serious damage to some houses, some students plan to continue to stay in them. Second-year Law Plus student, Sinead Barry

also lives in a house in Briarfield. During the holidays, a pipe burst

*"The walls are really damp now, which could cause problems for our lungs."*

leaving the walls damp, parts of the carpet destroyed and ruined a

number of the tenants' items. "The landlord fixed it up as best he could in the time he had and claims that the house is still liveable in, so we're going to keep on going."

Second-year Applied Language student, Niall Curry, also lived in that house, but will be leaving for Co-Op. He claims that he would not be able to live in the house anyway. "The walls are really damp now, which could cause problems for our lungs. Parts of the damp carpet are ripped up as well, even though more parts of it were left. I got a pretty nasty electrical shock off the light-switch for the toilet as well, so I really don't think the place is liveable in." Like many houses

across Castletroy and the city, a number of students had to make due without water or heating for a number of days.

This was not exclusive to off-campus accommodations, as well as the water supply in Cappavilla was turned off for a number of hours at certain points during the holidays. Pipes in the Students' Union building and the Foundation Building have also burst during the holidays.

Students who currently do not have accommodation for this semester, for whatever reason, are advised to go to the Welfare Officer of the Students' Union to search through a list of approved landlords.

## Winter conferrings held in University

By Sharon Whelton

**THE latest batches of conferrings from the University of Limerick have taken place, with the Winter Conferrings occurring last week. Over 1,000 students flocked to the University from Monday January 18 to Wednesday January 20, with students graduating in the areas of business, arts, science and engineering.**

University of Limerick Student Union President, Ruán Dillon-McLoughlin said that once students have the right attitude in seeking employment, they should have no problems. "I have no doubt that the UL graduates will fare well in seeking employment and with a resilient and dynamic attitude will eventually seek their ultimate goals. I would like to wish them all the best in their careers ahead.

According to a recent press release, demand for UL graduates is still high, despite a challenging economic backdrop. A recent survey of UL graduates showed 65% of graduates entering employment (still significantly above the national average) with another 20% going on to further study. UL is ranked first in Ireland for degree completion and has one of the highest employment rates for its students.

The Conferrings began on Monday afternoon, with all ceremonies taking place in the University Concert Hall in the Foundation Building. Awards were given to students graduating from The Kemmy Business School - Postgraduate Taught Programmes and Applied Taxation Programmes.

The Kemmy Business School was again the topic of graduation on Tuesday morning, with awards handed out to students graduating from The Kemmy Business School - Undergraduate Programmes and Research Programmes.

On Tuesday afternoon, students from the faculty of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences, Interfaculty, and Faculty of Education and Health Sciences (Nursing and Therapies only) received their awards in the University Concert Hall.

Students from the Faculty of Education and Health Sciences (except Nursing and Therapies) also received their awards on Wednesday morning, with awards being given to students from the Faculty of Science and Engineering.

UL has also been strongly supported by the Irish Government and by the European Union for our research endeavours across all areas during the past year. UL President Professor Don Barry highlighted UL's record in research funding in saying: "Research income during the year amounted to €40million from corporate sponsors and agencies such as Science Foundation Ireland, Enterprise Ireland, the HEA and the EU. Over €3.5million came from the EU which represents almost a threefold increase in funding from that source compared to the previous year. Given the pressures on the state finances here in Ireland, this increase is to be greatly welcomed," Professor Barry stated.

In the past year UL has seen great success in research commercialisation. UL spinout Powervation continues to be a major player in the green economy with the recent announcement of further investment from one of the world's leading clean technology funds, New York-based Braemar Energy Ventures.

Industry researchers are predicting that Powervation's revolutionary computer chip could reach 30% share of the multibillion dollar market in the next 3 years.



Michael Bouke from Clonmel, and Orla Doyle from Canick On Suit, Tipperary who graduated recently

## Union De brief

# Ruán's Rundown

The "Student Experience"; at nearly every University meeting I attend, this catchphrase is mentioned. The University claims to be doing its best to provide the best experience for its students but what is our "Student Experience"? What is the experience students receive from attending the University of Limerick?

Unfortunately for those who partake in field sports their experience is a bleak one. They arrive in the University of Limerick, Ireland's Sporting Campus, with high hopes; hopes of reaching their full sporting potential and representing their University. For this privilege they have to endure some of the worst playing pitch conditions around. When conditions worsen they have no option but to travel as far as Newtownshandrum, Co. Cork, to train. They have the embarrassment of conceding home advantage and travelling to play "home" games. All of this is done at an extra cost to them and their clubs. This is the experience of our elite athletes, some of our country's finest athletes.

The University have accepted there is a problem and have engaged in a process of trying to solve the difficulties. We are very grateful for the acknowledgement and yes, things have been done to move things on, but is the University doing its best to solve the problem? The redevelopment of the playing pitches is constantly under attack due to the funding crisis. Funding is so bad that there is no provision for flood lighting in the current

redevelopment plan for our turf playing pitches, which renders the pitches useless to the clubs; the end user. In the same sentence, as a campus we are spending €9 million on a separate venture of synthetic pitches which will be 100% commercial with no provision for student access. Despite this, we can't afford to provide adequate playing pitches for our own students. Our athletes are finding that as hard to comprehend as am I.

I do believe that the University wishes that the students will have best experience possible, but I believe that they are not doing their best to make this a reality. There is far too much of a conflict of interest between providing a service for students and commercialisation. The University seems to have forgotten why it is here. S

tudents, on too many occasions, seem to have been left out of the equation. This leaves students feeling dejected and unwanted by their own University which results in a bad reputation for the University. What do you think these students will answer when asked "What is UL like?" These Students are the future Managing Directors, employers and philanthropists of this country. We need to look after them now and secure a positive future for the University of Limerick.

I would encourage you to read the articles relating to this topic which are contained in this issue of An Focal. I would welcome any feedback you might have on the issue to [supresident@ul.ie](mailto:supresident@ul.ie)

## Postgrad News

Hi there folks,

I would like to welcome you all back and I hope you all had a great Christmas and New Years. Semester two brings us hope of better weather and more events for postgrads, but it may very well prove to bring challenges of its own. For any challenges you may face this year remember that the PSA is there for you. If you need to contact me then email me at [psapresident@ul.ie](mailto:psapresident@ul.ie) or call me on 061 213473 or go to [www.postgrads.ie](http://www.postgrads.ie) for more info.

On a lighter note, the highlight of this year's postgrad calendar will be the PSA Annual Charity Ball in Limericks Strand hotel on 26 February. In addition to being the event that raises the most money for charity in the year it is also the best night out and is perfect for class parties.

We are happy to arrange seating to suit all groups but you will need to buy your tickets soon. Tickets will be on sale this week so check out [www.postgrads.ie](http://www.postgrads.ie) for more details. The event is open to anyone and all are welcome. This Wednesday (27 January) there will be a welcome back wine reception in

the PSA common room from 7pm. It is open to all postgrads. In addition to this we will have targeted wine receptions for Research students, AHSS, EHS, KBS and Science & Engineering faculties from week two so check your mail and the website for more details. These targeted events are intended to bring postgrads together to meet other postgrads from within their faculty.

In other news, application forms for childcare bursaries can be collected in my office and the deadline for returning them is 4pm on February 1st. Applications must be returned fully filled out with all supporting documentation or they cannot be processed. While we're on the topic, we intend to host a children's event for the children of students around Easter – more details to follow.

Some of the other events that we have planned in the pipeline include another Charity night in the stables similar to the Movember Madness Bash last November; a trip away in conjunction with Trinity GSU and postgrads from Trinity and Mary I; more tables quizzes and of course a BBQ or two during the

## This is a copy of the letter sent by SU President, Ruán Dillon McLoughlin, to the Playing Pitches Committee regarding the Draft Playing Pitches Brief.

Dear All,

Having consulted with the Clubs representatives and the Students' Union since our last meeting on the 9th of December and having reviewed all documents again and in particular the "Playing Fields Report – 2009" – the position of the field playing sports clubs and the Students Union is not to support the "Draft Development of Sports Pitches Brief – December 09" in its current form.

When you consider that daylight hours currently are from approx 8.15pm to 4.30pm (and have been for a number of weeks) with a backdrop to an official class timetable of 9am to 6pm, and when you factor in the reality of labs and tutorials in a University renowned for being hard task masters academically, the brief in its current form is not cognisant of this fact and does not assist the future development of field playing sports in any real meaningful way.

As per the "Playing Fields Report- May 2009", the issue of floodlights is an imperative part of any development of the grass pitches on campus and most specifically the training area of Maguire's.

The suggestion of the Universities Wednesday afternoons policy as a feasible idea to offset lack of daylight hours is not in any way a realistic solution. As the policy of no classes after 2pm is rendered obsolete due to the volume of labs and tutorials after 2pm notwithstanding it cannot actually meet the huge training demands in that one afternoon regardless.

On reflection there is a lack of any serious vision for the future promotion, growth and development of student's sports. It appears that the North Campus Development instead of complimenting the students sports on campus is actually going to stagnate student sport field sports on campus and as per the "Draft development of Sports Pitches Brief 2009", section 4.5 "Once new all weather pitches are constructed flood lighting to be removed from sports pitches" only copper fastens that view to all affected. The North Campus has been proposed in the meeting

as being 100% commercial which is also problematic as the Arena's financial contribution to the project and its annual revenue generation running to hundreds of thousands of Euro is significantly contributed to by the student campus community and that has not been acknowledged with that view or the outright rejection of floodlights on the grass pitches.

The emphasis on commercial development of sports as a revenue generating tool for the University appears to date to be at the expense of those students asked to wear University colours and represent this college on the playing fields around Ireland.

Currently the "student experience" is a concept within the University that various departments are trying to develop notionally but on the basis of this real tangible problem to enhance the student experience for our talented athletes the solution is an indictment that the student experience is a notional concept and not a real aspiration.

As such we are requesting that STRI re-submit a plan for grass pitch development that factors in floodlights for Maguires in particular and the relevant costings, configurations, ground works as per "Playing Fields Report – May 2009" and with attached doc, which can be discussed in detail as part of the proposed meeting on the 27th of January 2010 and still allow for the Students Union to offer an opportunity to present a real future vision for how students sports will be developed and embraced by the University for the start of the new term.

We do acknowledge and appreciate the general sentiment to improve the standard of pitch surfaces and the productive meetings to find solutions to date but without floodlights it really is a pointless exercise to all affected.

We are available to meet and develop discussions on the basis of this email in advance of the 27th of January.

*Yours sincerely,*

**Ruán Dillon McLoughlin**

summer. As always my door is always open for you if you have any questions or queries and for those of you who don't know where my office is – it's the red door off the PSA common room, which is located in the Stables courtyard. If you are new to UL this semester I would encourage you to call in to say hello if there's anything I can help you with.

I'd also like to remind you about our website which contains a "Rooms" section where you can find a place to live or if you're on the other side of the market you can post ads for

rooms (or whole houses) to rent to postgrads. On a final note I would like to remind you to continue to bring your issues to me – the dust has yet to settle from the financial crisis and we may begin to see the effects of government expenditure cuts in our day to day lives.

While I don't want to speculate on rumours; I'd like to state that the PSA is adamant that services will not be cut and we may need your support in securing existing services later in the semester. I'm looking forward to representing you again this semester.



# Raising and Giving Charity: Limerick Youth Service

**EACH year, the University of Limerick Students' Union selects four charities that will receive a portion of the money raised by the students for Raising and Giving charities during the academic year. Limerick Youth Service is one of the four charities who will benefit from the money you raise this year.**

## Who are they?

Limerick Youth Service was founded in 1973 with the support of the Bishops of Limerick and aims "to support and encourage young people to be active participants in shaping their futures". Since 1973, the voluntary organisation has grown to become the largest local youth service in Ireland.

Limerick Youth Service is involved in projects all over Limerick city and county including youth clubs, drug prevention programmes and Garda diversion programs. Southside Youth Space is one of these projects. Based in the old Fulflex building in the Galvone Industrial Estate, the project is a partnership between Limerick Youth Service, the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform and Limerick Southside Regeneration Agency.

The Southside Youth Space building is the only one of its kind in the country in that it is home to a number of youth based agencies. These agencies include Limerick Youth Service, Southill Outreach, Le Chéile, the Youth Advocacy Program and the Limerick City South Youth Initiative. As such, the building works as a "youth hub" for youth focused organisations on the Southside of Limerick. The space is also available for the public to book and use.

The building is comprised of two multi-purpose pitches with locker facilities, a PC suite, an art room, a counselling room, a youth café and a proposed music room with recording studio and a dance studio.

The different youth agencies are able to book the use of the multi-purpose space and they will be supported in the delivery of programmes. In addition, a drop-in service will be provided where young people will be able to access information and support, organised activities or simply a safe space to come and chillout with friends. The Manager of Southside Youth Space, Ciara Kane, explained: "We're also going to be running, for example, a late night soccer league in partnership with the FAI so that will be open to drop-in so that the kids can come down between 9 and 11 o'clock for a game of soccer". One of the first projects completed by the Southside Youth Space was a mural project, painted by the youth groups from Ballinacurra/Weston, Janesboro, St. Saviours, Southill and Roxboro, which surrounds the border of the multi-purpose pitches. The young people were invited to paint on any theme they wished.

Ms Kane also stated that the Rotary Club had donated the PC Suite to the building. This suite is comprised of 12 computers and it is hoped that, if funding is obtained, they will be able to hire a tutor to teach basic computer courses from the suite, as well as possibly providing training for young people interested in a

specific area such as web or graphic design. It is also hoped that intergenerational courses will be run from the suite in future.

Upstairs in the building is the youth café, however, Ms Kane stated that funding had been cut from youth cafés across the country and as such she is unsure how it will be funded at this stage.

Once up and running the café will be run by young people for young people, with the kids forming a management committee with support from a youth worker. From there they will make decisions on the type of programmes and events that will be provided by the Cafe.

In addition to the services provided inside the building, the Community Training Centre in Limerick Youth Service will also be basing their Horticulture Project at the Southside Youth Space. This will see them installing a number of tunnels in which they can grow seeds and plants and maintaining the surrounding green areas.

## How would my donation help?

Ms Kane explained that at present she has "a set of drums, I've two guitars, I've a bass, I've a keyboard, I've an amp and a microphone and I need a room to put them in". With funding

donated from UL students Ms Kane will be able to soundproof a suitable space to create a rehearsal room for the young people in the area. To soundproof the room in question would cost approximately €6000, a total of 50c per student.

Once the room has been soundproofed, it can take on a number of different formats. Ms Kane explains: "Local bands could actually book and come down, use the space and use the instruments...The Irish Chamber Orchestra does music courses in the primary schools so we want to provide a rehearsal space and practice space for them for the summer holidays so they don't go two months without practicing, and also for the sixth class kids who are transitioning into secondary school because they won't have access to music lessons anymore.. It's also for young people who might be attending lessons but can't afford an instrument to practice upon."

There is also scope to renovate an adjoining room into a recording studio, and eventually a youth community radio, but this is dependent on how much money is raised by UL students during the academic year and during Charity Week. As such the room will be sound proofed, along with the music room, to work towards

this long term goal. Additional pieces of electronic equipment are also required for the room.

Ms Kane said that a big challenge regarding the room is that when the kids are using the pitches, which are located just outside the proposed music room, it gets very loud and as such being able to soundproof the room is very important.

Ms Kane decided that this project would benefit from the money raised by UL students because of the strong links with UL in relation to the music, and because UL students would be running the music programs during the summer.

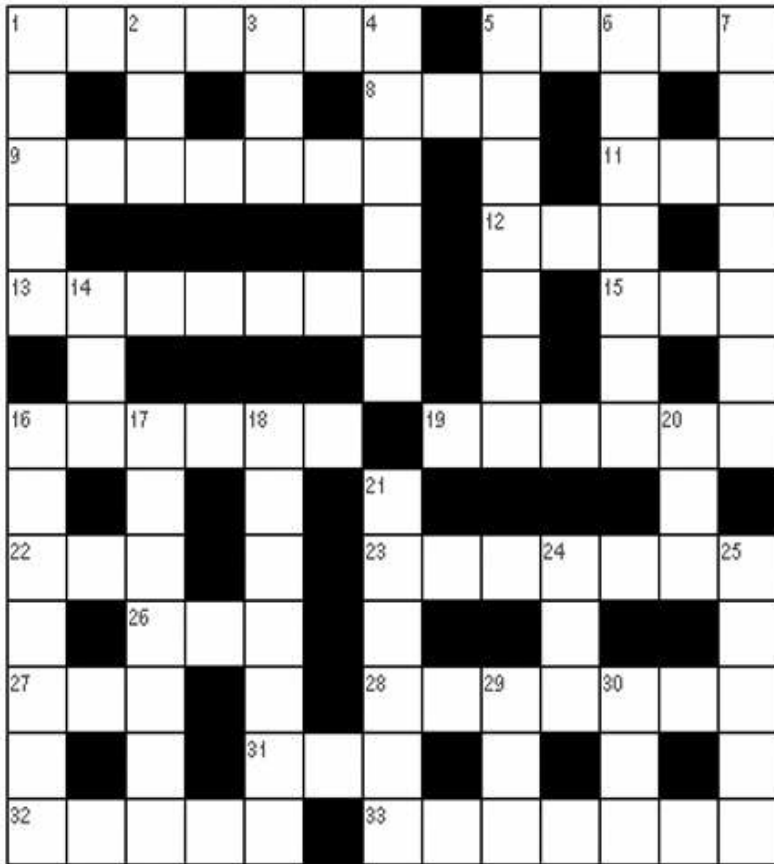
She also stated that, aside from raising money for the project, students are also more than welcome to volunteer at the project. "We always need volunteers. We are recruiting for volunteers and we fully train our volunteers so they'll be Garda vetted and trained in Child protection but anything that a volunteer is interested in doing, we're happy to engage with them...Once they know what they can commit to, even it's only half an hour a week." Ms Kane also said that the kids in the area are very positive about the building and are "excited to get in and are really willing to engage".



