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# THE INVER READ

THE OFFICIAL LARNE FC MAGAZINE : APRIL 2023



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# WELCOME MARK STRANGE

Just one of those nights. I don't think you need me to tell you what night I am talking about but there is still so much to look forward to as we enter the final month of the season. Welcome to the final issue of the Inver Read 2022/23. Five games left. Five points clear. It has been an incredible season and the beginning of it against Glentoran at Inver Park in August seems an absolute lifetime ago. We welcome the Glens back to Inver to kick off the 'split' fixtures with everyone in the league having played each other three times.

Although we are 33 games down, the final five are shaping up to be some of the most exciting and crucial in the history of Larne Football Club. As well as a visit from Rodney McAree's side, Linfield visit Inver Park in April as well as two trips to North Belfast to take on Cliftonville and Crusaders before rounding off the campaign on the North Coast against Coleraine.

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As well as a visit from Rodney McAree's side, Linfield visit Inver Park in April as well as two trips to North Belfast to take on Cliftonville and Crusaders before rounding off the campaign on the North Coast against Coleraine.

No easy fixtures there. There will be no routine victories but, if Larne are to be the best in the league then they must beat the best. This is a test of the squad's mettle, that is for sure, but they have shown all season that they are more than capable.

Remember that Tiernan Lynch's men are not top of the tree for no reason. They were not gifted top spot. They have earned it. Every single tackle; every single goal; every single point. Thank you for reading along with us this season and let us hope that come 29th April, there will be celebrations at Inver Park and beyond.

See you at Inver for the run-in and, of course, come on you Inver Reds!



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# FIVE THINGS WE LEARNT THIS MONTH

## IAN CAHOON



For the final time in the 2022/23 season we have a month of action to reflect on – let's find out what we have learned as we come into the home straight of the campaign.

### 1) How are the nerves?

That's the question which has probably been asked most as we entered the penultimate month of the season. Having got ourselves into the position we did throughout March there are going to be questions which come your way, particularly as the players and management aim to do something no-one before them at the club has done.

As we arrive into the finals games of the season the tension is only likely to grow – for all of those clubs involved in the title race. Whoever handles it best is likely to come out on top, which means all of us as supports have a duty to give the players the best possible chance by getting behind until the final whistle goes at the Coleraine Showgrounds.

### 2) Irish Cup holy grail

March was bookended with two Irish Cup ties. The first one we came through right at the end, courtesy of an Andy Ryan goal, the second is probably all too fresh in the minds as we deservedly exited the competition with a 2-0 defeat against Ballymena United.

There is the statistic, which is often mentioned, that no-one has appeared in more Irish Cup finals without winning one than ourselves.

It serves as a reminder of just how hard the trophy is to get your hands on. No matter how well you're doing in the league the Cup often seems to be a different beast altogether and a competition you simply cannot take anything for granted in.

As Larne fans have said more than once in the last century and a bit – there's always next year!

### 3) Striving for goals

It must be said March was not a memorable month when it came to goals scored for the Invermen. There were just two goals to celebrate across the five matches, coming in the Irish Cup win away to H&W Welders and the important league win against Ballymena United on St Patrick's Day – both of them scored by Andy Ryan.

Lee Bonis missed the majority of those, only starting the final two games of the month. Hopefully the former Northern Ireland under-21 international is well-places to hit the ground running in the month ahead.

### 4) Clean Sheets continue

While it's true that March was not the most prolific month, the only goals conceded in the month came in the final half hour of action we played, against Ballymena United. Throughout the month we continued to look solid at the back, just as we have all season, which is a big encouragement coming into the split.

The old adage is that goals win you games and clean sheets win you titles. That remains to be decided in the current campaign, but a mixture of both will be required in these final five games as Larne bid for history.

### 5) Randy Wolters added

It's rare to have a new signing to call upon as the season enter final straight but that's exactly what Larne have in the form of March arrival Randy Wolters.

