

Interview Transcript Samples

Higgins Delighted With Training Camp

Dundalk Assistant Head Coach Ruaidhri Higgins has been delighted with the work that has been done as we approach the end of our midseason training camp in Spain. Speaking to dundalkfc.com Higgins feels the players are in good spirits.

“It has been very, very good. Conditions have been first class. As good as the pitches will see anywhere, they facilities are unbelievable and the players are in good spirits.

“All in all, there are no complaints. Everyone has enjoyed it and we have got some good work done.

“It was important that the players got a little break last week but equally important that we do our preparation for the period that we were going in to, it’s vital.”

With the Lilywhites back in action next Friday against Shamrock Rovers, that is the immediate focus of the side, with Europe looming also, however the Derry native warned that domestically we need to remain focused.

“It is important that we go into next week hitting the ground running. We have 3 huge games, 9 points to play for and we want to maximise that week.

“We want to get the 9 points going into Europe. We can’t look any further than that and I know that everyone is talking about the Champions League at the minute.

“It’s a good buzz for people but we have a massive game when we get back against Shamrock Rovers next Friday, that is our main focus.

We do have three league matches when we resume next Friday and Higgins is determined to take all three points in Dublin 24.

“If you take your eye off the ball domestically you will get turned over and I have said that on numerous occasions. “

“The three games that we have in our own league are against very good opposition so we have to prepare properly. We are not looking ahead of Shamrock Rovers next weekend.

“We will prepare well and do everything in our power to get the three points in Tallaght Stadium. “

The week also proved beneficial to the team bonding and morale which is something that the former Lilywhites midfielder believes is crucial going forward before concluding that it was a ‘good week’ on the training ground.

“They are good lads. I have to say it is a special group of players. The bond that they have between them is fantastic. They are good people first and foremost. They are good players – that is why they are here – but they are really good people.

“You can see as time goes on, they are getting closer and closer. Winning matches helps that but being over here in that environment, having a bit of fun down at the pool is great for team morale.

“You can see the atmosphere in the group is brilliant and that is the same for the staff. We have bonded this week as well and it is good for us to be together having a bit of craic.

“The week overall has gone very well and we are pleased with it.”

Gannon: Exciting Times Ahead

Dundalk full back Sean Gannon couldn't hide his delight as he put pen to paper on a three year deal at the club.

Speaking to **dundalkfc.com** after signing his new deal Gannon is looking to add to the great nights he has had at the club already.

"I am absolutely delighted to be staying. I am so pleased to be committing my future to the club. I have had great times here at the club.

"There has been plenty of great nights and I am looking to have many more here. We have been so successful since I joined the club and there has been so many highlights over that time but beating BATE Borisov in Tallaght Stadium is up there.

"It was such a special night for everyone at the club and it qualified us for the group stages of European competition. It elevated the club even more and everyone rallied around each other. We had so much to look forward to after that.

"Playing in the Europa League Group Stages was massive for us and showed we had that capability.

"I want to get back on that stage though and that's the plan. "

He also reflected on the 2017 season with the new additions to the group and he feels the time off will help recharge everyone and they will be ready to go again in 2018.

"Last season there was a lot of new players at the club and for them to win a trophy in their first year at the club was good for them. They have got a taste for it now.

"To lose the FAI Cup in the way we did was tough but the squad is strong. The lads will go off now and recharge in the off season, come back strong, have a good pre-season and be ready to go next year. "

The three year-deal means that the Dublin native will be at the club until the end of the 2020 season and is looking forward to being here for that time and feels there's 'exciting times' at the club at the moment.

"There's exciting times at the club. There's a lot of ambition here. We are going to have a good squad of players here. Stephen (Kenny) always brings in quality players each year.

"I am just delighted to have got my own deal sorted, got it down now and I am looking forward to being here for a long time."

Kenny Pays Tribute To Ireland Legend

Dundalk manager Stephen Kenny has hailed Kevin Doyle following his retirement. Kenny was speaking to **dundalkfc.com** following the retirement of the Ireland centre-forward on Thursday evening and looks back fondly on the striker's early beginnings in the League of Ireland.

"Kevin Doyle has been a really exceptional centre-forward for Ireland and he has had an exceptional career. I remember him bursting on the scene as a right winger with St. Patrick's Athletic. He was a right winger first of all before his move to Cork City. He played a lot on the right with Cork initially before eventually moving up front.

"Pat Dolan has been very influential in his career and was his manager at both clubs. He was terrific in the Cork team that came up against my Derry City team. John O'Flynn and Kevin Doyle were the strikeforce with Roy O'Donovan flying on the wing. You had midfield players like George O'Callaghan and Joe Gamble. It was such a good team he was in. Kevin was very good in that team.