The space which will be transformed into a music room thanks to your donations

Fun Page!

Crossword

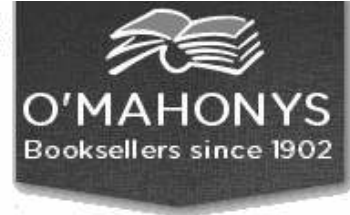


Across

- 1. A word formed from the first letters of a group of words
- 5. Having an edge or edges
- 8. A vase for holding the ashes of a cremated person or item
- 9. Vast or huge
- 11. A nocturnal bird
- 12. The second pronoun
- 13. Any instrument used in the kitchen
- 15. 21st letter of the Greek alphabet
- 16. Hatred of a particular race
- 19. Persons who escort people to an area or seat
- 22. A climbing vine which can be poisonous
- 23. One who regards you with affection
- 26. A tree with curving branches
- 27. There's no room at the \_\_\_
- 28. A particular size of newspaper
- 31. Attempt
- 32. To estimate or conjecture
- 33. A reprinting of something

Down

- 1. Another way to say goodbye
- 2. Band who sang "Shiny, Happy People"
- 3. Woman member of a religious order
- 4. A type of breakfast cereal
- 5. Any of numerous proteins created by cells
- 6. A woman who follows musicians around
- 7. Typically girly toys
- 14. A hot drink
- 16. The usual weather in Limerick
- 17. A type of pepper
- 18. Highest points on a hill or mountain
- 20. A type of small deer
- 21. A person who undergoes constant suffering
- 24. To feel sick or unwell
- 25. Long, narrow elevation of land
- 29. A way of measurement of fat and muscle mass (abbr.)
- 30. Abbreviation of obstetrics



The lucky winner will receive a €20 voucher to spend in O'Mahony's Booksellers or online at [www.omahonys.ie](http://www.omahonys.ie) For all your college needs  
Submit entries with name & ID number to the entry box in SU reception

EnviroCom University of Limerick Environmental Committee **EnviroCom Puzzle Competition**

Get out your googles and internets. Complete this crossword to be in with a chance to win a prize that will change your world. Use the clues to fill in the rows. The shaded column will reveal a hidden word.

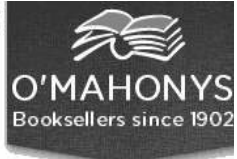
Email the hidden word to [marc.carroll@ul.ie](mailto:marc.carroll@ul.ie) to enter our draw.

Clues

- 1. Famous outspoken climatologist from NASA
- 2. Greenhouse gas that cattle belch
- 3. What sector is responsible for the largest percentage of Ireland's greenhouse gas emissions?
- 4. UN body that evaluates evidence of climate change
- 5. Vegetation change with the highest impact
- 6. The city where there was an agreement in December '09
- 7. Island nation most likely to disappear with rising sea levels
- 8. Oscar winner for "An Inconvenient Truth"

Sudoku

Sponsored by:



5	9			4		8	3
		1					4
2	4	7	8				
			8			9	2
			6				
	1	5		3			
				1	4	6	9
	4					2	
1	7			2		3	5

**Instructions:**  
The objective of the game is to fill all the blank squares in a game with the correct numbers. There are three very simple constraints to follow in a 9 by 9 square Sudoku game:  
\* Every row of 9 numbers must include all digits 1 through 9 in any order.  
\* Every column of 9 numbers must include all digits 1 through 9 in any order.  
\* Every 3 by 3 subsection of the 9 by 9 square must include all digits 1 through 9.

The winner will receive a €20 voucher to spend in O'Mahony's Booksellers [www.omahonys.ie](http://www.omahonys.ie) For all your college needs  
Submit entries with name & ID number to entry box in SU reception

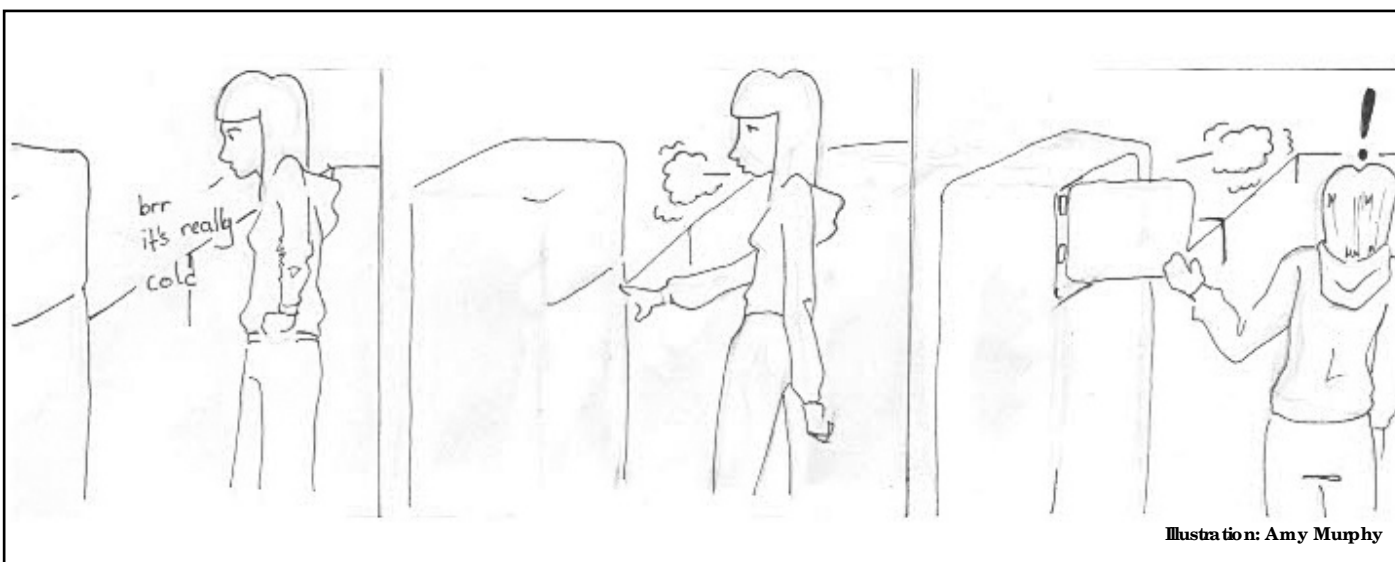
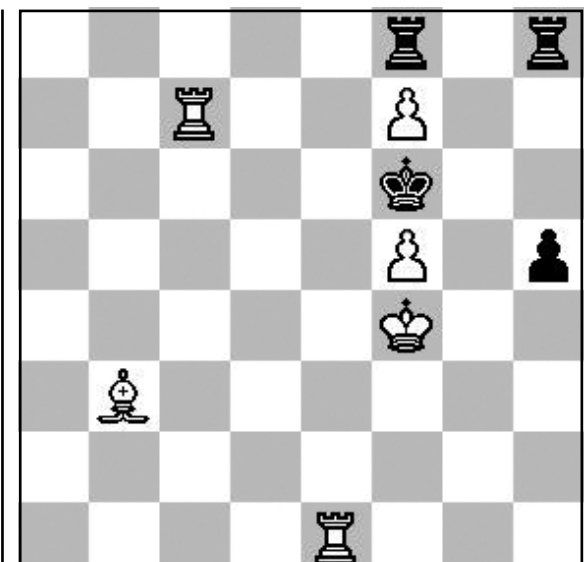


Illustration: Amy Murphy





# Diary of a Co-Op Student

By Nicole Ní Ríordáin

**A YEAR and a half into my New Media and English degree, and it's time to leave the safety of UL for one semester of work placement. Although I knew from the beginning of my course that it was coming, Co-Op seems to have snuck up on me and although I've learned a lot from my course so far, I must admit that I'm feeling quite unprepared for the working world.**

Thankfully I'm distracted from my lack of useful skills by all the preparation needed before I depart. One advantage of an Irish Co-Op is that you don't have to worry about passports, visas and luggage restrictions. One thing for sure, however scary it is to go on work placement in Ireland, doing it in a foreign country makes the entire experience much more daunting, especially when you don't speak the language. When I was applying for this placement, almost a year ago, I was given the opportunity to choose which European country I wanted to be placed in. I decided to leave it to fate. When I found out I was going to Vilnius, Lithuania, my first reaction was "Where the hell is that?!"

I'll spend five months working as an English language teaching assistant in a secondary school in Vilnius as part of the Comenius programme, which is run by the EU. The

school itself is so different to the type of secondary school I went to; there are over 1,000 students (there was only 26 in my 6th year), they study English and Russian instead of Irish and French, and, worst of all to someone who's been doing an Arts course, classes start at 8am!

The differences don't end there. While our country has been turned upside down by the rain, snow and frost we experienced in December and January, Vilnius has apparently endured -16°C temperatures. However cold I am here, I'm going to be a hell of a lot colder when I land there in a few days time! At least I'm well stocked up on furry socks, warm pyjamas and hot water bottles, as most of my friends took inspiration for my Christmas presents from my imminent travels!

Aside from a frantic dash to renew my passport, I'm pretty well prepared for my departure. I've spent the beginning of 2010 travelling around the country to say my goodbyes. I'm mostly feeling really excited about leaving, but it's not without sadness that I bid my friends farewell. I think I'm most upset about missing one of my closest friend's birthday parties, which of course is on the same night I leave, Kaip nusibodė! (The Lithuanian for "how annoying", according to Google translate).

## Garlic Chicken Stir Fry

### Ingredients

Chicken breast  
Garlic (I usually use just under half a clove)  
Soy Sauce  
Chicken stock cube(s)  
Noodles  
Oil  
Spices - Salt, Pepper, Paprika & Chilli Powder  
Peeled Onion/Spring onion  
Washed Mushrooms  
Deseeded Red Pepper (half)

N.B: Any combination of vegetables can be used including carrots, mange tout, sweetcorn, and peas.

### Method

1. Slice the chicken, the onion, mushrooms & the half pepper into strips preferably or small cubes.
2. Peel the garlic and crush/chop it up as small as possible.
3. Boil about 200ml of water and use to make up a small amount chicken stock. Add half the garlic to the stock.
4. Add a little oil/butter to a large frying pan or wok and heat.
5. Add the other half the garlic to the hot pan, along with a generous amount of the spices.
6. Add the chicken to the pan and cook until brown.
7. While the chicken is in the pan, cook the noodles in a saucepan of boiling water until soft.
8. Drain the noodles and pour cold water over them.
9. Add the vegetables to the pan and cook for a few minutes.
10. Add the stock mixture to the pan and let simmer.
11. Add the noodles to the mixture, stir throughout the chicken and vegetables.
12. Eat!



## First Year Diary

By Amy Murphy

**IT'S NOT fun trying to learn how to wake up early again, especially in this weather and especially when your blankets are exactly the right temperature.**

You know, the same temperature as that warm, fuzzy feeling you get from "insert happy moment here" but, to be honest, I'm looking forward to going back to college. I've never languished so long doing nothing. I mean sure, when they told us college holidays were ridiculously long I heard "just the right amount of time", but really lads, could we be any better rested? Ok, ok, I agree; after those exams, like the Leaving Cert all over again but with multiple choice and only four tests, we all felt like hibernating for the next seven semesters but I think we're ready for a comeback, hungry for knowledge (I never want to see another plate of food after Christmas) and a thirst

for structure in our lives (and that means no more staying up "to watch the sunrise"). For those of us lucky enough to go home for Christmas, was it a success? Personally I never want to be exposed to my parents for that amount of time ever again.

How did I make it nineteen years with them 24/7? They do, however, cook great food. Speaking of Christmas, anyone else feeling let down by it all? There was a build up to this special day since before Halloween and then what? Food, T.V. and? My friends and I organised a traditional Christmas party for some international students to show them what it was like and I think it was the hardest thing I've ever planned in my life! We couldn't come up with anything apart from, food, T.V. and alcohol (at a stretch).

However, it seems they like food as much as we do! So, Christmas, how was yours?

## A different kind of Co-Op

By Diarmuid Lucey

**When I first started considering my options for Co-Op the thoughts to myself of a 9 to 5 job, as an over-worked under-paid "glorified PA", in a cramped Accountants office, in recessionary Ireland, did not pump my adrenaline. I rolled my eyes and sighed, but then the thought of no exams, the lure of a weekly wage and a social life without the Lodge enticed me. Still though was there a better way to spend Co-Op?**

Then, almost like a fairytale, I opened my inbox, and noticed one entitled "Graduate Internship Research Opportunities". I began to feel tingly with excitement, as I read that the student would spend 5 months in a Business/Educational Institution in China (Beijing) and would gain first hand knowledge and experience of the Chinese business/financial environment and culture. This was exactly what the doctor ordered to cull my Co-Op blues. My stomach churned as excitement was displaced with disappointment, as a 1,000 word essay was required for the next day, in order to be considered for the Graduate Internship.

I thought about whether I should enter at

this late stage, not to mention what I should write. I eventually brain-washed myself into thinking that I was destined for China, and more importantly the monotony of the Accountants office could wait for now. I frantically scribbled all my thoughts on a page and any ideas that I thought would help my chances. I decided to title my essay "Emerging Nations and Europe" and began searching the internet of all I could learn about China.

It was not until October 9 that I thought about this Internship again. On this day I received a phone call stating that I had been successful in applying for the Graduate Internship in China and I was invited to Dublin to meet the other seven students who were also destined for China. I was completely stunned.

There is now just over two months before I depart for Asia and, if I'm honest I do have mixed feelings. However, I know this Internship will be, at first, a culture shock and then will be an immense learning curve. I hope to update you on when I actually land in China and the fun and frolics that is sure to ensue.

## Insight Into ...

# Corrective Eye Surgery

By Jason Kennedy - News Editor



**FOR as long as I can remember, I have either been wearing glasses or contact lenses. I'm told that I was bespectacled since the age of two. Without the aid of lenses, I wouldn't be able to make out faces or shapes, let alone letters or numbers. I'm told I had a prescription of minus 15, which is very close to legally blind. At parties, my glasses would be passed around like some drug out off "That 70s Show". Recently, I decided to make a change. I was sick of being blind. I decided to take the leap and get laser eye surgery.**

In September, I took the trek up to Dublin to see how soon I could get the surgery done. Imagine my disappointment when I was told my eyesight was too bad to get normal, run-of-the-mill laser surgery. I was told I would have to get phakic lens implants into my eyes, which would have to be clipped in with microscopic metal clips. After days of contemplating it and even looking up the surgery on Youtube to see how bad it is, I decided to take the leap and get it done. Anything would be better than having this kind of eyesight for the rest of my life.

It took the lenses that they would put inside my eyes eight weeks to be made and

delivered, so for the last two weeks of the semester one I wasn't allowed to wear contacts, which I hated having to do. Let me just tell you how much I hate my glasses. They were thinned down as much as they can be and they still look like the bottom of milk bottoms. When I was in national school, my blonde hair didn't help matters and I gained the nickname the Milkybar Kid, even if I thought I looked more like that kid from Jerry Maguire, if I do say so myself. Last Halloween I stirred things up by donning a cowboy outfit and packets of the white chocolate, just to have a laugh. I started using contacts when I was 15 and never looked back.

Three days before Christmas, I packed my bags to get my right eye done in the Mater Private Hospital. I was under the care of Professor Michael O'Keefe, who has many articles on the internet about eye care and who is regarded internationally as one of the best. I had to pack a nightgown and slippers, as I would be recovering in the hospital for the afternoon, after I wake up from the anaesthetic. I was given more eye drops and forms to fill out than I could count, but following that, I was given my hospital gown and

wheeled into the anaesthetic room. After a few minutes of nervous waiting, the nurse put those curious sticky pads on my chest and connected my to a monitor, where I had a good look at my heart rate, naturally not having a clue what it meant.