The experienced Dutchman has been around the camp on and off for much of the season, but was only able to sign on the dotted line as an out-of-contract professional last month, when his work permit came through.

Anyone who has listened to his edition of Invercast will have picked up that Randy has had a more than decent career and is more than capable of giving the place a lift off the pitch with an infectious personality.

The final chapter of a memorable season for the Inver Reds will be written in April – could Randy add himself as a memorable character in that story?

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# FAN CAM

BILL GUILLER

## PHOTOS FROM OUR ST PATRICK'S DAY FIXTURE AT INVER PARK



# TIERNAN LYNCH

## MANAGER

I finished my last notes talking about the importance of resilience and, as I write to you now, I can't pretend I'm not hurting after the Irish Cup Semi-Final at Seaview. It wasn't the performance I expected or the one you deserved but it's gone now, it's done and we look forward. I've watched these players dig deep and respond time and time again and that's what I'll be asking of them now. Perhaps it's also the reality check that'll get us back to the values and principles that have got us so far this season.

We may not have an Irish Cup Final to savour but what lies ahead of us now is an opportunity unlike any we've experienced together in the 6 years I've been at Inver Park. This campaign has seen this group re-write the history of Larne FC, whether it be the number of wins they've managed or clean sheets they've posted. Now it's time for us all to have tunnel vision, to fix our eyes on these five games we have left and stand united as we look to remind everyone what's special about our corner of East Antrim.

Your support this season has been unwavering and for us to go that extra mile and do what many still consider unthinkable or impossible, we will need you with us for every step, being louder and prouder than ever.

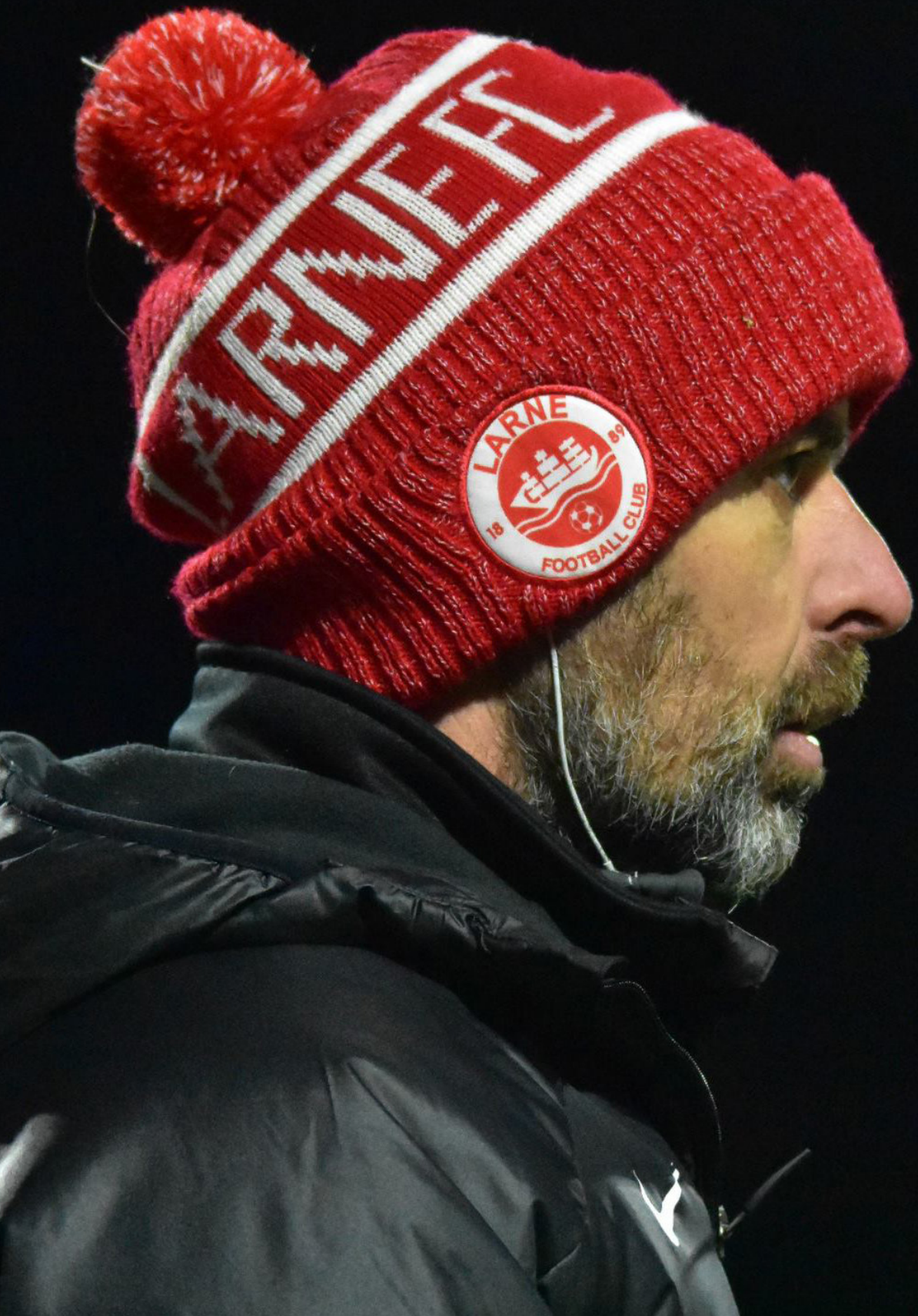
When I look at our next five opponents, they all have plenty in common, whether it be the fact they're all bigger clubs than we are or that they can reflect on trophy-laden heritages but none of that matters now. It comes down to five sets of ninety minutes and who wants it most and, I promise you, this group of players is hungry and will fight to keep this football club at the top of the league.