"He subsequently went on to do very well at Reading, Wolves and everywhere else that he was. He had a very good partnership with Robbie Keane in the international side, Keane scored a lot of very good goals with Kevin playing alongside him. He put a ferocious amount of work in and was a great foil for him."

The boss told **dundalkfc.com** that Doyle is a terrific example of a player from the league of Ireland going on to have a brilliant international career and feels he should be a template for younger players here wishing to progress in their career. On the topic of concussion, Kenny highlighted how it is becoming more important in the modern era and how at Dundalk Football Club all protocols are followed.

"He is a great example of a player from the league going on to have a brilliant international career and he is a great example to young players. In one of the recent internationals for Ireland it looked like he took a heavy knock to the head. It was just before the Euros.

"It's new territory for players retiring from football with concussion related injuries. It's only associated with rugby as such. We are always very fearful about concussion at Dundalk Football Club.

"We took Conor Clifford off in a big game against Cork and we received some criticism for it. Under the protocols it was 100% the right thing to do. We have been consistent with that in the players in that regard.

"I have seen clubs who should know better letting players back in who have suffered concussion but we have always been strict on that.

"Kevin Doyle has been outstanding and we should acknowledge his contribution. He has come from the league and Wexford to go on to have a terrific career."

This week Ethan Ampadu was called into the Wales international squad for their upcoming World Cup Qualifiers with Georgia and the Republic of Ireland. The young

prospect only recently turned 17 and he is someone who has a personal connection to Stephen as he played with his father years ago.

“The young player Ethan Ampadu who plays for Chelsea, he came to them from Exeter City, was called up to the Wales international squad this week.

“When I was a young player at Belvedere, his father Kwame Ampadu was in the team a year ahead of me. He was a really excellent forward player. He was a quintessential Dubliner! He had a strong Dublin accent but he went on to have a brilliant professional career in England.

“Like Stephen Ward he ended up playing full-back. He started out as an attacking player but ended up playing full-back. Kwame Ampadu was the same. Ethan Ampadu is an outstanding prospect and he is in the Chelsea first team at only 17 years of age. He is a terrific prospect and he has got a call up for Wales. “

This weekend we have the Irish Daily Mail FAI Cup semi-final with Shamrock Rovers at Oriel Park and he emphasised how important reaching the final can be for a town like Dundalk and reflected on how the Cup seems to attribute more significance in the provincial areas.

“For the people of Dundalk, to get to the FAI Cup final is a huge occasion. When we won it two years ago and we won the double, we only lost one game domestically that whole season.

“Winning the double that season was special and winning the Cup was fantastic. We had a massive crowd in the AVIVA Stadium. The whole town came en masse. These are special moments for a provincial town like Dundalk.

“The celebrations in the town after winning it were huge and it really lifted the town in a major way. You have to be inspired by that.

“The Cup seems to mean a lot in the provinces. The league is the focus more in the cities. Our focus over the last few seasons has been on league titles more than Cups but the FAI Cup is a special trophy for everyone in Dundalk. The opportunity to go to the AVIVA is massive for us. Motivation is high. “

Our opponents are Shamrock Rovers of course and having met them in the EA SPORTS CUP Final a fortnight ago we are familiar with the Hoops however Kenny is ‘under no illusions’ on how difficult the game will be on Sunday and is anticipating a tough encounter which his Lilywhites will have to ‘earn their spot in the final’

“Shamrock Rovers will be very tough opposition. We have to earn the win and our spot in the final. We are under no illusions about that. They are a very strong team.

“We are very determined. We have a very passionate Dundalk home support. We are delighted with how they get behind the team and we are looking them to do so on Sunday.”

The opportunity is there for Dundalk to reach their third FAI Cup final in a row and that is something that the boss is determined to do and feels that the younger generation in the town really relate to the current crop of players and is backing the squad to raise their game for the big occasion, like they have always done in the past.

“We have been in the Cup final for the past two seasons and we want to get back there. Cup finals are special for the whole town. All the children really relate to the players.

“They have related to Richie Towell, they have related to Daryl Horgan but these guys have left us. Now they are relating to Patrick McEleney, the Sean Gannon’s and all the players.

“We have shown a capacity over the past three years to raise ourselves when it comes to the big games. We have always managed to rise in the big games.

“Whether that is the league deciders or the big cup games, the semi-finals or finals. We have a capacity to save our best performances for the big games and that is an important trait to have.

“We will have to find that again. We have some injury problems with Dane Massey, John Mountney and Steven Kinsella, we’ll see how they all are.

“We have a few knocks after the game on Monday night so we will have to dust ourselves down and show a renewed focus. We want to keep progressing as a club and getting to the final would help us do that for sure.”