Then came the nasty little needle the nurse stuck in my hand, so that the other syringes that would undoubtedly follow could just attach onto. The anaesthetist then stuck in an injection to make me happy. It worked. Last thing I remember before going off to the land of sleep is talking utter rubbish about how much I love college and how I'd been having a rough time lately. I told that poor nurse more gossip and

feelings than I would tell good friends. I would imagine she was delighted when she could knock me out with the general anaesthetic.

I woke up a few hours later in the recovery room. The first thing I noticed was the strange feeling in my right eye. It was covered in a few layers of gauze and what felt like anti-bacterial goop. I kept constantly waking up and falling asleep and continued to talk rubbish until I was given tea, toast and a new batch of eyedrops. I was then wheeled upstairs to the eyecare part of the hospital where the bandage was taken off and to my surprise, I could actually see. There were even more drops put in my eye and it was examined. The doctor

seemed very happy with the progress, before asking me to read down the dreaded optometrist's chart. Without any lenses, normally all I could see was a white board; I wouldn't have even been able to see the outline of the letters. I was overwhelmed to be able to even see the letters, let alone make it down as far as the fourth last line on a very long chart. Who would have ever imagine reading letters would be such a huge novelty?

So, with stitches in my eye and enough eye drops to last me a long time I went home. Two weeks later I returned to get the left eye done, which was a very similar experience. The help and support offered by all the staff in the Mater

Private Hospital was fantastic. It's amazing how calm I remained during the time I spent there. I cannot thank them enough for what they have done for me and how much they have changed my life.

At the time I am writing this, I have a few more visits to the hospital ahead of me, mostly just check-ups, and also to get these pesky stitches out of my eye, but I'm looking forward to it.

The days of me being blind and having my eyesight restrict what I do are over. I could not recommend this surgery or the Mater private enough for what they have done. Have no fear of the surgery, just do it and don't look back. I know I won't.



Jason now



# Health Paradox

By John Rainsford

A WORLD expert on men's health has told a packed lunch time conference at the University of Limerick that men were suffering from a "paradox" in their public perceptions of masculinity.

Dr Noel Richardson was giving an inaugural speech organised by the University's Diversity and Equal Opportunities Committee. He told the packed attendance in the Wood Room, Plassey House, that it was particularly insightful that many men's conferences, which he had attended over the years, were mostly attended by women. This was part of the "disconnectedness" that men suffered from in relation to their health, he explained.

In a speech entitled "Looking beyond the prostate-reflecting on paradoxes, dilemmas and challenges for men's health in the 21st century", Dr Richardson said that many men tended to focus their lives on job security and financial independence. Today, however, there were growing challenges to this traditional concept of masculinity. The "New Man" faced challenges to the very notion of masculinity itself, he explained.

For example, women were found to suffer higher rates of depression but four times as many men killed themselves, in Ireland, as the illness went largely undiagnosed. While it was true that men dominated health provision they were conspicuously silent on matters relating to their own health, he stated.

Male life expectancy in Ireland is now five years lower than that of their female counterparts. Indeed men from lower socio-economic groups die six times more often, from the leading causes of mortality in Ireland, than males of similar ages in the highest socio-economic group.

Put simply a huge gender gap currently exists between the sexes in Ireland with male life expectancy currently standing at 76.8 years and females, by comparison, surviving until 81.6 years. This burden of ill health is more pronounced in the twenty to thirty year age group where men die 3.5 times faster than do women.

Dr Richardson believed that the demise of the "Celtic Tiger" had made men increasingly insecure. Rural men, in particular, had health issues which were largely ignored by mainstream society and racism was growing all the time. However, the "fragile man", as one researcher dubbed him, was

increasingly blamed for every ill in society. Dr Richardson said: "In the past fathers did not have meaningful discussions with their children. It was left to the mother. The man was the breadwinner and the mother reared the children. That traditional role is being challenged by modern notions of masculinity."

of masculinity, in relation to health issues, could be changed through enlightened public policies."

He used the example of "Tour de France" winner and cancer victim Lance Armstrong, who waited until the last minute to go and see a doctor about his condition. The traditional keepers of men's health tended to

male preoccupations. Young men tended to stick their chests out and get aggressive when drunk. Drink had become a rite of passage for men increasingly caught between conflicting expectations of their role in society.

It was no accident, he said, that many popular men's magazines

gained worldwide coverage for doing so. Examples of such "health disparities" existed across the board in Ireland today, he stated.

Men took greater risks with their health and in their lifestyle choices, for example, in sexual relationships, and in their choice of food, alcohol and drugs. However, he admitted, that a complete bridging of the health divide might be impossible due to genetic differences between the sexes.

More men were disconnected from the health system and their reluctance to heed advice was impacting negatively on health outcomes. It was typical of this type of thinking that men preferred to discuss issues like testicular cancer by using phrases like 'under the bonnet' or 'lead in the pencil'. It made it easier to discuss topics of a sensitive nature, he felt. A doctor's surgery was seen as a place where women and children went but this only masked deep seated fears about the consequences of doing so.

The central thrust of Dr Richardson's argument was that men were raised to be stoical but that this attitude had served them very badly in terms of their own health needs. Men had many health taboos, he said, helped in some cases by doctors, whose attitude was to "just motor ahead".

It was Dr Richardson's belief that many Irish men felt invincible but that there was an urgent need to address this misconception via a specific focus on men's health. Although lacking financial resources, "The National Men's Health Policy", launched in January 2009, was crucial to changing negative health outcomes, he explained.

Dr Richardson's own "Centre for Men's Health Research and Training" was established in 2008 to conduct research, raise awareness and promote, with stakeholders, the public profile of men's health in Ireland. The Centre, for which he is the current Director, is located in the Institute of Technology in Carlow.

Dr Richardson's speech, which was covered by the "Limerick Leader", is one of a series planned over the next twelve months by the University of Limerick Diversity and Equal Opportunities Committee. For further information please contact Dr Liam Murray at the University by e-mailing [liam.murray@ul.ie](mailto:liam.murray@ul.ie)



Dr Noel Richardson, Director of the Centre for Men's Health Research and Training

He continued: "These new roles were hard to assimilate, particularly for older men, for whom running to the doctor, was a sign of weakness. The "Gender Script" had been "hammered into us" from birth, however, this social construction

be mothers, wives and girlfriends, he lamented. Men have many health taboos, the prostate being only one example, he explained.

At the centre of this "paradox" was a public perception of masculinity which conflicted with very private

were now practically identical to certain women's magazines in their obsession with body-image and sex. The Institute of Public Health in Ireland, however, had drawn attention to growing health inequalities in Ireland and had

# Obsessed with dieting

By John Rainsford

**What lies behind our current obsession with weight gain and the next “Yo-Yo diet”? John Rainsford looks at why humans, mostly in developed countries, have a unique problem with weight gain and asks what strategies of “weight management”, if any, might yield beneficial results.**

“A moment on the lips, a life time on the hips” is a common enough incantation for those of us who like to have our cake and eat it too. Indeed, humans have evolved to eat fat in a Martini like manner; that is anytime, anyplace, anywhere; and to consume sugars, originally in the form of ripe fruits, for their vitamin and fibre content. Unlike our early ancestors, however, famine is now redundant as a means of shedding those once vital extra pounds.

Today, not only do we binge eat, we also binge on all the wrong things. Oils, butter, cakes and biscuits may be heaven on the tongue but they are invariably hell on the tummy. Health experts advise no more than three servings per day of sugary treats but Irish people eat as many as 7.3 such servings.

As a society we are paying heavily for this over indulgence. 47% of Irish men and 70% of Irish women are currently recorded as being “centrally obese”. We eat mountains of sugar and not nearly enough fibre. Women, in particular, have become dangerously deficient in minerals like calcium and iron as a direct result. Indeed, almost 71% of Irish people regularly exceed the six grams of salt recommended for healthy daily consumption.

Human appetite is governed by a complex set of factors involving the central nervous system and an appetite suppressing hormone called “Leptin”.

The initial response to appetising food (salivation) can be extended considerably, however, by varying our diet.

“Leptin”, is ironically, produced by fat cells themselves and triggers a region of the brain called the “Hypothalamus” to increase or suppress appetite. Some new drugs, designed to curb obesity, have, therefore, focused on raising levels of “Leptin” in the bloodstream. Others have tried to decrease the process of fat absorption from the intestine. Thus far neither approach has been fully successful. The side effects, in a number of cases, have also been severe and sometimes life threatening.

Ironically, although, we tend to eat fewer calories than we did 30 to 40 years ago, we

are now much heavier on average thanks to our increasingly sedate urban living.

Differing rates of metabolic activity have sometimes been blamed for this rising obesity but most evidence today suggests that the heavier we get the higher is our rate of resting metabolic turnover.

In short, we have to eat more, in order to maintain the weight we put on. Subtle deficiencies in vitamins and nutrients may also drive us to over eat just as pregnant women

The answer may lie in controlling the number and type of these fat cells. Unfortunately, however, some diets have the potential to create health difficulties of their own.

Low carbohydrate diets, for example, may result in serious illness. In particular, some research has found that dieters who maximised protein intake through foods such as meat, cheese and salads (at the expense of carbohydrates) risked developing a chronic blood disease known as “Ketoacidosis”.



can develop cravings for certain foods.

Varying ratios of brown to white fat may also help to explain obesity in society. Brown fat is highly mobile and can be easily broken down, usually from stores held around the kidneys, in order to generate body heat. White fat on the other hand is commonly called “flab” and gives us the distinctive spare tyre around our waists. It is the least beneficial kind of fat humans possess.

While some people appear to be genetically predisposed to weight gain, others remain relatively thin no matter how much they eat.

“acetone” leading to “halitosis”, commonly referred to as “bad breath”. In addition, by loading the kidneys with proteins, valuable trace minerals are leached from the body resulting in a loss of bone density.

The condition is usually treated with substances known as “buffers” which act to decrease the bloods acidic content. Health professionals today are increasingly concerned about the prospect of future generations adopting the same unhealthy attitudes as their parents.

Indeed, when measured for such risk factors as bad cholesterol, high blood pressure and weight gain an alarming number of school children exhibit the tell-tale signs of being over fed and in poor physical condition.

In times past children could expect to exceed the minimum level of healthy exercise by walking to school, running in the park or playing sport. Currently, however, some of these children are suffering Type-2 Diabetes, a disease once the preserve of forty-something’s.

Dr. Marion M. Hetherington, a dietary expert based at the University of Liverpool, said: “If someone is trying to manage weight or to lose weight then they should eat without distractions including having other foods to eat.

This might mean choosing simple meals rather than a large variety of foods. It is easier to facilitate satiation with simple, single meals than with large, buffet style varied meals”.

She continued: “We found in our research that eating with the TV on or eating with friends increases food intake, but we would like to see whether this influences the development of satiation. Men eat more than women, this is to be expected and that was the only gender difference.”

Presently some 41 million Americans suffer from blood glucose abnormalities (pre-Diabetes) with diet and exercise being the only current treatment. Worldwide 220 million people suffer from what the “Centres for Disease Control and Prevention” have labelled an epidemic of obesity.

In order to find an effective response to these illnesses scientists are now increasingly targeting the mental, as well as the physical, motivations behind appetite. The knowledge produced by their research may help millions of people in the industrialised world who suffer from eating disorders.

Typically sufferers feel fatigued and dehydrated, and suffered from headaches, nausea, constipation or diarrhoea.

The condition results from a lowering of the pH level of the blood and thus a rise in its acidic qualities. Similar symptoms are seen in cases of Diabetes Mellitus and even starvation. When carbohydrate levels are low insulin levels also drop and substances known as “Ketones” (produced by the liver) begin to swamp the blood stream.

Sufferers may experience an increased level of respiration and higher concentrations of



## Interview

# Target man, gentleman or just 'Big Niall'

*Sports Editor, Tomás McCarthy, talks to Sunderland Chairman, Niall Quinn, about his career to date.*

By Paula Jane Murphy

**In the increasingly cut throat world of English football, where common courtesy is disappearing, a gentleman like Niall Quinn can still survive. In a wide ranging interview with An Focal he gives his views on an enthralling international career, his experiences at the likes of Arsenal and Man City as well as how he took Sunderland to his heart. Overall, life has been good to Quinn and you wouldn't begrudge it to one of Irish soccer's most likeable players.**

This fairytale comes with a twist however. Saipan was on the agenda and yet another insight into the controversy that split the nation. Quinn doesn't shirk the issue. "Ultimately it was a media frenzy that was uncontrollable and selfishly at the time I just got on with my football". Signs of regret maybe, but this was Quinn's last World Cup; one last shot at the big time. "I certainly know it should never have happened. I think all of us should shoulder a little bit of blame for it but at the end of the day the jersey is the most important thing to me." He certainly doesn't think that the team suffered as he reflects on the eventual defeat by Spain. "If you look back we were a kick of a ball from emulating the 1990 team and possibly going even further you know. So it wasn't so bad a performance despite the problems". There is also a sense of anger. "It was funny nobody else had an issue with the training ground nobody else had an issue with anything but there you go". Emotions still run high and the memories are obviously vivid for Quinn.

"Sorry I didn't react better, us professionals we all wanted to go out and play". In truth the 6ft 4 inch giant never let Ireland down. After making his debut in 1986 he enjoyed the Charlton bandwagon, an era which brought soccer to another level in this country. "It was a great time. We had never been to tournaments before and in '88 especially we really were novices". That Euro 88 campaign ended with a narrow defeat to the Netherlands denying us a semi final place but it stood to the team. "It brought great hope to the team that we could go on and go a bit further".

Belief grew taking them to Italia '90 and unbelievable scenes country wide. "We had to pinch ourselves at times. It was dreamland". He admits that the 1-0 quarter final defeat to the hosts was tough to take. "By that stage we were gone from being novicey and delighted to be there to actually thinking we had a chance of winning the bloody thing". It is unlikely that

the homecoming could have been bigger if we had won it. In the hearts and minds of the Irish people the World Cup was coming home.

In a career of many highlights like these the goal against Netherlands at Italia '90 must rank near the top. Quinn admits "it was a very important goal for my career". Before that moment the gangly centre forward wasn't starting regularly for Ireland but he seized the opportunity in that game. "From that moment on every time I was fit for the next 11 years until we played Holland again in Lansdowne after that 11 years every qualification game I was fit for I started". That goal was crucial also because it secured Ireland's passage to that famous second round clash with Romania. It was no thing of beauty. Bonner hoofed a high ball right towards the Dutch penalty area and then the defender volleyed the ball back towards the goalkeeper who spills it. Quinn then arrives to slide home. Other highlights included scoring against England in 1991 at Wembley and also holding the record goals tally. Although Robbie Keane is now well ahead Big Niall maintains that "it was nice to have it for the couple of years I had it".

Quinn was quick to defend Charlton's tactics. "We tried to bring great teams to our level. Jack was tactically so astute. People forget that. Countries couldn't live with us for four or five years". Not pretty but effective. While Quinn couldn't quibble with the tactics he did realise Charlton's weakness as the years rolled on. "It was only when the team got a bit older it wasn't replaced properly. Once the original team got old and tired it faded away."

At club level Niall experienced his share of highs and gut wrenching lows. He signed for Arsenal on his 17th birthday. It was a big decision to leave his Dublin GAA roots behind but one which made sense. "Once that opportunity comes up I think you must take it. My mother's a teacher and my sister's a teacher. It meant me not doing my Leaving Cert but even they realised it would have been tough to say no." Fortunes fluctuated for Quinn at Highbury. He scored on his debut in a 2-0 win over in Liverpool in 1985 and also enjoyed a run of games under George Graham. A lack of goals though saw Quinn as he says himself run "out of favour at Arsenal". Manchester City came calling in 1990 to his relief.

"To get the break to go to Man City was massive. It kick started my career. I felt more confident as a player and as a footballer." He fired 20 goals for City in the 1990-91 and the

goals began to flow the following two seasons also. 1993 though saw Quinn sustain a cruciate ligament injury which kept him out for a full year. Further disappointment followed in dramatic circumstances. On the final day of the 1995-96 season Man City played Liverpool and were fighting for Premier League survival. Quinn had been substituted in the second half and went to the changing rooms to keep tabs on other results. "It was tough, very tough. It gets shown on TV every now and again." City were drawing 2-2 but also needed other games to go their way. "It was chaotic. Communications weren't as advanced as they are now. There was a mix up."