I hope and trust that you'll embrace the challenge that lies ahead, our hard work and dedication has put us in a position that everyone else would love to be in. Now as a town and a community, it's about us all proving our resilience, our character and our determination to write a new chapter, together.

Time to do the hard yards.

Tiernan.

***"What lies ahead of us now is an opportunity unlike any we've experienced together in the 6 years I've been at Inver Park."***



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# GLOBAL ALLEGIANCES

## MARK STRANGE

I think it is safe to say that we are all here for one reason – we all have a love of Larne Football Club. Whether you are from Larne, a blow-in to Larne like me or not living in Larne at all, every one of us are attached to this wonderful club in one way or another.

However, most, if not all of us, follow other clubs from other countries. It may be Manchester United or Liverpool or Rangers or Celtic but these are just the common ones. Some of us follow clubs that are off the beaten track somewhat and makes people say "you follow who?!" when you bring it up.

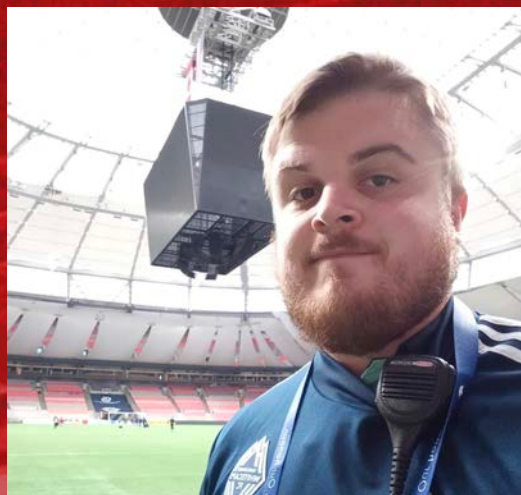
This scribe can attest to that. Firstly, I am a follower of Oldham Athletic. It can be a bit of a conversation killer when the question "who is your English team?" gets asked. Not many people want to hear about a battling point away to Wealdstone on a Tuesday night. Strange that.

