



## Dundalk FC Press Release

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### **Kenny Focused On Progression After Contract Extension**

Dundalk Football Club today are delighted to announce that manager Stephen Kenny has signed a contract extension at the club.

The deal, which takes the Tallaght man up to the end of the 2020 season, will extend his stay at the helm of the Oriel Park club with the ambition of further success in the coming years.

Under Kenny's stewardship The Lilywhites have won three SSE Airtricity League Premier Division titles on the bounce, an FAI Cup, an EA Sports Cup and a historic UEFA Europa League Group Stage qualification last year.

The news comes as we prepare for a busy end of season with league and FAI Cup honours to challenge for.

Speaking to **dundalkfc.com** after putting pen to paper on a contract extension, Kenny spoke of his 'privilege' to manage the Lilywhites and about how his backroom team has played a major part in the success of the club.

"It has been a privilege to manage this Dundalk team over the last four and a half years. The team has been in one of the most successful in the history of the league. Some great players and brilliant people have been here in that period.

"We started with absolutely nothing and it has been a great journey. We are still on it. We have had a great consistency over those few years in the backroom team. We have had minimal changes. Vinny Perth has been the assistant manager for the whole time during that time.

"I have had Noel Walsh, Steve Williams and Graham Byrne for that time too. Sam Rice and Fearghal Kerin have been there for a good bit of that too. Ruaidhri Higgins has been the addition this year. We have had the same youth coaches also. By and large I have had the same backroom staff since day one.

"Everyone has really played their part behind the scenes in our success. "

The 45 year-old spoke of the challenges facing the club as a provincial club.

"We are a provincial town. There's just a population of over 30,000 in the town. We are battling against the bigger cities in Ireland - Cork, Derry, Dublin. To go then and compete against the bigger cities in Europe.

"Zenit St. Petersburg, Maccabi Tel-Aviv and Legia Warsaw to name a few. Not only compete but beat them and get results against them. There has been a lot of very special nights in that period for Dundalk Football Club, domestically and in Europe.

"We want to create more of them. "

Kenny has overseen some changes to his playing squad this season and feels that the younger players in the squad 'will only get better' and is pleased with how the squad is shaping up ahead of the next few seasons.

"We have had to rebuild the team this season. We have lost some good players but I am excited by the players that we have brought in this season. We have some excellent talent under the age of 22 at the club.

"Sean Hoare, Michael Duffy, Jamie McGrath, Dylan Connolly. Steven Kinsella has been injured so we are yet to see the best of him. He is only 18 but they are all exciting players. Next season we will see a big improvement in them all. They are all settled in now and starting to excel.

"These players will be better over the next few seasons.

"I am excited by the way the team is shaping up. I think we are shaping up very well. There's going to be a tough challenge over the next few seasons from several clubs. There will be several clubs in contention for honours. "

European nights have been plentiful with 20 European matches in the past three years and the stage of Europe is something which motivates Kenny saying that being seeded for the Champions League and aspiring to play in a packed national stadium is something he is aspiring for at the club.

"I have been informed that if we can win it next year and get through two rounds of the Europa League that we will be a seeded team in the Champions League going forward. Our co-efficient has improved because of our European results.

"I am motivated by that. As a manager I want to manage at the highest level. In order to that at Dundalk, we have got to aspire to get back into the group stages of European competition.

"We have to have that ambition. I think our ambition overall to have packed AVIVA Stadiums. If Ciaran Kilduff's off the crossbar had to go in against Rosenborg we would have been there last week against Celtic in a full AVIVA.

"Last year we had it against Legia Warsaw. We want those special nights, they are tremendous. We should aspire to have that. In Ireland it's not something we have had. We should have it - our national stadium full for European games. We should have that aspiration to have that and the determination to achieve that."

The boss turned his attention to the present and feels that it has been a good week for the club reaching their second EA Sports Cup final in his tenure and wants to carry that form into the FAI Cup tie with Derry City on Sunday.

"It has been a good week for us. After losing to Rosenborg the disappointment hit us. Then we had two good 3-0 wins last weekend and we are into another league cup final. Going away to beat Galway United convincingly 3-0 with a very good performance.

"It's a tough game for us on Sunday against Derry City in the FAI Cup. We couldn't have got a tougher game. It's a tough game for both sides. My experience of Sunday night games is that they are good atmosphere's. Sunday is a good night for a Cup game.

"With all the non-league teams and the fact that two of the top three teams got each other makes it tough. There's obviously a new dimension with it finishing on the night. Last year we played Derry and it went to a replay. We don't have that this year. We want to go and progress on Sunday."

On a personal level, the Dublin native feels it was a big decision for him to stay but is intent on progressing the club on and off the field with plans coming together for the development of Oriel.

"For me, it was a big decision to stay as manager. If I had to have known five years ago that I would still be managing Dundalk then I am sure we would have moved! By the end of that season I would have done that two and a half hour trip between 850 and 900 times over the five years.

"It's a lot of time spent in a car, a lot of kilometres. It can take its toll. Some of the other top clubs have had four other managers in that period. Only Liam Buckley is in his job longer. Oriel Park has stood still here. There is plans for the Development Centre. We are looking at putting a sports science room in it, we are going to put in a medical department and a video analysis department. These are all new developments and we are looking at putting them in there.

"We want to progress as a club. We haven't moved too quickly as a club because our success has been quite rapid. I have been the only full-time member of staff as such up to now and we need to improve to get better."

The goal for Kenny is now to improve and after winning three league titles in a row as well as the FAI Cup and EA Sports Cup so far as well as the European run in 2016, he is intent on competing stronger over the next few seasons and wants more special nights.

"We have to work harder to get better. A lot of the teams will be strong again next year. We have got to work harder. We have to have a high work ethic. We have a lot left to play for this season.

"It has been a good week for us with the wins and getting through to the EA Sports Cup final and we want to carry that into Sunday against Derry City.

"Going forward we want to get better. We want players to want to be a part of what we are doing here. We want players to want to be a part of the big European games. You can't get that everywhere. Some of the big league wins have been special and we want players to want to be part of that."

One thing which enthuses the manager is the amount of Dundalk garments which is on show in the town and wants to compete for trophies hailing the 'passionate support' in the town.

"As the owners Paul Brown and Andy Connolly would say to me 'Dundalk are the most stable club in Ireland now'. We want to get better over a period of time.

"There's a passionate home support here. We are enthused by people wearing Dundalk FC gear all through the town. When I came into it four years ago there was very few people wearing any Dundalk gear.

"Now there's people wearing tracksuits, jersey's, all the gear. It's a great thing and certainly we want the team to get better now and to continue to compete for trophies. "

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