City, instead of going for a winner, held the ball up in the corner. A goal was reported at Southampton but the players and manager Alan Ball had received false information. Quinn knew the true story and raced up the sideline in his normal clothes shouting at his team. City needed a goal. "With a few minutes to go everyone thought we were safe and started holding the ball up in the corner I was the only person who knew we weren't. There's coverage still shown of me running down the touchline screaming at our players to put the ball in the box." In the end City were down and Quinn departed weeks later.

His affair with Sunderland began. It wasn't so smooth to begin with though. "I got injured after five games. A bad knee injury." Relegation was again Quinn's plight by season's end. "It was really tough having being relegated two years in a row, my knees weren't great, I was 30 years of age. I felt like I'd made a mistake at that point going to Sunderland." Things improved though and Quinn hit the Premier League box office with a bang. After losing a thrilling play off final against Charlton, Sunderland emerged stronger. "The following year we ran away with the league and we had two brilliant years in the Premiership." Brilliant indeed with Quinn, now in his mid thirties linking up with Kevin Phillips to deadly effect and have two of his best seasons. Chelsea were famously beaten 4-1 at the Stadium of Light. The club which was on the crest of a wave soon came crashing against the rocks after Quinn departed the scene.

"The season after I left the whole thing fell apart they got relegated, they lost lots of money." After Mick McCarthy's Black Cats broke their own record lowest points tally Quinn came to the rescue. "I was asked by the chairman at the time Bob Murray could I get

people together to try and come in and bring the club forward. So that's what I did and because I knew the club inside out I got on well and the people trusted and respected me. I ended up going back there in an administrative role". And here he is now with the ship steered as chairman with the team safely positioned in mid table of England's top division.

There is more to Quinn than football of course. His dedication to helping charities is endless. Before Christmas he visited Limerick to launch the Shane Geoghan Project. The project is being based on a trust which is running over in Sunderland. "We administer vital educational needs in the Sunderland area". The aim is to "transfer some of the successful projects that we have in Sunderland to Limerick. We are on that page now where we are looking at a couple of things that we think will help in areas of Limerick where we need to turn young people on a different path." Sometimes you just have to admire someone who wants to give something back to society.

Eamon Dunphy once labelled him "a creep" but Niall's reputation in this country still remains unblemished. Today FM's Gift Grub have often put his character in situations to show his generous, caring side. Is there another side to him? "I love a night out, I love backing a horse or two." Still he just can't help being nice. "I've always got time for people". Looking ahead to the future again Quinn's considerate outlook is striking. "I was really lucky everything fell my way I just hope that those close to me get as good a kick out of life as I did."

With Quinn you never feel he's putting on an act. It's all genuine. Still he has things to do, places to go and people to see. But in Niall Quinn's world you are always welcome. Maybe nice things do happen to nice people after all.





# The appeal of Buddhism

By Ruth Whittle

**BUDDHISM is the fourth most populous religion in the world, with an estimated 359 million Buddhists in the world today. One of the most appealing aspects of Buddhism, which marks it out from other religions, is that Buddha is recognised to have been an ordinary man. Buddha never claimed any inspiration to a god or a higher force.**

Though Buddhists follow the teachings of Buddha, Buddha does not lead his followers to God. Buddhist principles teach the path to awakening or truth.

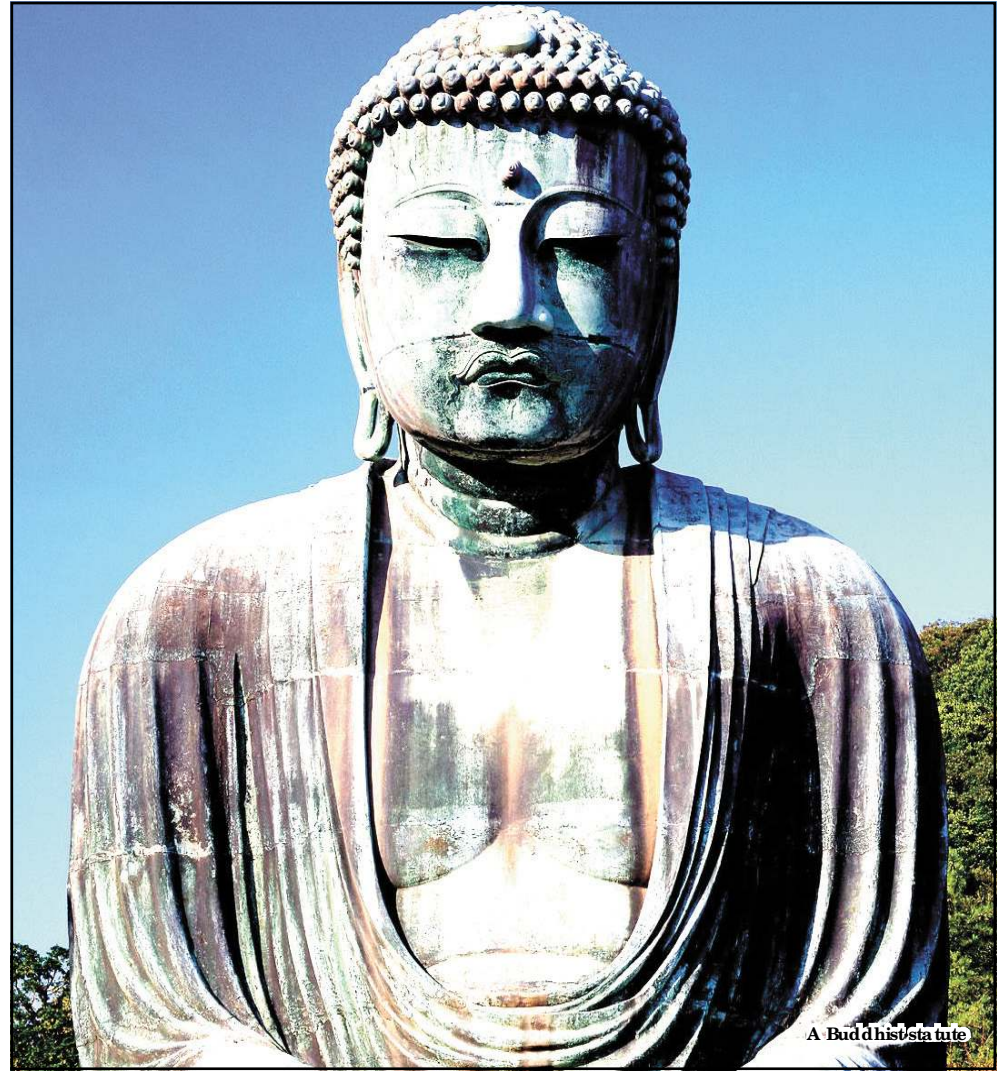
Every person is a potential Buddha and has the ability, if they try hard enough, to achieve enlightenment. Man is in charge of his own destiny, therefore man's emancipation from suffering is solely his own responsibility. This is described in the Four Noble Truths, Buddha's teachings on how to achieve Nirvana. It identifies that all life is suffering and that the root cause of this suffering is desire. The cessation of suffering involves the elimination of this desire. Nirvana is a heaven on earth which can be achieved by each and every person who diligently practises the Buddha's way.

Our minds can be our worst enemies. The search for Nirvana, for enlightenment, can be seen as a search for refuge, as a safe place that provides protection from distress. Through meditation, the mind can be stilled. We can learn new ways to see our troubles and our pains and bring true wisdom to our life. Meditation can be achieved through mindfulness of all that we do. By entering deep into the present

moment, the nature of reality is identified and this insight liberates us from suffering and confusion. While in meditation, there will be an agitation of the mind; by identifying the root cause of the agitated thought, awareness is developed and there will come a realisation that the agitated thoughts do not have any original location and are empty.

An experiment involving brain-scanning was conducted on a Tibetan Buddhist monk by a team of neurologists. They wanted to see what happened to a transcendent mind, scientifically speaking, during moments of enlightenment. In the mind of a normal thinking person, an electrical storm of thoughts and impulses whirls constantly, registering on a brain scan as yellow and red flashes. Mystics across time and cultures have all described a stilling of the brain during meditation and say that the ultimate union with God is a blue light which they can feel radiating from the centre of their skulls. Sure enough, this Tibetan monk was able to quiet his mind so completely so that no red or yellow flashes could be seen. Instead, the monitor indicated a small, cool, blue pearl of light, as described by the mystics.

In summation, the appeal of Buddhism is widely recognised. Buddhism is a practice which can be followed by every individual. Meditation is a powerful force which helps to attain the nature of reality and liberate us from our desires and suffering. In addition, Buddhism can transform the mind by stilling the brain and is a potent tool to achieve sheer bliss of nirvana in life.



## Blasphemous libel in Ireland

By David Hartley

**AT WHAT point does it become acceptable to police what goes on inside peoples' heads?**

How can the state prosecute people for vocalising thoughts and opinions? Since we live in a democracy, does that not necessitate a right to freedom of expression? The blasphemous libel law that came into force on January 1 of this year is undoubtedly a regressive step in civil liberties in this country. Religious fidelity in Ireland is not so strong that the populace demand these measures. It is simply drawing attention to deficiencies in the current constitution due to the culture at the time it was written. There is not a massive amount of debate regarding the present laws value since it is constructed to be ineffective and the Minister has explicitly stated he sees prosecution under the act as unlikely. Despite this the concept of protection of religious beliefs is not without merit. Imagine you are attacked in the street; would you be content with

no ability to defend yourself, with no state measures to protect you from this harm? Why is that we place more value on someone who has been punched in the face than we do on someone who's deeply held beliefs are damaged? Psychological harms can have all the negative consequences that physical ones can, yet if someone is damaged due to being a member of a religion that's practices are being savaged, the state tacitly condones this. Sometimes inactions speak louder than words. Can the state stand to one side and let people have their views trashed in public? Are the harms of protecting people in this way far outweighed by the harms to those wishing to express these opinions? The UL Debating Union will be holding a debate on the issue of the new Blasphemous Libel law on the January 26 at 7.30pm in B1023. There will be speakers from Renew and Atheist Ireland in attendance to discuss both sides of the new blasphemy legislation.

## Resolving to fail

By Emily Maree

**Resolutions are like dodge ball. At first you're able to avoid the obstacles thrown at you, like the five tins of Quality Street you bought, or the icing off the uneaten Christmas cake, but once the inevitable cravings hit, they hit tenfold.**

You end up in a sugar coma at half two in the morning, after eating 37 Crunchie bars and smoking two cartons of Silk Cut. It feels like years since you last had a chocolate bar, a cigarette, a drink, or anything else for that matter. You keep looking at the calendar every five minutes to see if it's changed date, but it's still the fifth of January.

So why do we make these resolutions that we are so obviously going to fail at keeping? Why give up the vices we feel we deserve, like smoking, or drinking, or from personal experience, just being a total couch potato? Do we want to punish ourselves for the year we just left behind, or brace ourselves for the one to come? Or are resolutions

just a marketing scam to sell gym memberships, nicotine patches and copious amounts of liquor to help ease the pain?

All we know is they don't work. One minute you're sitting around with your friends deciding to make a New Year's resolution and the next, you're like a junkie, inhaling a Swiss Roll still in the wrapper under a bush in the garden so they won't find out what a failure you've become. Pathetic. My New Year's resolution is to stop giving things up and it works extremely well for me. On the other hand, the alternative is to give up something you don't do anyway, like someone with lactose intolerance deciding to give up drinking milk. Now that's what I call a smart resolution. We're doomed to failure from the start. Kicking away our crutches and expecting to run a marathon may seem a good idea in your head but deciding to give up smoking, then "just accompanying" your friends to the smoking area may seem more like a kick to the crotch

rather the proverbial crutches. Half the UL campus must be giving up Facebook surfing for the essential nine hours a day to concentrate on their "studies".

Even the word puts a dampener on the task in hand and makes it a chore rather than a change for the better. 'Resolutions' should be changed to "ah sure, go on so, I'll take a stab at it!"

This way we won't feel so pressured to suddenly transform into Rosanna Davison after skipping one cigarette, because let's face it, that's not going to happen! All you can do at this stage is put down the Celebrations and put your hands in the air and do yourself a favour. Ask yourself whether you have the willpower or indeed, the "dodging" skills to overcome the temptation of breaking your resolution, since you know it won't last anyway.

Be strong and you might be able to dodge, duck, dip, dive and, well, dodge your temptations well into the New Year.



**“Nine” is sexy and mesmerising but not for everyone**



By Marese Heffeman

I MADE the decision to see “Nine” after reading scores of bad reviews, almost all of which compared the film to the 1963 musical “8½” on which it is based. Without having seen the original movie, I was able to discard the unfavourable assessments and focus solely on “Nine” – a Broadway musical-turned film that, walking into the cinema, I knew very little about.

Daniel Day-Lewis plays Guido Contini in this Italy-based film. Contini is a troubled movie director in the midst of a breakdown as he struggles to find inspiration for his latest project before shooting begins. Day-Lewis plays the role of a man on the edge as his character becomes trapped inside his own mind, haunted by the numerous women who have engulfed him and shaped his life. These are his mother (Sophia Loren), his wife (Marion Cotillard), his mistress (Penelope Cruz), his leading actress (Nicole Kidman), his dressmaker and friend (Judi Dench), a beautiful American journalist (Kate Hudson) and the mysterious cavewoman (Stacey Ferguson) who represents the sins of his childhood. Contini appears to be almost totally detached from reality, trying to reach an artistic revelation through his own flawed experiences, but instead becoming obsessed by his problems, searching for redemption and losing himself in a sea of imagined scenarios.

I feel I was supposed to fall in love with Contini somewhere along the line, or at least that I should have felt sympathy for him at some point. However, there was very little to love or to sympathise with.

Contini is harsh, abrupt and wholly unexciting. It is very obvious that he is having a breakdown and he portrays a vivid picture of someone plagued with guilt and confusion, his constant lying and self-absorbed nature makes it difficult to understand why his wife and his mistress are so deeply and tragically attached to him. His character would have made much more sense had we been shown some of the good, the genius or the initial attraction. Instead we saw a broken, battered and bitter shell of a man from which we were expected to form sympathy and understanding. It was impossible.

The main appeal of the movie should have been the music, the dancing and the extravagant costumes. In terms of the latter, I was not disappointed. Every musical scene is filled with colour and vibrancy and a very subtle kind of sultriness. The dancers are beautiful and everything is very much alive and pulsating. The cinematography during these scenes is

superb, bringing a sense of inspiration to the screen. The only flaw – and it is a significant flaw – is with the songs themselves. None of the numbers stand out as being “that song” – the one that will be sung at talent shows and karaoke nights for years to come. Nothing is worth remembering and much of the lyrics are specific to the storyline of the film rather than appealing to the wider audience. Also, most of the singers are not singers, but actors. Of course they all sing quite well but apart from Nicole Kidman who is actually known for her singing voice, none of them are even close to reaching the high standard of actor/singers in many other musicals.

The only numbers which stand out to me are Cotillard’s “My Husband Makes Movies” and “Take It All” for their intense emotion and believable performance and of course, Stacey Ferguson (Fergie) in her rendition of “Be Italian” which is at once so exciting and so ugly that we finally feel we are biting our teeth into something real, something that matters: this poor wicked whore who ruins the young Contini’s innocence yet manages to evoke more of my sympathy than any other character.

Some of the characters are underdeveloped and we wonder at their purpose and their significance in Contini’s mind. For instance, we know that Kidman plays his leading actress and acts as his muse but why is she so affected by him? Her purpose is questionable and therefore her contribution to the film is bare, despite her powerful performance. The only female characters I could even partly relate to were that of his wife and his mistress – both desperately calling for his attention and feeling mistreated and taken for granted. Penelope Cruz gives a convincing performance and develops her character thoroughly throughout the film; beginning as the typical ditzy, beautiful and one-dimensional bit on the side and developing into the depressed, lost and tragic mistress. Contini’s wife portrays the strength and elegance of a lonely wife as she watches her husband tear their relationship apart.

I loved “Nine”. I thought it was mesmerising, glamorous, original and beautifully made. But I represent a minority. The movie is greatly flawed and doesn’t appeal to anyone in particular. Unless you are easily captivated by flashy costumes and beautiful dancers, you will almost certainly be disappointed. There is a wonderful story within this film, but much of it is lost through poor dialogue, bad instincts and unnecessary footage.

# Avatar is clichéd but worth the viewing

By Colette Keely

**AVATAR, the sci-fi epic, has already made over \$1.14 billion globally since its release in December 2009. The film is unprecedented with the invention of revolutionary technology and a new language created just to make the film.**

This 3D film also combines action and a love story with special effects, all coming together to make one truly unique film. James Cameron, the Oscar winning director of Titanic and director of films such as The Terminator and Terminator 2, wrote and produced the film which he envisaged 15 years ago, but had to invent the technology to make the film first.