While my love for the Latics has come from family ties, my other two favourite clubs have come through different means. I began following Feyenoord around ten years ago. A co-worker and fellow football geek suggested I look up videos of their fanatical support on Youtube and social media and, after doing so, I was hooked.

While they are a big club in the Netherlands, they have been somewhat overshadowed by bitter rivals Ajax and PSV in recent years. They have an incredible history, being the first Dutch side to win the European Cup with a victory over Celtic in 1970 and producing some incredible talent through their academy. Giovanni van Bronckhorst, Robin van Persie and, more recently, the likes of Georginio Wijnaldum and Nathan Ake have all come through the famed 'Varkenoord' academy.

Since supporting the club, I have fallen in love with the relationship between the club, players and fans and the pride that the city of Rotterdam has in its team. I witnessed Dirk Kuyt's incredible swansong at the wonderfully tight surroundings of the De Kuip stadium in the 2016/17 season that saw him score a hat-trick on the final day to secure the club's only title of the 21st Century – so far! As I write this, the club have just gone eight points clear and have recently won their first game in Amsterdam since 2005. A 16th Eredivisie title could well be on the cards.

Finally, my other love is the Vancouver Whitecaps of MLS. This love was born when I worked for the club



while my partner Leah and I lived in the city, I have followed the club avidly ever since. While the 3am starts on Canada's west coast make watching live games a struggle for the most part, the first thing I do is check for their score and watch the highlights. They are far from the most glamorous team in MLS and do not have the stars or the pull that the likes of LAFC or Inter Miami have but it is a wonderful way to keep our connection to Vancouver.

There are others involved in the club who have a love for clubs outside of these Isles. We will start with First-Team Analyst Oliver Byrne and his love for Portuguese giants Benfica.

"I have always had a love and passion for European football but never really had a team that I followed. I always enjoyed the slower, more technical side of the Portuguese League and then I met my partner Margarida who is Portuguese."

Oliver explains how, in Portugal, your club is more than just a weekend activity, it is a way of life and you don't choose your club – it chooses you!

"My partner is a fourth generation 'Benfiquista' so, naturally, they became my club too. The club is part of your blood and you hear the stories of family watching the likes of Eusebio, Rui Costa and Di Maria through the years."

The death of Benfica and Portuguese legend Eusebio is still something that provokes emotion among the supporters of Portugal's most decorated club and being in the Estadio Da Luz on match-day certainly made the hairs on Oliver's neck stand on end.



"Hearing over 60,000 fans singing the club anthem 'Ser Benfiquista' and the eagle fly around the pitch before kick-off was an incredible experience.

Your club is part of your family and the club itself is one big family. I have never known another club that embodies that as well as Benfica. That is how I got pulled in."

Oliver was drawn to the Lisbon giants by his partner and has been kept there by the family feeling of the club.

Club chairman Gareth Clements is a huge Manchester United fan and can be found watching Erik ten Hag's Red Devils when not at Inver Park. However, he has a love for a club that do not play in red but in sky blue – no, not that one! I will let Gareth tell the story.

"I started following Celta Vigo in 1987 when former Larne defender Jim Hagan signed for them from Birmingham City. This was under the management of Colin Addison who worked under Ron Atkinson at West Brom as well as managing Derby County."

A combination of East Antrim grit at the back and a Midlands flavor in the dugout saw Vigo promoted to La Liga ahead of the 1988/89 season.

"I went over to Vigo for a week in 1988 as a sixteen year-old to watch Jim and the team train and play against a Barcelona side that had Gary Linekar up front. It was an incredible experience that I will never forget and the love for the club was born."

That season, 'Los Celestes' finished in seventh place, level on points with Barcelona and Hagan was voted as the best non-Spanish player in the league, beating the likes of Real Madrid's Hugo Sanchez and Bernd Schuster as well the afore-mentioned Linekar.

"Not bad for a lad from the Glenarm Road!"

After helping Vigo to an eighth place finish the following year, Hagan returned home to play at Inver Park but Gareth has continued to follow the club's fortunes to this day. He was in attendance at Old Trafford for the 2017 Europa League semi-final between the sides with son Zak.

