

Dundalk Football Club's strategic PR campaign successfully attracted over 30,000 fans to the AVIVA Stadium for the UEFA Champions League playoff, showcasing the power of community engagement, media relations, and creative marketing.

Organisation – Dundalk Football Club

Date – August 2016

Description – To sell over 25,000 seats for the AVIVA Stadium for the UEFA Champions League playoff first leg match against Legia Warsaw. Due to the difficulties with our own home ground, Oriel Park, the match had to be moved to the AVIVA Stadium. The objective was to appeal to all football fans – not just our own local – to ensure that we captured the imagination of the public and gain the biggest crowd possible behind us. The overall message was that Dundalk Football Club were not just representing the town however Ireland's representatives on the European stage.

Strategy

1. **Strategic ticket pricing** - We introduced a reduced ticket pricing for the match at the AVIVA Stadium with tickets starting from €10 and €5 to encourage as many people to go within the Dublin area.
2. **Marketing Campaign** – There was a week long marketing campaign launched around the game which included combining PR efforts with advertising and social media. This was featured across newspapers both local and national, online resources, local and national radio and through TV adverts. The campaign featured match highlights, interviews with our manager, players and club legends as well as paid social media posts to promote the event. We also took out billboard advertising and pages in the paper to promote the event and ticket prices. There was also a video created to highlight how the team were represented by all corners of Ireland utilizing our players home counties and towns.
3. **Community Outreach** – Local schools, youth clubs and football teams were engaged and encouraged to get involved. This included group tickets at a discount and buses being run from our home at Oriel Park to the game on the night.
4. **Fan engagement** – There were competitions run on our social media to win tickets to the game in the premium level and we also ran a contest encouraging fans in the town to 'deck out in black and white' where they were to decorate their house with the club colours of black and white with the best winning tickets and/or club prize.
5. **Media Relations** – There were two media days held before the game in the AVIVA Stadium with three players. The national press were invited as were the photographers which gave an extra opportunity to generate coverage across all media. There was also the traditional press conference on the day before the match with the manager and captain to give further coverage.

Results

1. **Ticket Sales** – There was a huge response to the ticket sales. Despite there being torrential rain, an incredible 36,417 people turned out for the match surpassing the initial target.
2. **Community Support** – The engagements of local schools, youth teams and community organisations resulted in a large turnout from the area creating a huge sense of unity among the support.
3. **Media Coverage** – The game received extensive media coverage with it being a Champions League qualifier and our media day, plus pre-match press conference on the day before at the AVIVA generated numerous previews, feature pieces and interviews to push the match into the public view.
4. **Fan Engagement** – The number of ticket competitions and initiatives for the local residents to decorate their house in the black and white of Dundalk added to the crowd and generated huge enthusiasm for the event.

Media Coverage

There was extensive media coverage in the week leading up to the game with the national interest being at its highest ever. This was partly due to it being a Champions League Play-Off match however also due to the strategic media placement. The press conferences and photo calls led to coverage on national television, the national media and the ticketing campaign featuring across all platforms online, in print and through Ticketmaster's own channels.

In conclusion, the project effectively leveraged strategic pricing, marketing campaigns, fan engagement, community outreach, and media relations to achieve the goal of selling over 25,000 seats for the UEFA Champions League playoff first leg match, creating a memorable and vibrant atmosphere at the AVIVA Stadium. For the club itself, the contributed to the long-term visibility of the club. It put the club on the national stage and in the national conversation alongside the likes of the GAA and rugby. It led to increased interest and attendance around our European matches in particular and an increase in merchandise from even non-Dundalk Football Club supporters.