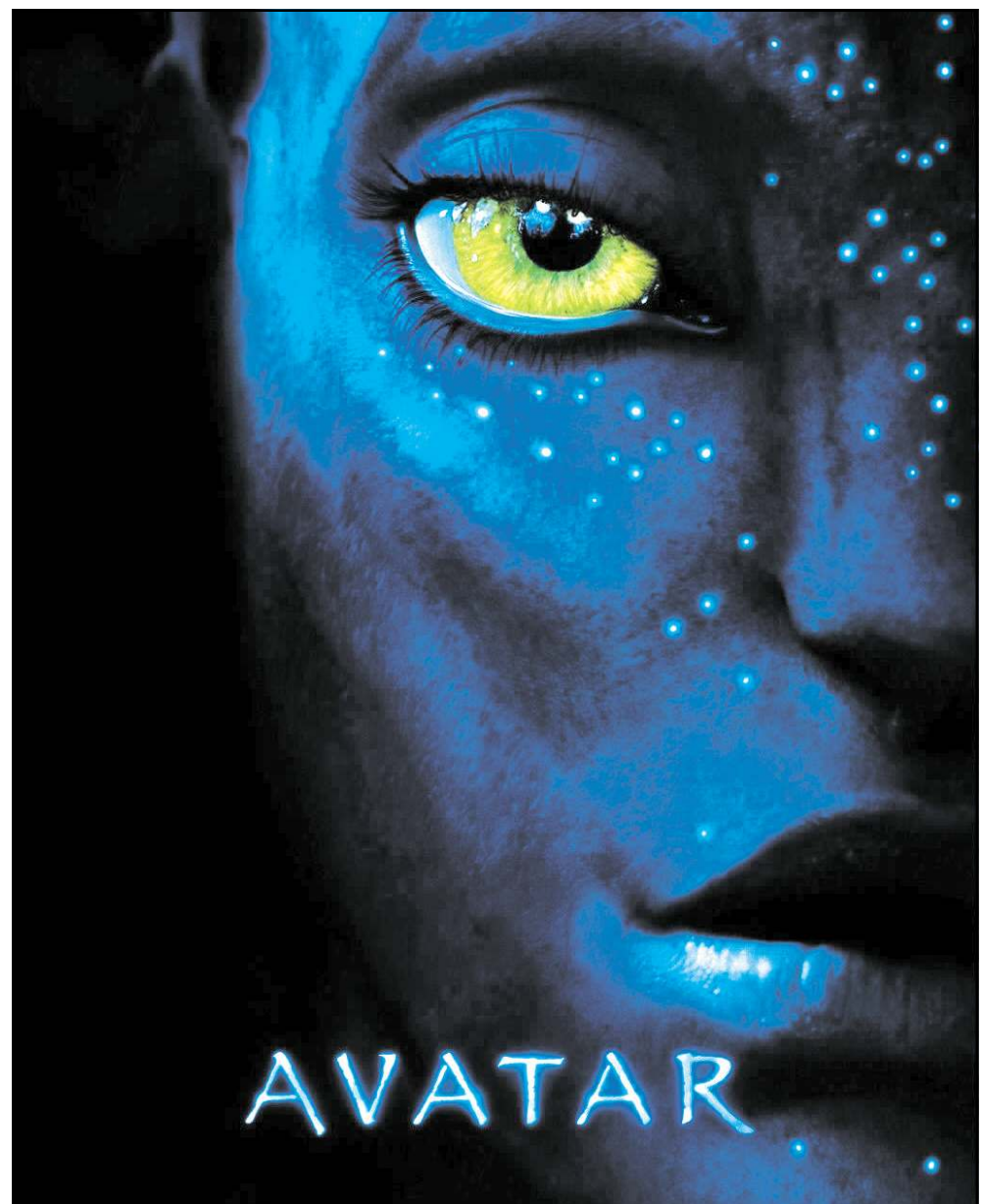
The basic plot is that Avatar is a program which links the human consciousness to a biological body that can survive in Pandora’s toxic atmosphere. The Avatars are a mixture of human and Na’vi DNAs (the Na’vi being the natives of Pandora). Ex-marine Jake Sully, who is confined to a wheelchair, is recruited to replace his twin brother in aiding a mining expedition on the jungle moon of Pandora. This is a rare mine for a mineral essential to solve the Earth’s energy predicament. In his avatar form Jake has full mobility of his legs again.

His mission is to infiltrate the Na’vi to persuade them to trade their precious ore. Jake must gain their trust and learn to become one of them; this involves many tasks and learning

their language and way of life. In the midst of all this he is distracted by the beautiful Neytiri. Their relationship develops and Jake comes to respect the Na’vi way and is accepted as one of them. Unfortunately he now has to decide where his loyalties lie when the battle between the two worlds collide. This is the true test for Jake; the fate of the whole world is on his shoulders.

Cameron hasn’t created anything revolutionary in Avatar regarding the narrative, structure and human characters. They are recycled from various other films and many Sci-Fi Action films yet Avatar is more impressive on a technical level rather than a storytelling one. The editing, cinematography and special effects excellently portray the extraordinary world of Pandora and allow you to forget the fact that the story is clichéd.

Avatar is perhaps a little controversial with the analogy between the Vietnam and Iraq wars and connections could also be made between 9/11 and the human attack on Pandora, which could be pleasing for opponents of the war on Iraq. Even with the longer film Cameron still manages to captivate the audience’s attention throughout. The film has something for everyone and the technology created will no doubt vastly improve the future development of 3D films, which we can now only look forward to.



# Ritchie Enriches Holmes

By Paula Jane Murphy

**WHEN Arthur Conan Doyle created Sherlock Holmes I do not believe he envisaged the man taking part in bare-knuckle underground fights, being outwitted by another or indeed falling in love with the woman who did the outwitting but in Guy Ritchie's new adaptation traditional perceptions of our hero are not adhered to.**

With gritty pictures like *Lock Stock and Two Smoking Barrels* and *Snatch* in your resume you're not going to produce a typical interpretation of anything. Its fast paced, clever and in parts rather amusing. Die hard traditionalists may be a little affronted by this movie but it does what I think a film should do giving a fresh interpretation on a well worn story. There's no Professor Plum in

the library with the lead piping here; instead Sherlock Holmes comes up against a man who vows to rise from the dead, kill people with black magic and then take over the world. It's not however as farfetched as it sounds. Robert Downey Jr. breathes life into a previously cold character with wit and energy. Jude Law was notably impressive seeming more at ease than he usually does on screen. The relationship between these two is almost symbiotic and their dialogue between each other provides much laughter. Indeed the screenplay penned by Michael Robert Johnson, Anthony Peckham and Simon Kinberg leaves one with very little to fault.

We see London in a harsh, industrial, bustling period which is a refreshing outlook. Rachel

McAdams is another addition to this story and bewitching and ensnaring Holmes provides an interesting new dimension to his character; she also provides a link for a planned sequel. This sequel has promise and also is rumoured to star Brad Pitt as Holmes nemesis. Kelly Reilly plays Watson's love interest and seems to be another woman that has the measure of Holmes showing a weakness he was never supposed to have but in so having makes him more audience friendly. Reilly is also to be seen currently as a detective herself in UTV drama *Above Suspicion*.

I think this new take on an old story does quite well and while it's not the stuff of legend if you have not seen it it's worth the trip or save it and be guaranteed an enjoyable DVD.



Jude Law and Robert Downey Jr. in *Sherlock Holmes*

## Bitches Brew still innovative 40 years later

By Liam Corcoran

**"BITCHES Brew" is the critically acclaimed, highly influential 1970 album from the renowned Jazz artist and pioneer Miles Davis. It is seen as a watershed in the production and development of contemporary Jazz and remains, 40 years after its release, a brilliant and explosive piece of music.**

A first listening to the eponymous track on the record can be a spooked, almost bewildering affair. Coming in at a weighty 27 minutes and filled with many musical quirks and as much bizarreness, this is not what the standard Davis fan or casual Jazz listener will be expecting.

Haunting reverb and catchy, echoing loops electrify the piece, as far removed from Davis' 1959 breakthrough record "Kind of Blue" as is jazzily possible. The revolutionary use of electric instruments on the album and the way in which Davis used the editing element of the recording studio as an instrument in its own right lends much to the intensity and omnipotent musical dexterity of the record.

Another key aspect of the singularity of the album lies with the way in which Davis favoured his backing musicians to use pure improvisation during much of the album's recording. As the story goes, rehearsal of each piece was kept to a minimum before the recording, with Davis refusing to divulge exactly what he was looking for as regards

the progression of the music. In the title track, Davis can be clearly heard directing his musicians with rhythmical finger-clicking and after some minutes, his distinctive voice can be heard advising: "keep it like that, keep it tight..."

The entire musical ensemble for the album is dense, with three drummers, a percussionist, two bassists and three pianists in the rhythm section alone. On many of the riffs throughout the album, this intricate setup gives the impression that Davis is trumpeting to the backdrop of a gently cascading waterfall. At other times, all will drop to a deathly quiet, with the solid thump of the bass taking precedence before gradually being supplemented by the pianos and finally a chaotic crescendo is reached, as in "Pharaoh's Dance" which is reminiscent of a reasonably well ordered jungle of sound. Another notable track is "John McLaughlin", named for the guitarist whose delicate soloing takes the place of Davis' trumpet.

If *Bitches Brew* is like music you've never heard before, that's probably because it has no equal, and any ill-advised attempts at imitation have slipped quietly into the obscurity and anonymity which comes with feeble follow ups. The years which have passed since its release have done nothing to diminish the vehemence of this fabulous piece of art.

# How To Be Stylish While Staying In Fashion

By Ruth Whittle

**Style and fashion are two totally different concepts. Style suggests a distinctive or characteristic mode of expression in wearing clothes. Being stylish implies dressing to flatter and ornate yourself in the optimum way. Fashion is the current mode of style in clothes. Being fashionable means that you adhere to the conventions of the present moment, in terms of wearing certain things to stay in vogue with everyone else, whether or not it suits you.**

Nowadays, fashion houses are eclectic and varied, with designers borrowing from different eras and continents. Fashion is no longer confined to the Parisian catwalks. There are now influenced by everything from street style, to celebrity fashion to fashion blogs, which all contribute to a wider spectrum of choice. As such there is no

reason to limit yourself to Prada. Look around you as you walk down the streets and read your favourite celebrity gossip magazine; borrow and cherry pick from everywhere to gradually build up your own unique style.

One common mistake made by the typical fashion victim is to wear clothes which don't suit your figure, face shape or hair colour. There are just some things which will not suit you and will not do your body justice. It is fairly easy to know what does not give credit to your great assets but it's harder to admit that it's not right for you. Be a true style icon and dress to impress.

If in doubt, stick to basics and gradually build up the impact with a few accessories. There are many books and articles out there which will give you guidance on how to flatter your body shape, whether it is pear-

shaped, apple-shaped or hourglass. Be comfortable in your own skin and don't follow trends just for the sake of it. Instead, be a trend setter. Don't be a slave to fashion or a carbon copy of somebody else. Stand out and be an individual – that's what true style is all about. It is alright to wear clothes which are in fashion but be clever about it.

Wear them in a quirky way. For example, you could team a girly lace dress with a biker jacket and some studded ankle boots to toughen up the look or a plain black dress could be teamed with some neon pink tights and some colourful necklaces and earrings to jazz it up. Fashion may have its own rules but your individual style should be non-conformist. Embellish and accessorise your outfits with colour, beads, feathers and a red pout! This article could not finish without the

mention of a timeless style icon, Miss Audrey Hepburn. She embodied what true style was all about: comfort, individuality and inner beauty.

She is responsible for bringing the little black dress, ballet flats, Capri pants and the black turtleneck to the forefront of fashion, all items of such simplicity that they still seem modern today.

She was quoted as saying, "For beautiful eyes, look for the good in others; for beautiful lips, speak only words of kindness; and for poise, walk with the knowledge that you are never alone." One of the great secrets of Audrey's elegance was her extraordinary ability to exploit her strong points to maximum advantage. This is something we could all learn: to wear flattering pieces to complement our greatest assets.



## Advice Bureau

# Welfare Corner

**IT'S gotten to the time of the year where there's very little I can say that hasn't already been said. Fergal and myself are collaborating on the "It's OK" mental health campaign, which I'm sure he'll tell you more about. I on the other hand am compiling the spread on what your mental health is about and what to do to keep it feeling good.**

I've more than likely mentioned much of this in a previous article at some point, but at least I can't be accused of using copy and paste for this article anyway.

There are some great websites to get you thinking about your mental health and the mental health of those around you and, while it might not be something you think about on a regular basis, take some time out to think about mental health in general. Does your housemate look down? Ask what's wrong. Does your brother or sister seem a bit out of sorts? See if they want to talk.

This applies more to the men amongst us as opposed to the women, who'll spend a good time wearing the ear off anyone who'll listen, but whether it's a man, woman or child you see feeling down, or acting out of sorts, Please Talk...it goes both ways you know!

Semester 2 is upon us and in Week 9 we'll have Charity Week with 4 Challenge

Days, one for each of the 4 Raising and Giving Charities. I need volunteers to help with fundraising, bag packing, etc., and Fergal will need help on the organisational front. We'll have a great line up for ye, but remember; this is all about raising money for charity and having the craic while doing it. If anyone is interested in volunteering time with a charity long term, instead of forgetting about it once the week is done, contact me. If anyone is interested in volunteering in general the Student Development Officer in the University, Aidan Healy will talk to you about the President's Volunteer Award, launching this semester which will eventually end up as recognition on your student transcript.

All in all, condoms are still available at reception, and remember to leave a donation for the RAG Charities, the SECOND money box is nearly full, and there was almost €250 in the first one. Fair play to everyone having sex (or at least carrying condoms) out there!

And remember, my Drop-in Hours will be posted on my blog (which I've been neglecting) and on my door from Week 1 again.

As Jerry Springer always says to end a show: "Take care of yourselves and each other."

# Get the head down

**Oral sex is a pleasurable act and, when it is performed correctly, can do wonders for your sex life. Some people naturally excel in this area but some are less fortunate. For others, the mouth should only be used for talking. The purpose of this column is to make the most efficient use of your mouth. Remember oral sex is fun so try not to be too particular about it.**

### For the Romeo:

First and foremost, start slow and don't jump a head. Gentle is the road to Genitalia. Some girls, especially the sensitive type, like a bit of TLC in the "vagi-store department".

Caress her body with your fingertips as you slowly undress her. Use your imagination. Be inventive, but don't treat her like a blow up doll. Take a ride down vagina valley. Start by spreading the vaginal lips gently apart with your fingers. With your tongue stiff and pointed, try licking and flicking the tongue across her clitoris.

The nerve endings are mostly located at the vagina entrance and a few inches inside. For her maximum pleasure, pay particular attention here and you may be rewarded later. Take the clitoris in your mouth gently and suck. Now is a good time to build momentum. Find your rhythm and stick to it. You should hear her turn

from tickled gasps to breathtaking screams as she gets closer and closer to orgasm. Don't be afraid to ask her what she wants as questions give the impression of a sophisticated lover!

### For the Juliet:

Confidence is the key for good things to cum. Grab the opportunity with both hands. Just as it is for the Romeo's, asking for direction is only highlighting your desire to please him. Even if he is not erect yet, you can start by licking and kissing his penis. Massage, kiss, lick, suck his balls, but, I cannot stress this enough, be tender. Take the head into your mouth gently; roll it around stimulating the shaft and head as you go up and down. Never stop moving your tongue. Lick, flick, circle, caress. Never break contact with the penis. Feel free to hum and moan. If he thinks you are enjoying it, he will enjoy it more. Whilst you have the head in your mouth, use your hand on the shaft at the same time, starting slowly, getting faster, and your grip getting tighter. Deep throating has proved to be problematic during this technique. It is important to relax and adjust to a new rhythm. Remember, practice makes perfect, so to avoid the gag reflex, learn to love the penis. If you're having a dry spell and can't find a partner an ice pop is always a good substitute and tastes better too!

# Ed's Education

**WELCOME back everybody! I really hope that you enjoyed your break. Hopefully you're all happy with your exam results but if not, the good news is there's no reason why a bad QCA in first semester can't be picked up in second semester! The time to start is now so have a read of my First Week Fixes:**

### 1. Organise your week

There's no point having the best intentions in the world but not being organised enough to follow through. Once you lay your hands on your timetable, make your own one. Include the time that you get up, the time you go to bed, the time of your lecturers and then set aside time to go to over your notes from that week or do extra reading or both.

### 2. Have a system for your notes

It's much easier to study during exam time if your notes have been in order from the start of the year. Start colour-coding, have different folder for each

subject or failing that, a different drawer or shelf in your room.

### 3. Read your module outline

It seems like a simple thing, but reading your module outline and being aware of how your marks are divided is very important. Your course outline will also have details of any deadlines that you need to keep in mind and whether or not any marks are going for attendance. There's no point realising in Week 4 or 5 that you've lost percentages for failure to attend!