"My wife, Karen and I have holidayed in Vigo and the surrounding area a few times and I have made friends through the club.

Two of them – Cesar Fernandez Dominguez and Gabino Perez Pineiro – made a four-hour round-trip to Portugal when we played Pacos de Ferreira."

A truly great story of football friendship that would not have been possible if it weren't for Jim Hagan from the Glenarm Road!

There are surely plenty of other stories of Larne supporters with links across the world and this is part of the reason why we love football. The connections across the world all linked by this wonderful game.





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# SPOTLIGHT ON EUROPEAN OPPONENTS

## MARK STRANGE

Earlier this season, I had a look at how our European opponents of the past couple of years have been faring and, as we approach the end of the season, I will take a final whistle-stop look at Bala Town, AGF Aarhus, Pacos de Ferreira and St Joseph's.

Firstly, to our friends in Wales who have some exciting games coming up towards the end of the season. The New Saints have, once again, ran away with the Cymru Premier League, securing the title as early as St. Patrick's Day. However, Bala have a chance to stop them from completing back-to-back domestic doubles as they will face off in the FAW Cup final on 30th April.

This is after the Lakesiders defeated Connah's Quay 3-2 in the semi-final thanks to captain Chris Venables' late winner. This is the second time that Bala have defeated the Nomads this season in cup action having secured the League Cup back in January with a shootout victory following a goalless draw.

While the title is well out of reach, Chris Caton's men sit fourth in the league with three games to go as we speak which means they will be competing in the playoff for Europa Conference League action once more.

Over in Denmark, Uwe Rosler's Aarhus have turned their fortunes around in 2022/23. After a dreadful season in 2021/22 saw them flirt dangerously with relegation, the former Manchester City player and Wigan Athletic manager has stabilized things at Ceres Park. The Whites currently sit in fourth place, which would not be good enough for a European return as it stands, but they are just two points off third-place Viborg who occupy the last continental place.

The Danish Superliga still has ten games to go between now and the first weekend in June in what will be a packed fixture calendar and a thrilling run-in awaits. Aarhus are eight behind surprise league-leaders Nordsjaelland while powerhouses FC Copenhagen have recovered from an uncharacteristically slow start to roar back into contention in second. There is still plenty of time for ups and downs and a potential European birth for Aarhus.

For our Portuguese friends, Pacos Ferreira, there will be no such thoughts of Europe this season. In fact, just remaining in the top flight will be seen as a



success. The Beavers' participation in Europe was the exception rather than the rule as they have spent much of the past few years as a yo-yo club. They currently lie in 17th in the Portuguese Primeira Division with only Santa Clara below them.

The team came to Inver Park contained Canadian international Stephen Eustaquio who moved on to Porto in January last year while double goal-scorer from the first leg, Denilson is lining out for Famalicao. Their best hope with eight games left is catching Maritimo above them and, at least compete in the relegation play-off, however with Porto, Sporting and Braga all to come in those games, it could well be an uphill battle.

Finally, St Joseph's are competing with two other sides for another crack at the Europa Conference League. Lincoln Red Imps have ran away with the league title and, with it, a spot in the Champions League qualifiers. With three games remaining, Europa FC occupy second spot which would see them into Conference League qualifiers but only three points separate them and Crusaders' opponents from last year, Magpies and St Joseph's.

A big game against Europa on April 9th will go a long way to deciding who goes into continental action this summer but, before that, St Joseph's will attempt to stop the Red Imps from doing the double as they clash in the cup semi-finals on April 5th.

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# THE RISE OF THE SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAMME

## DEAN HOUSTON

As a young 17 year old student athlete, every footballer at that age dreams of becoming professional and making football their life.

Larne born and now part of the Scholarship Programme at the club in partnership with the Steven Gerrard Academy, Jack Hastings has been living the lifestyle of that dream recently on the programme, combining football and education at the Larne Academy of Sport.

Jack has shown his undeniable talent for the U20 and U18 NIFL side's this campaign, demonstrating his willingness to drive forward and find the back of the net.

His impressive form didn't go unnoticed by Tiernan Lynch, with the first-team Manager bringing Jack into the squad for the Irish Cup visit of Crumlin United in January. After making his senior debut in that fixture, the pathway to the top has never been clearer for those within the Scholarship Programme and Tiernan Lynch has never shied away from bedding youth into his side.

With the U20 and U18 NIFL sides in their best form of the season at the moment, the recent International break was going to prove interesting in terms of selection for our young student athletes.

It didn't disappoint. Jack Hastings was called into the Northern Ireland U17s squad for their Euro Elite Round qualifiers, Sean Brown and Dylan Sloan were called up to the Northern Ireland U19s squad for their Euro qualifiers, Kye Livingstone was called upon for Gibraltar U21s squad for their friendly against Liechtenstein and Odhran McCart, Caolan Donnelly, Ben Walker and Rian Brown were called into the Northern Ireland U18s Schoolboys squad for the Centenary Shield.

First-year student athlete Harrison Knight is also currently in the USA representing the Steven Gerrard Academy in the prestigious Dallas Cup, potentially facing teams such as Real Madrid, Sporting Lisbon and Everton.



In the space of a few months, first-year student athlete Jack Hastings has gained his senior and international debut whilst being involved in a full-time football and education environment and playing regularly for both the U20 and U18 NIFL sides at the club. At just 17 years old, the future looks bright for the local talent and all of the invaluable experience being gained at this moment will help to stand him in good stead for the opportunities and challenges to come in the future.

All in all, it has been a successful period for our Scholarship Programme. With both NIFL sides performing well in their league as of late and the host of international call-ups mentioned previously, the future for the programme looks incredibly bright with the student athletes starting to flourish within the full-time football and education setting at the Larne Academy of Sport.

If you would like to keep up to date with everything from the Scholarship Programme in partnership with the Steven Gerrard Academy, please follow our social media channels:

**Facebook:** Larne FC Scholarship Programme  
**Instagram:** @larnefcscholarship  
**Twitter:** @LarneFCscholars

# INVER REWIND

## BRIAN CRAIG

You can still see the goal on YouTube.

The cross from John Barnes and the sumptuous volley from John Aldridge, the decisive goal in the FA Cup semi-final between Liverpool and Nottingham Forest in April 1988 at Hillsborough, home of neutral Sheffield Wednesday. If you get a chance to have a look, watch the Liverpool fans celebrating behind the goal in the Leppings Lane end of the famous, but by then, crumbling old ground. Packed in like sardines, and pushed up against the fence. Yes, that's the way football fans up and down the country were treated back in the late 1980s. Herded into pens in decrepit old stadia, some not fit for purpose; unbelievable when you look back now on it over a third of a century later. I remember watching the highlights on Match of The Day that night and thinking to myself that I would not fancy being in the middle of that.

Thankfully we are not normally used to crowd crushes at Irish League matches, but I had been in two in previous years - firstly in attempting to cross the footbridge on the way out of Windsor Park's south stand following a Northern Ireland v England game in 1977 and almost ten years later trying to leave the grounds of Slane Castle in the Irish Republic after one of Freddie Mercury's last ever concerts with the rock band Queen. Both very scary experiences which I would not like to have to go through again.

However, these thoughts were far from my mind as I dandered up to Inver Park for an end of season league match with fellow strugglers Carrick Rangers on a bright spring afternoon, Saturday 15th April 1989, still euphoric after the midweek Irish Cup semi-final replay victory over Cliftonville at Windsor Park.