So forget last semester and get ready for semester 2! Aside from that make sure that you get a module (course) outline from your lecturers this week. They are obliged to provide you with one (either in paper form or online) and it has to have the module assessment and percentages. If your module outline doesn't have this or if you didn't get one at all email me on [sueducation@ul.ie](mailto:sueducation@ul.ie) or call into me in the SU!

# Campaigns and Services

**Welcome home! Hope everyone is well rested after the Christmas. No doubt ye're all mad to get back into college life! I speak for everyone in here when I say it's great to have ye back. This place is a ghost town without ye. Hopefully the results are all good and everyone's happy with that. Let's see what we've planned for the next semester.**

On January 12 a massive earth quake shook through Haiti on the island of Hispaniola in the Caribbean. UL has always had a connection with Haiti, the old Saint Vincent de Paul society sent members there and we have had graduates working there for years. We are trying to raise awareness and money for a graduate that is currently based in Haiti working at an orphanage. Please give generously if you have a few bob to spare. There will be collections Wednesday around campus so please help us out! It would make a huge difference to a country that was already ravaged by poverty and now has so much more to cope with.

The following week we'll be running "It's OK", this is just to assure everyone that it's alright if you feel like shit or you're under pressure. It's ok if you've got problems, we all have them. So this is just to let yis know that it's all alright. Grab a stress ball, have a moan,

share your problems and we'll hopefully all be better off for it!

We're putting a massive effort into Charity Week, trying to get some good bands and that and making sure we raise enough money to combat the cost of actually holding the week. Please have a bit of respect for the neighbours over the next while guys. They've had a lovely peaceful Christmas so let's not ruin it for them now!

A big fair play to the Gardaí after getting a suspect for a host of robberies in the Castletroy area. The local Gardaí are excellent guys. They might give out tickets for parking and drinking in public but you have to realise that they are here for your safety and security. We're lucky to have such a dedicated bunch a lads and lasses working out here.

One last thing if you an unplaced Co-OP student and you're looking for ways to spend your time don't hesitate to call in and we'll get ye doing something. You can email [sugetinvolved@ul.ie](mailto:sugetinvolved@ul.ie) or any of the officers. That's all for now.

It's great to have ye back,

Ferg

# IT'S OK

## To feel

- angry
- sad
- alone
- pissed off
- nobody cares
- down in the dumps
- stressed
- different
- lonely
- helpless

The good news is that if you feel any of those for a week or two, that there are support services here on campus for students; Student Counselling in CM-073, The Chaplaincy at Teach Fáilte in the Student Centre, the Students' Union and a vast array of online supports.

If you feel your mental health, or a friend or housemate's mental health is not the best, [IT'S OK] to go to Student Counselling, and it always will be. If you need help before getting there, or some info before you go checkout:

[www.reachout.com](http://www.reachout.com)

[www.letsomeoneknow.ie](http://www.letsomeoneknow.ie)

[www.headsup.ie](http://www.headsup.ie)

[www.spunout.ie](http://www.spunout.ie)

[www.please talk.ie](http://www.please talk.ie)

will give a brief description of these under the UL tab.

# Get Connected

EVER felt like you just need to have a rant? University life is new and exciting with so many things to see and do, let alone all the lectures, labs and tutorials to attend. However, at the same time the University is a big place and in a time when everyone is so busy and stressed it can be difficult to find someone who will take the time to sit down and lend a listening ear. Sometimes all we need is to let off some steam about the awful weather, that bastard of a module or the terrible housemates and we feel a whole lot better. Connect is exactly what this is for. It is quite simply a group of students just like you or I, who are happy to meet up with you and have a chat about anything and everything.

Sometimes a fellow student may understand your situation better than other people in your life or you may not be comfortable

approaching the more formal support services offered here. This is where the mentors can help. We can refer you on to further support if desired.

If you have a question and don't know where to ask, try us! If we cannot answer a question, we know who to ask! When asked why they wanted to be peer mentors, the overall consensus from the students was that the University is such a brilliant place to be, to have a bit of craic and meet people and it would be a shame if anyone was feeling left out, homesick or alone. These are a fun and enthusiastic group of students who are available and waiting to meet up with you. So if you're finding that college life isn't going quite the way you'd imagined or you aren't feeling very at home here in UL and you'd like to meet up with another student and have a chat then email [connect@ul.ie](mailto:connect@ul.ie)

**connect**  
student network

# Mentally Healthy?

WE ARE very conscious today of physical health and well-being – we know what we should and should not be doing, whether we choose to live our lives that way or not! However, we rarely seem to reflect on our mental health in quite the same way.

So ask yourself the following questions:

How do you feel about yourself?

How do you feel about others?

How are you able to meet the demands of life?

To enjoy mental health, it is essential to maintain a realistic but positive view of oneself. The way we

view ourselves has a direct bearing on what we believe which can affect relationships and our expectations of the world. There are many factors that affect how we perceive ourselves including self-esteem, diet, sleep, communication, relationships, alcohol and nicotine, exercise and relaxation. Developing an awareness of stress points and responses, which enable us to take control of potentially damaging issues, can help prevent the build-up of worries which can affect mental well-being.

Mental health means so much more than simply the absence of mental illness. It is about physical and emotional well-being, about having the strength and capacity to live a full and creative life, and also about the flexibility to deal with its ups and downs.

# It's ok to feel down every now and again...

...but next time you're feeling down try one of these top 10 tips to have you smiling again!

1. **Smile. Yes it's that simple.** When you smile, messages are sent to your brain which tells it you are happy. In response the brain releases "happiness hormones" which stops the production of "stress hormones".
2. **Exercise.** During exercise your body releases endorphins which cause a feeling of well-being. Losing weight can also make you feel better about yourself which will lead to all round happiness.
3. **Do something you enjoy.** Whatever it is, no matter what it is, do it and enjoy it. When I'm having a bad day I love nothing more than getting in to bed to watch trashy TV and read trashy magazines.
4. **Make someone else happy.** Perform an Act of Random Kindness, or just tell someone how much they mean to you. Happiness is contagious so making someone else happy is sure to make you feel better.
5. **Have sex.** There's nothing like sex to put you in a good mood.
6. **Think positive.** If you only focus on the bad things you're bound to feel down. Try and see the good in a situation or focus on the good things that happened recently, no matter how small.
7. **Eat well.** Drink lots of water and eat lots of fruit and veg. as too much junk food and processed food will not help your mood. Alcohol can exaggerate the symptoms so don't get drunk to feel happy.
8. **Hug someone.** Hugging has been proving to be beneficial. One study shows that hugging promotes the release of Oxytocin which is the chemical of love. It doesn't matter if you hug a friend, family or loved one, just hug them!
9. **Stroke a pet.** Stroking or petting an animal has been shown to reduce levels of stress in humans. Make sure the animal is calm first because an angry or upset animal is not going to make you feel better.
10. **Have some chocolate.** Chocolate has been proven to trigger a release of serotonin which is a natural anti-depressant.



# UL Finance & Investment Society

The UL Finance and Investment Society (ULFISoc) was set up at the end of last semester by three 2nd year students – Brian Foody, Robert Mortell & Andrew O'Doherty. A rapidly growing society, we already have 40 members and are racing into this semester with all hands on deck.

The aim of this society is to bring the business world to students and staff at UL. We intend to cater for students in business modules by bringing the world of finance & investments to the fore and making the leap from lectures to life.

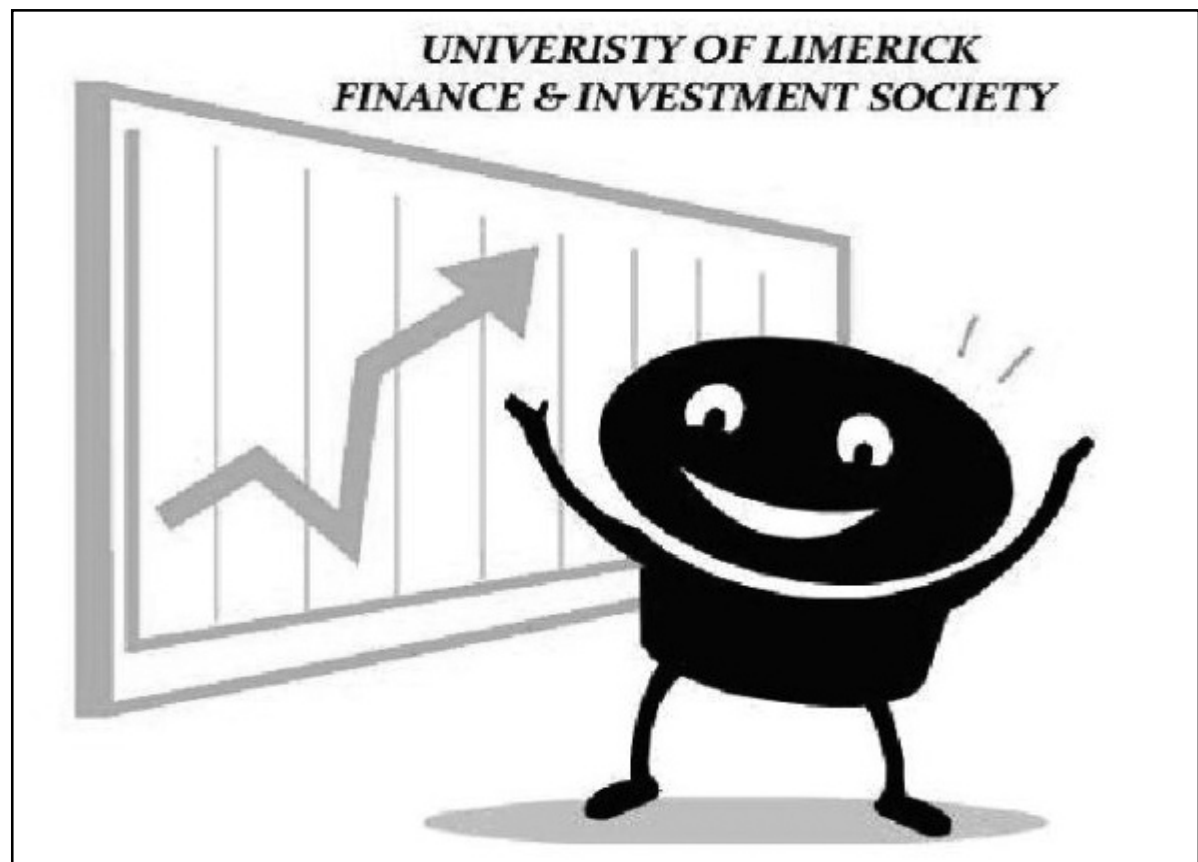
We also cater for non-business students and those with a passing interest particularly in the domain of stocks/shares. UL has yet to see a society in the business area that can be sustained, but we know that we will provide not only an opportunity for you to meet your peers but you will leave each event with the feeling that you have truly benefitted from the experience. That is why we are here to stay.

We have already secured access to the Kemmy Trading Floor, where there is a wealth of knowledge and practical experience to be gained. Our first guest speaker is Brian O'Neill – UL graduate, Co-founder of the WorldSpreads Group and Chief Executive of WorldSpreads Ireland Ltd. We plan to host Brian in the Kemmy Business School on February 10th 2010 (Wednesday, Week 3). Look out for posters in the coming days for exact details but we are certain this will be an event not to be missed by anybody even remotely interested in shares and investments.

All information about the Society can be found on our website and our Facebook group.

Looking forward to seeing you in the coming weeks. Robert Mortell, Andrew O'Doherty, Anna Rybalchenko, Shona Connellan & Brian Foody.

**Website:** <http://ulfinanceinvestmentsoc.webs.com>  
**Email:** [ulfisoc@hotmail.com](mailto:ulfisoc@hotmail.com)



## Captain of Tramps leads team in quest of shield

UL Trampoline and Gymnastics club once again took their fair tally of medals and trophies back from the Irish inter-varsities competition. Originally destined for Cork, even the floods couldn't stop these courageous few from taking gold, silver and bronze medals and placing in both the team and overall varsity competition.

Club captain, Elaine McDermott rerouted 16 of her UL competitors to Trinity College in Dublin for a very well organised competition given the short notice. Medals were taken in both novice and advanced categories with four competitors being promoted to a higher competing level. UL placed second in the overall competition, just losing out on laying claim to the shield. This is a great result following from the success of the

1st Munster Open, as hosted by UL in November of this year, where medals were won in all categories. UL Trampoline and Gymnastics hope to continue their success in the New Year competing in the Scottish Student Trampoline Open and the Irish Student Trampoline Open in Belfast. Given the disasters of last year where the club was left with one trampoline after mishaps during PESS hall renovations, the club is on its way to regaining its former glory as one of the leading competing trampoline clubs in Ireland. Finally, well done to everybody for all their hard work and dedication during the last semester.

Hope you all have had a great Christmas and hope to see you all bouncing in the PESS hall in the New Year!



# World University Debating Championships 2010

By David Hartery

**THIS Christmas break saw the UL Debating Union attend the World University Debating Championships which took place in the seaside resort of Antalya, Turkey. Following trials hosted by ULDebU themselves, the team of Maurice Cotter (4th Year Law and European Studies) and David Hugh Hartery (2nd Year Law Plus) was sent to represent UL.**

The tournament was held in the Maritime Pine Beach Resort in Antalya. As you would expect from a 5-star hotel, our every whim was catered for, with a swimming pool, fitness centre and daily excursions on offer. The accommodation included a week long running buffet and free bar which ran from 8am to 12pm every day and

was extended to 4am on New Years Eve and the Grand Final Night. This was all paid for by Koc University after the Debating Union paid a registration fee.

With all this opulence surrounding us, it would be easy to lose track of the debating. This took place in two stages, with 3 preliminary rounds per day for the first 3 days of the competition. UL, unfortunately, didn't make it to the knock out rounds, but the Irish contingent did come out in force to cheer on the sole Irish team to reach the knock outs; The Honorable Society of the Kings' Inn. There were 2 Irish representatives in the Final though they were representing non-Irish institutions. The competition was eventually won by the University of Sydney.

Videos of the final can be found online and links are available on the Debating Union website. With success in the Irish Times and the Irish Mace competition, as well as consistent performances at intervarsity competitions that have been taking place so far this year, a good showing from UL at the WUDC caps off a promising opening semester for the ULDebU. If you are interested in joining the Debating Union, Speaker Development takes place in the Students' Union Room 3 every Monday at 7pm. Details can be found on our website [www.skynet.ie/~debates](http://www.skynet.ie/~debates). We hope to see you there and you might just qualify to attend the European Debating Championships, to be held in Amsterdam in August.



## UL Softball Club continues quest for 5th IV title in a row

By Lauren Comican

**THE UL Softball Club is charging into the spring of 2010 having secured its fourth Intersvarsity title in a row, the last two seasons, of which, were without losing a single game. We are well on the way to our 5th consecutive title, as the first tournament of the season saw the club bring home all of the silverware!**

The club consists of both Irish and international students of all ranges of capabilities. All are welcome to join the club, regardless of experience. Joining a UL Club or Society has proven to be a great way to make lifelong friends, so why not join a club where all you need to have is a desire to have fun and maybe learn a new sport along the way? UL Softball enters into the Intersvarsity league and travels

to other Universities to play in weekend tournaments. The club has two competitive teams and the rest are recreational teams, so if you've never played before, don't worry about it! Everyone is out there to have a good time.

Training sessions are on the AstroTurf next to Kilmurry Village every Wednesday and Friday from 2-4. All gear is provided except your own shoes, of course! If you can't make it for the whole time, that's ok, just come down when you can and leave when needed!

Questions? Email us at [ulsoftball@gmail.com](mailto:ulsoftball@gmail.com), or contact us at 0857394760. You can find us on Facebook under UL Softball or online at [www.skynet.ie/~softball](http://www.skynet.ie/~softball).

Come join us for some great craic!



UL Softball club following recent wins at the Belfast Intersvarsities

## Who Are Ya? Special

Tomás McCarthy compiles the highlights of first semester

### Best thing about the club:

Drinking and throwing sharp objects!  
(Alan O'Sullivan, UL darts club)

### Worst thing about the club:

Drinking and throwing sharp objects!  
(Alan O'Sullivan, UL darts club)

### Favourite drink:

Brugal  
(it's a Dominican rum!)  
(Anna Caplice, UL ladies rugby)

### The Lodge or Trinity Rooms?

Trinity Rooms. The Lodge was way too packed last night.  
(Anna Caplice, UL ladies rugby)

### Best chat-up line you've heard?

I won't go down in history but I'll go down on you.  
(Pa Durkin, UL soccer)

### Best chat-up line you've heard?

Do you believe in helping the homeless? (if yes) In that case would you mind taking me home with you?  
(Robert Rea, UL intermediate football)

### What are you scared of?

Some of my team members' tackles. Luckily I'm on their team.  
(June Downey, UL ladies rugby)

### What will you be when you grow up?

Well I'm studying accounting but can't see that happening.  
(Robert Rea, UL Intermediate football)

### What will you be when you grow up?

Part time super hero!  
(Pa Durkin, UL soccer)



Anna Caplice



# Sporting Predictions for 2010

By Daniel Bridge

## January

Well it's over now. Moving on...

## February

February sees the Ireland's defence of their Grand Slam crown kick-off against Italy in Croke. Brian 'Credit Union' O'Driscoll and Paul 'Milk' O'Connell see off Italy, before turning their attentions to France in Paris, with Thierry Henry lining up at out-half for the French (good with his hands, y'know!). The 44th Superbowl takes place and the BBC get unbelievable ratings for 3am on a Sunday night, leaving the Irish economy tired and hung over.

The Winter Olympics also start in February, but unless Will Ferrell takes part in the figure-skating, nobody cares.

## March

The F1 begins on the 14th in Bahrain and marks the return of Michael Schumacher and just as the sport began to get exciting again, boring Schumi is back, oh well. Champions League 1st round results come through, nothing strange to report because I won't be watching.

All eyes will be on the Europa League for this completely unbiased reporter. Ireland will win the Six Nations but not the Grand Slam. Don't know which game will be lost but there will be one.

## April

The Masters starts in Georgia, with Tiger Woods finishing his, ahem, sabbatical, and caddy Steve Williams replaced with the clubhouse barmaid. Michael Owen finally realises he is past it and Fergie signed him for the craic, and comes out publicly saying he needs a tougher challenge (but not one that sees him fighting for a starting place).

What Michael wants is to be a guaranteed starter for a big club, rumours are Barca, Inter and Accrington Stanley are after him. Cheltenham starts, and my crystal ball can predict that the local bookies will love seeing me walk into their establishment.

## May

Liverpool manages to scrape 17th place with new boss Steve Staunton declaring that he couldn't have wished for a better start. This is before getting beaten in the Crap-opa League final to the Champions of Liechtenstein. Michael Cheika leads Leinster to a consecutive Heineken Cup victory over Munster.

## June

I advise that all English media should be avoided for June and July, as the lead up to the World Cup starts prompting Gary Lineker to start off the English public's frenzy about all the omens that mean they're "obviously" going to win it. Wimbledon, and while I like Andy Murray, it's on the BBC again, which annoys me to the point of muting the telly. Harrington wins the US Open. Sure why not?!



Will Brian O'Driscoll lead Ireland to victory again?

# The hurling helmet debacle

By Enda Dowling

OVER the last decade, the GAA has had more than its fair share of heated debates. Strikes, stand-offs, rule changes and mutinies fuelled off season sports columns as well as online message boards. As 2009 gave way to 2010, the GAA have dealt us a fresh set of contentious issues to set our teeth into. One topic which has created an unexpected division of opinion is the move to make hurling helmets with faceguards compulsory at senior level.

The ruling has been in effect since January 1 and will see senior players follow the regulations already in place at all grades up to U21. Implementation of course rests on the shoulders of match officials, who are obliged to stop play if any player at any level appears on the field without the necessary standard of headgear. It is a decision made with a genuine wish to reduce instances of head injuries as well as reducing the severity of head injuries.

But there is a large minority of disgruntled voices who feel it is forcing veterans of the game (e.g., Michael Kavanagh, Sean Og, Ken McGrath) and virtually every other intercounty goalie to wear helmets

after so many years at the top. I understand that it will initially be very difficult for older players and goalkeepers not accustomed to helmets, but surely the benefits of safety and player welfare outweigh any inconvenience presented by their usage? Diarmuid O'Sullivan has said a grown man in his 30's whose played hurling his whole life shouldn't have to be told to wear something he's never needed to use. And what if he or any other player happens to get a nasty blow to the head that renders him unable to work again or live his life as normal? Who will be expected to foot the bill? More pressure on the GAA for additional funds? The GPA? Insurance companies?

At some stage the GAA had to make helmets mandatory for all players, and in five years time it won't be such a big deal. Some very nasty injuries have occurred over the years on the field of play (e.g., Galway's Joe Rabbitte whose career almost came to an end following a near fatal head injury in the '97 Connacht final against Roscommon) and in this respect it makes perfect sense. Sad to say though, our love affair with some of the more battle hardened

players simply because the game has had a direct and visible effect on their face might be coming to an end. Players like Ken McGrath who regularly avails of the blood sub, command huge admiration outside their own county, because of the almost blood sacrificial element in their style of play. Cuts and stitches as badges of honour will become rarer. Christy Cooney has effectively written the obituary to what a GAA statement listed

as including; scalp lacerations, concussions, skull fractures, jaw fractures, cheekbone fractures, nasal fractures, penetrating eye injury, orbital fractures, facial lacerations and damaged to and avulsion of teeth in both the upper and lower jaws... shame. Come one month from now only one burning question will be left to answer; will Mullane seem half as mental with a helmet on? Probably.



Former Cork hurler, Diarmuid O'Sullivan

## Fitzgibbon Feature

## Experience key to UL's Fitzgibbon challenge

Tómas McCarthy - Sports Editor

**PICTURE the scene; it's the Fitzgibbon weekend in Dublin and UL are preparing for two big matches to bring back the cup for the first time since 2002. In the dressing room one player asks another "What's your man's name over there?" Despite the fact that the team had been preparing all year for this weekend, team bonding had been overlooked.**

In recent years the Fitzgibbon journey for UL has been missing this ingredient. The final performance against UCC last year was flat as players got nervous on the big day. In 2008 the team could only muster six points in the first group game at home to WIT. Heads were scratched. This time

around the management team have left no stone unturned. They realise how important it is for players to get to know each other off the field. A more laid back attitude was also taken to the league. At one stage Seamus Hickey, who is well known as a half back or midfielder, operated at centre forward. Despite these different methods used, the team is still working towards the same goal.

UL are expecting to appear at the Fitzgibbon finals again, which will be held at NUIG. Members of last year's panel remain but fresh blood has also been injected. Brian Fox, Kieran Joyce, Martin Walsh, Michael Gleeson, Ryan O'Dwyer, Brian Carroll and Matt Ruth all started last year's Fitzgibbon

Cup final. The same management team of Ger Cunningham, Dinny Ryan, Declan Fitzgerald and Niall O'Sullivan is also in place. That experience is vital. Manager Cunningham admitted to An Focal earlier this season that they are setting the bar high. "The primary aim for the coming season is to go one step further than last year. Reaching the Fitzgibbon Cup final was a massive achievement for us last year but losing it the way we did has left a bitter taste in all our mouths." Cunningham employs the short passing and running game but this is nothing new for UL. When it's played at a high tempo not many teams can live with it; certainly not St Patrick's or UUJ whom UL

face in Group C. If everything goes to plan UL are set for a make or break quarter final clash. This is likely to be against the third team in Group A which contains WIT, LIT, UCC and GMIT. Yet every team has their own motivation; UCC enter the competition as reigning champions; WIT were robbed in the semis last year by UCC; LIT rested their big names during the league in wait for the Fitzgibbon; GMIT powered by many of Clare's Under 21 success want to reach the final four in their own backyard. There are no easy challenges. UL knew it would be no different. The lessons have been learned, the players are there, the game plan is in place. In Fitzgibbon there is nowhere to hide.

## Andrew Quinn - a man on a mission

By Liam Toghher

**THE CV of UL hurler Andrew Quinn may contain a Harty Cup and a Clare senior hurling title, but one competition in particular still eludes the Masters in Law student; the Fitzgibbon Cup.**

Quinn has studied at LIT in recent years but, through injury or otherwise, he was not a member of Davy Fitzgerald's victorious teams of either 2005 or 2007. Now he's out to add to his medal collection with Ger Cunningham's UL and the form he displayed in the league in autumn suggests he has every chance of ticking off another item on the wish list. It was a baking

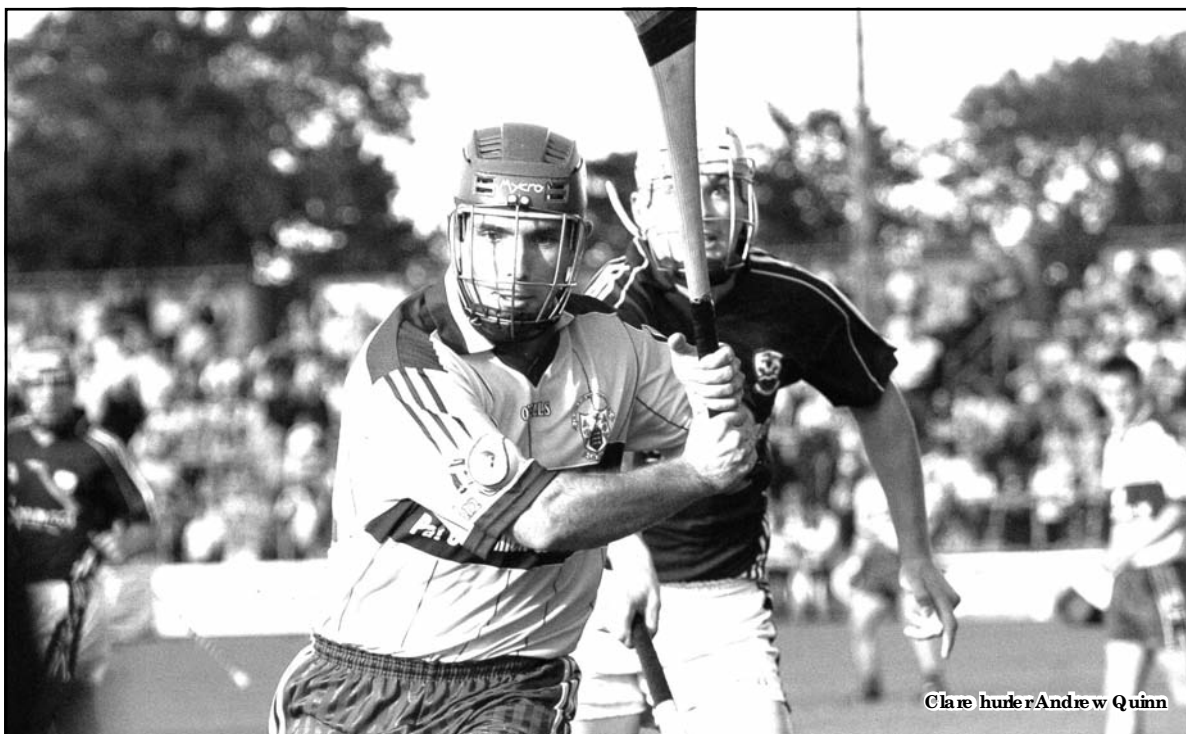
hot Sunday afternoon in May 2003 when Quinn exploded onto the inter-county scene with a memorable performance at Páirc Uí Chaoimh as Clare got the better of Tipperary in the Munster championship, having lost to the Premier in the competition in each of the previous three years. Unfortunately he couldn't quite build upon that massive potential, although he was a regular on the Clare senior panel for several seasons before dropping out of contention more recently.

However, with neither Niall Gilligan nor Tony Carmody to call upon this year, there is every chance Quinn will

force his way into Ger O'Loughlin's plans for 2010.

The Tulla native's last noteworthy moments were winning the county final with his club against Crusheen in 2007, their first Clare title in 86 years, and featuring in the Munster final weeks later.

Now the mission for Quinn is to play his part in what will hopefully culminate in UL landing the Fitzgibbon Cup and subsequently forging his way back into the Clare senior panel for the league and championship. It's bound to be an interesting few months for Andrew Quinn.



Clare hurler Andrew Quinn

## Fitzgibbon Cup Draw 2010

## Group A

Thursday 4 February  
UCC v LIT  
WIT v GMIT

Wednesday 10 February  
GMIT v UCC  
LIT v WIT

Tuesday 16 February  
UCC v WIT  
LIT v GMIT

## Group B

Thursday 4 February  
CIT v UCD  
NUIG v DIT

Wednesday 10 February  
DIT v CIT  
UCD v NUIG

Tuesday 16 February  
DIT v UCD  
NUIG v CIT

## Group C

Thursday 4 February  
UL v St Pats College  
Wednesday 10 February  
St Pats College v UUJ

Tuesday 16 February  
UUJ v UL

## Quarter Finals

Wednesday 24 February  
Winner A v Third B  
Winner B v Runner-Up C  
Winner C v Third A  
Runner-Up A v Runner-Up B

## Semi Finals

Friday 5 March  
Winner A/Third B v Winner B/Runner-Up C  
Winner C/Third A v Runner-Up A/Runner-Up B

## Final

Saturday 6 March  
Winner semi final 1 v Winner semi final 2



Sigerson Feature

# Breaking free from Sigerson tradition

By Tomás McCarthy - Sports Editor

**THE UL football team currently stand three home games away from a final four spot at NUI Maynooth. To achieve this will require a determination to not only defeat the teams in front of them but also to break down barriers in a competition which hasn't been kind to UL.**

Kerry All Ireland winners Pat Spillane, Mike Frank Russell and Declan O'Keefe have all played for UL or Thomond College, yet the last decade is best forgotten. Victories were rare and 2007 saw DCU inflict a 15 point home defeat. Cian O'Neill's task to take the team from the scrapheap of college football has been slow progress but UL have won their first Sigerson game in each of the last two years. This year will see the team entering the campaign with spirits much more upbeat than in previous years.

In addition, the draw has seldom been so generous. With last year's champions CIT, Queens of Belfast, UUJ, DCU and DIT all on the opposite end of the draw the outlook must be positive. On February 3 Queens and UUJ square off in a second round tie, a repeat of the 2007 Sigerson final. On the same day DCU face UCD in a local derby. However UL will avoid all of those big guns. Carlow IT and Athlone IT stand in their way of a quarter final place and both teams have little Sigerson tradition. If UL survive those two tests a home quarter final with either Garda or IT Sligo awaits.

Preparations have been hampered due to the

freezing conditions. The McGrath Cup tie with Tipperary was postponed on three separate occasions before they subsequently lost by 2-9 to 1-9 on January 16. League form, however, provided hope with good tests against UCC, CIT and Garda.

The likely line up of the team is unclear as of yet. James Reilly and Enda Joyce are disputing the goalkeeper's jersey. In defence Colin O'Mahoney and Declan Rattigan bring stability to full back and centre back with Seamus O'Shea and Thomas Ladden likely to feature in centre field. Up front there has been a reliance on Enda Varley for scores in the past two seasons. During the league Edmund Walsh and Mike Tim O'Sullivan proved that they can also contribute. Meanwhile the option of route one football is also possible with big full forward Stephen Coughlan.

None of these names are immediately familiar however. Last year's winners, Cork IT, contained Ray Carey, Paul O'Flynn, Paul Kerrigan and Daniel Goulding who were all part of the Cork panel that made the All Ireland final. Kenneth O'Malley (Mayo), Fiachra Lynch (Cork) and David Moran (Kerry) are major losses to the UL team from last year. All three featured in Croke Park last summer.

With star names lacking in the ranks UL's success in this competition is determined by the team playing above the sum of their parts. They also need the mental strength to break with tradition. A tough ask for all concerned.

# Can UL mix it with the best?

By Liam Toghher

**A NEW year brings with it another chance for UL footballers to make history by becoming the first ever team from the college to win the Ulster Bank Sigerson Cup. While overall victory probably remains a lofty ambition, progress that has been made by Cian O'Neill, his management team, and the players since 2007 offers them the right to hope for the best. On January 27 the journey begins with a home tie against Carlow IT, a game UL will be expecting to win.**

Should that obstacle be overcome, the following week presents a crack at Athlone IT in Round 2. Victory in that game will take UL into a quarter-final against either Garda College or Sligo IT and just one more success away from a coveted place at the finals weekend in NUI Maynooth at the end of February. That remains the primary goal of O'Neill and this team, whose disappointing league campaign will spur them on to show their true potential in the Sigerson Cup. Given the autumn form of players like Thomas Ladden, Seamus O'Shea and Stephen Coughlan, UL have every right to

aim for the semi-finals and finally put to rest their reputation as also-rans, which was borne out of some dismal campaigns over the last decade.

Holders Cork IT will again fancy their chances of victory, particularly with the outstanding Daniel Goulding still in the team. They can also call upon other inter-county players in Paul Kerrigan and Barry John Walsh, so they will be expecting to at least come close to retaining the title. Other serious contenders for the crown will be DIT, last year's beaten finalists, the ever-dangerous GMIT and the perennial Ulster contenders Queen's and UUJ.

This year may see quite a few breakthrough names making an impression with the weather-imposed mass postponements in the various provincial competitions such as the McGrath Cup preventing most teams from declaring their hand early. What we can expect, though, is a fiercely-contested battle in the weeks ahead for the big prize in intervarsity Gaelic football, and hopefully a prolonged run in the competition from UL to prove that they can mix it with the best.



UL go in for the kill. Photo courtesy of Kevin Johnson, ULPhoto Soc

## Sigerson Cup Draw 2010

**Round 1**

Wednesday 27 January  
UCC v DIT  
UL v Carlow IT  
St Mary's v Mary I

**Round 2**

Wednesday 3 February  
St Mary's/ Mary I v CIT  
Garda v IT Sligo  
UCC/ DIT v NUIG  
Queens v UUJ  
GMIT v Dundalk IT  
DCU v UCD  
UL/ Carlow IT v Athlone IT

**Quarter Finals**

Wednesday 17 February  
Queens/UUJ v NUI Maynooth  
DCU/UCD v St Mary's/ Mary I  
UL/ Carlow/Athlone v Garda/Sligo  
UCC/DIT/NUIG v GMIT/Dundalk IT

**Semi Finals**

Friday, February 26

**Final**

Saturday, February 27

# Clarification

An Focal would like to apologise for a number of inaccuracies printed in an article entitled "UL simply doesn't do hockey coaches" which featured in Issue 7 of the newspaper, and was printed on December 1, 2009. The article featured a number of remarks regarding the UL Sports Department which were incorrect.

The article focused on the UL Ladies Hockey Club who currently does not have a coach. The writer placed the majority of the blame for the situation on the UL Sports Department who he claimed had provided very little support to the club on this issue and stated that the Sports Department are displayed "apparent indifference" in rectifying the issues faced by the Club. In actuality the Sports Department has been in regular contact with the Hockey

Club and has been attempting to help the Club where possible. The article also claimed that it was hard enough for the members of the Hockey Club to be "preparing final year projects without the added burden of organising the training, travel arrangements and so on." In actual fact this is a challenge faced by the members of any UL Club or Society, and is not an issue or a challenge unique to the Hockey Club.

An Focal would like to acknowledge that the article risked bringing the reputation of the UL Sports Department into disrepute, and that the Sports Department should have been approached for a comment on the matter.

The Editor and writer would like to apologise for any inconvenience caused to the Sports Department as a result of this article.

# Eagles flying high at top of Superleague

By Daniel Bridge

UL EAGLES have continued their impressive start to their Superleague campaign, winning all but one of their twelve games so far. The team, which was previously named Limerick Lions, is currently the team to beat in the Superleague Conference South.

Cork side Neptune ran the Eagles close on January 9 with a 91-88 scoreline at the UL Arena. That win stretched their lead at the top of the Conference to 11 points, although UCC Demons have three games in hand. Coincidentally, UCC will be on the Eagles hit list next when the two sides face off in the Arena on January 24.

The form of many players is the main reason for the Eagles dominance in the Superleague this year. Players like Matthew Hall, Neil Campbell and Scott Kinevane have put up great scores while Stuart Robbins has been solid at the back and can always be relied upon when he has his chances that he'll take them. Coach Tony Hehir and his players will feel confident coming into the New Year's fixtures. With six games left, Hehir and the Eagles are most definitely favourites for the Superleague crown and it is hard to see anyone challenging them. However, with their steamrolling performances over the first half of the season, could a blip in form be just around the corner? All will be revealed in the weeks and months ahead.



UL Eagles have high hopes

# Plan sailing for O'Connor

By Cian Gallagher

**THE month of December saw Darragh O'Connor of UL Sailing Club take home the coveted Marissa Clarke Trophy after successfully winning the Irish Team Racing Associations Random Pairs National Title. This is the first time a member of the UL sailing club has won this trophy. O'Connor also captained the UL team to victory at the Varsities last year.**

A total of 14 helms were invited to contest for the title in the Royal St. George yacht club on which was forecast to be a cold wet and windy affair. Many national, European and even World champions were challenging for the title.

Racing began on-time at 10.00am to the delight of the spectators on the pier wall. An initial pairing of O'Connor and Carr saw off Rhatigan and Bayly in a 1, 2 combination. Racing was very close in the shifty conditions which also saw its share of incidents. Mid-way through the morning saw a three way tie at the top of the leader board with Marty O'Leary, John Chambers and Darragh O'Connor all tied on one loss each. A pairing of O'Connor and O'Leary against Chambers and O'Sullivan would soon break this tie however.

A clean start from O'Connor and O'Leary meant that Chambers and O'Sullivan could not challenge greatly and a quick pinning move at the 1st mark by O'Connor allowed O'Leary to slip through nicely. The 1, 2 combination could not be deterred by

the chasing boats and now meant a one way tie on the top. A further one loss each in the latter stages of the round meant that O'Leary led O'Connor on count back at the end of the round robin stages as both boats were on 8 wins from 10.

The deteriorating weather called a halt to the league which meant that the Irish team racing teammates had to do battle in the best of five final. O'Leary chose Chambers to sail with and O'Connor chose to sail with Rhatigan. Drama was never far away when a capsize by O'Connor on the downwind leg seemed to end hopes of a win in the first match. Rhatigan however sailed superbly on the last two legs to hold off Chambers long enough to allow O'Connor through to second place. 1-0 to Munster!

Another extremely close start and a collision between O'Leary and O'Connor spread the fleet out on the first leg. An intense downwind leg ensued and it was Rhatigan and O'Connor who came out on top and then managed to hold out to the finish. 2-0. In a close duel on the start line of race three O'Leary and O'Connor again had a collision but this time O'Leary bewasing penalised by the jury which resulted in a heavy penalty. O'Connor and Rhatigan held off Chambers convincingly for a 1, 2 combination to take the title. The Marissa Clarke trophy has never before been won by a sailor outside of Dublin or West Kirby, UK, the definitive home of team racing. Emer McNally of Skerries Sailing Club crewed for O'Connor and has also

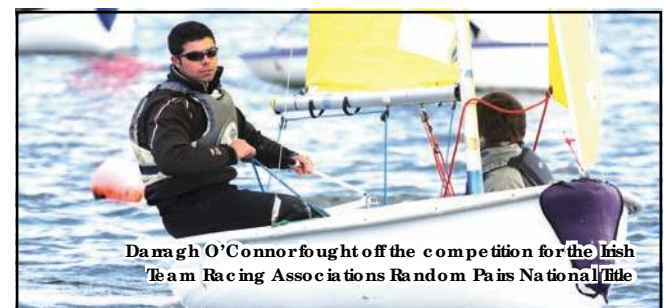
crewed with Conor Byrne a Former UL sailing Club member who is the previous winner of this title. The challenge is now there to keep the trophy in Munster and more importantly in UL for the coming years.

#### Upcoming events

UL Sailing Club will be hosting the Western College Team Racing Championships on the 30th & 31st of January in Kilrush, Co Clare. This event will attract almost 200 students from over 10 Colleges and Universities throughout Ireland. Having finished second overall in the Southern Championships in Schull last November, UL will be pushing hard for a win at their upcoming event.

#### Website

Keep up to date via our new website which is [sailing.skynet.ie](http://sailing.skynet.ie)



Darragh O'Connor fought off the competition for the Irish Team Racing Associations Random Pairs National Title



# Sports Writers Diary

By Tomás McCarthy - Sports Editor

- January 3**  
UL v Tipperary in the McGrath Cup falls foul of the weather. What about the yellow ball lads!
- January 4**  
Leeds fans continue to enjoy their victory over Man United the previous day. It nearly makes them forget that goal scorer Beckford will soon be on the move.
- January 5**  
The Sports Editor begins to understand the meaning of the word cabin fever.
- January 6**  
No Carling Cup action unsurprisingly as sports fans begin to despair. Snow ball fights did get the go ahead however!
- January 7**  
It's time to rally the An Focal troops for articles once more. Even us writers find the winter slog tough going.
- January 8**  
A Munster representative (who will remain nameless!) is sure that the Magners League game against Scarlets will take place on Sunday.

- January 9**  
Two Premier League games save sports fans from going insane.
- January 10**  
Roy Keane is convinced that Ipswich can still get promotion. A quick check of the table wouldn't fill many diehard Ipswich fans with such confidence.

**January 11**  
An Focal sports writer Daniel Bridge is well happy with his selection of Carlos Tevez for fantasy football after he hits a hat trick. I contemplate resigning from the competition after a disastrous Christmas run.

**January 12**  
The freeze is replaced by rain. Farewell snow I hope we don't meet again for a long time.

**January 13**  
One of the most unlucky Irish soccer players, Colin Healy, is on the move to Falkirk. He was due to take Roy Keane's place at the 2002 World Cup but missed out on the deadline.

**January 14**  
Liverpool fans wake with another hangover after last night's FA Cup shambles against Reading.

**January 15**  
All complaints for the quality of this diary can be forwarded to mossy.mccarthy@gmail.com. Any late Christmas presents can still be submitted to Aoife's office in the SU!

## Forgotten Footballer – Zvonimir Boban

By Stephen Kelly

**WHEN** sportsmen are described as national heroes it's generally a mere reference to their achievements in sport. Zvonimir Boban's status in Croatia goes far beyond that.

In 1990 with Yugoslavia on the verge of disintegration, a match between Red Star Belgrade and Boban's Dinamo Zagreb was disrupted by a pitch invasion that developed into a full-blown riot. The 21-year-old Boban noticed a policeman beating a Dinamo fan with a truncheon and decided to intervene. He knocked the policeman to the ground with a flying kick to the head and a Croatian legend was born. Boban's kick was the "symbol of the uprising against the 70-year Serb domination in Yugoslavia," according to one historian. As his country degenerated into civil war, Boban packed his bags for Italy and signed for AC Milan. In nine successful seasons there the skillful playmaker won four Serie A titles and one Champions League before retiring in 2001 following a brief loan spell at Celta Vigo.

At international level Boban captained Croatia to the quarter finals at Euro 96 and to third place at the 1998 World Cup. Since retiring he has completed a degree in history and, unsurprisingly given his past, intends to go into politics in the future.



## The Rumour Mill

By Conor McGrath

THIS edition starts off with the Australian Rules football club of UL. Forgive me for emphasising that once again: the Australian Rules football club of UL. Yes it does exist, according to a bunch of 1st year Business cowboy bandits and their ultra serious 'big cheese', who denied claims that he was booted out of the Gaelic Fresher trials last September. "We expect to be a force to be reckoned with in future semesters, once our full club status has been ratified by the SU" was the response from the 'big cheese', who is determined to remain anonymous.

The 'club' have also rebuffed suggestions of using AFL agents to 'tap up' players while announcing their Abramovich style three year plan for success without spending a drip of oil money. "We are ambitious and anxious to succeed, unlike other national sporting clubs in the college". So, will this sinister underground movement infiltrate the masses or just fade into sporting obscurity like a Ben Curtis or a Ray Cosgrove? Appeal will be the major factor, which brings us to the alleged dispute between the lifeguardettes and the Arena hierarchy.

Apparently, levels of wantonness between them and younger members of the Munster squad were dangerously high according to some quarters which led to a ban in all forms of contact between both parties. "They were totally chatting the orses off us, trying their Kanye West loike, nothing major ya know. We were so morto'd when we were told to stop for no reason loike" was the apparent high pitched response according to source close to the ladies in the high chair. However, their actions have been scorned in certain quarters. "Everyone who is involved in the arena is a part of a family. I don't want incest in my gym" was the bizarre take on affairs from a high placed member of the clergy in the diocese. Sepp Blatter may have to be consulted on this dispute.

# Quotes of the Edition

Compiled by Tomás McCarthy - Sports Editor

*"Cahill, Pienaar and Osman are not household names in their own houses."* Eamon Dunphy brightening up Saturday evenings for everyone.

*"Felliani is a nuisance more than anything"* Dunphy once again!

*"Americans, Benitez and Babel OUT!"*

A text message I receive from an unhappy member of the An Focal sports team.

*"I've been watching Mark Clattenburg this season. He did the Arsenal-Tottenham game - you'd have had to hit someone with an axe before he booked anyone in that game!"*

Sir Alex Ferguson has a pop at a referee which comes as no surprise to anyone.

*"He's lucky to only get one red."*

Robbie Earle thinks that El Hadji Diouf's horror tackle for Blackburn against Aston Villa deserved at least two or maybe three red cards!

# Give It A Lash Quiz

Compiled by Tommy Crean

- Who scored the winning goal in the 2009 UEFA Cup final?
- Who finished runner up in the 2009 PDC World Darts Championship final?
- What Guinness Premiership rugby side does Michael Owen play with?
- Who won the NBA title in 2009?
- What is athlete Usain Bolt's current world record time in the 100m?
- Who captained Kilkenny to senior All Ireland hurling honours in 2009?
- Who took the Australian Open title in tennis in 2009?
- What team announced that former world champion Michael Schumacher will drive for them in 2010?
- Who won the Ashes test series in 2009?
- Rory McIlroy finished tied in what place in the 2009 PGA Championship?

# AN FOCAL SPORT

## Sigerson and Fitzgibbon quest commences

By Tomás McCarthy – Sports Editor

**THE dawning of a new semester sees the start of fresh campaigns for UL's senior hurlers and footballers as the month of January sees the beginning of the Ulster Bank Sigerson and Fitzgibbon Cup competitions.**

Both teams received favourable draws and will be hopeful of places at the business end of each competition. UL footballers, managed by Cian O'Neill, face Carlow IT tomorrow (January 27) with UL holding home advantage.

The senior hurlers are up against UUJ and St Patricks College in Group C of the Fitzgibbon Cup. Ger Cunningham's charges face St Pats in their opening group game on February 4.

Last year UL hurlers were denied Fitzgibbon glory by UCC in Parnell Park. After strongly impressing against CIT in the semi final UL failed to reach their potential on the night. UL boss Ger Cunningham feels the occasion affected the players. Again UL enter this year's competition with an impressive line up on paper. Martin Walsh, Lester Ryan, Kieran Joyce and Seamus Hickey are likely to back bone the

defence. Up front, Offaly's Brian Carroll, Andrew Quinn of Clare, Kilkenny's Joe Brennan, as well as Tipperary corner forward Willie Ryan will provide an array of scoring talent.

UL's last title win was back in 2002. That team featured the likes of Limerick's Brian Geary and Niall Moran as well as Galway's Ritchie Murray.

UL will need a big display again because if they are to under perform expect UCC, LIT and WIT to be among the contenders to pick up the spoils at NUI Galway.

For the footballers, expectations are lower. Their last appearance in the final was in 1997 and since then they have made little impression on the competition. Under the management of Cian O'Neill however, standards have been raised. In 2007 UL reached the quarter finals and last year's second round defeat to UCD came after three periods of extra time.

This time around the team should negotiate Carlow IT in round one with Athlone IT awaiting the winners. Another quarter final appearance appears a realistic goal.

Leadership will be required from experienced players like Declan Rattigan, Seamus O'Shea and Paul Larkin. The loss of Kerry's David Moran and Cork's Fiachra Lynch

deprives UL of serious firepower and a place at the Sigerson weekend in NUI Maynooth seems unlikely.

The Sigerson and Fitzgibbon Cups have become increasingly

competitive in recent years and hard to predict. Over the next few weeks expect both UL sides to make progress but also expect the unexpected.



UL Gaelic Football in action

## Rugby steps up a gear in semester two

By David McMahon

**THIS spring, UL is adding to the excitement of the Six Nations by laying on a spread of intervarsity rugby like never before.**

No less than eight weeks of back to back fixtures are scheduled this semester starting on Week One, meaning the bowl is always worth a look on a Wednesday afternoon. Adding to this, the fantastic form of the fresher team is causing

resurgence in support for student's rugby in the University.

As if the Colleges League wasn't enough work, the club also has its main event, the memorial Colours Match, to look forward to. This year the occasion will be run as a huge event on February 24. The students of UL and LIT will also be treated to two live matches between these fierce rivals, as well as various

events in between. The contest was edged by UL last year and our lads will be eager to keep the prize this year.

It's not all about rugby jocks and mud this year as UL Rugby has organised their own formal night, the imaginatively titled "Rugby Ball", which will be held in April as a chance for the club to tog off in their Sunday best and show

themselves off. To add a bit of glamour to the proceedings the ball is being held in conjunction with UL Ladies Rugby club. Also the club is showing real enterprise this semester opening up kit sales to the larger student body.

The student body would look quite well in one of UL Rugby's playing jerseys, shorts, polo shirts or jackets, all by Kukri sports.

Not to be outdone by the boys, the ladies team is hosting this year's ladies intervarsity competition in early April, at which it is hoped the girls can retain their All-Ireland title. Keep your eyes peeled around campus for information about upcoming matches, events and of course the Colours match or go to [www.ulrugby.com](http://www.ulrugby.com)