As the same two teams, Liverpool and Forest, would be contesting another FA Cup semi-final at the same ground across the water, the game at Inver got off to a slow start, Larne still drained from the two cup games against a Carrick side, fresh from two recent wins over Ballymena and Ards. But gradually an eerie atmosphere spread around the Inver terraces as word began to spread, from fans with transistor radios glued to their ears, of horrific scenes at Hillsborough. The crowd at the Liverpool end had spilled onto the pitch and with supporters supposedly pressed up against the fence and rumours of casualties, the game had been stopped.

The crowd at the Liverpool end had spilled onto the pitch and with supporters supposedly pressed up against the fence and rumours of casualties, the game had been stopped. My mind flashed back to the images of a year before. Surely not? The terraces at Inver began to empty as fans rushed into the social club to see live pictures from Sheffield as the whole horror began to unfold, the match taking place in front of them suddenly not important any more. (This would prove to be the last year FA Cup semis were not televised live; the pictures came from reporters at the game for the Saturday afternoon sports show Grandstand). Possibly the strangest atmosphere I have ever experienced at Inver Park on match day.

The ground was more or less deserted as two Larne men - Kenny Thompson and Tom McCourt fired Carrick 2 up after the break and was nearly empty as Francis Murphy pulled one back for Larne late on

The result of the match rendered totally irrelevant considering the events across the Irish Sea.

The month had begun with a trip to Bangor in the league on April Fool's Day. George Gibson gave the home side a 70th minute lead but 6 minutes later Larne levelled when Bangor left back, debutant Ian Bruce spectacularly chipped his own keeper Stephen Eachus in the Bangor goal for a fortunate equalizer.

The game was marred by an injury to Larne winger Tony Frazer which would rule him out for the season and the upcoming Irish Cup semi-final(s) and subsequent final in May. Frazer, or "Surfboard" as he was affectionately known due to his all year round tan, just back in the side after a 3 month injury lay off, was making his first appearance back at Bangor following his big money move from Clondeboye Park to Larne the previous autumn.

Then we were off to Windsor Park on a wet and windy Friday night for the Irish Cup semi-final with Cliftonville. In front of a raucous crowd (Cliftonville fans in the South Stand with us in the North) the Belfast side took the lead in the 18th minute when Mickey McDonald glanced in Peter Murray's near post corner. Vince Magee then saved brilliantly from McDonald in the 53rd minute and five minutes later Larne were level, Eddie Spiers rising to nod home a corner from Francis Murphy. Larne dominated the rest of the half but could not get that elusive winner. Tommy McDonald had a goal ruled out, Spiers had a header cleared off the line and Prentice saved spectacularly from Murphy.

So, in the days when we had replays, it was back to Windsor the following Wednesday night.

This was another tense affair, again played in atrocious conditions. Larne went ahead midway through the second half when Tom Sloan fired home Francis Smith's cross but after Kernohan had headed Murray's corner off the line in the 78th minute, substitute Seamus Reid was on hand to scramble home the equalizer. Ian Bustard got Larne's winner in the 12th minute of extra time, thereby keeping up his record of scoring in every round of the cup, sending Larne through to the final while gaining revenge for the semi-final defeat by Cliftonville ten years earlier.

After all the euphoria of the cup win, Larne still had two further league fixtures to fulfil. Sick of the sight of each other by now, Larne and Cliftonville fought



**IAN BUSTARD**

out a dull 0-0 draw on the evening of Friday 21st before the league campaign ended on Saturday 29th with a 1-1 draw against Crusaders at Seaview, Francis Murphy once again on target for the Invermen.

A week later, in early May, of course we were all off to The Oval for the Irish Cup Final v Ballymena. I just wonder if a fit Tony Frazer might have made a difference that day. We will never know.

Of course much has been written in the years since about Hillsborough and the subsequent fallout. I still think about that day often, especially at this time of year, and the fans who left home that morning to see a game of football.

In memory of the 97 who never made it back.

Players used that month:

Vince Magee, Trevor McMullan, Francis Murphy, Tom Sloan, John McKinstry, Marty Armstrong, Ian Bustard, Gary Hannan, Harry Kernohan, Francis Smith, Tony Frazer, Tommy McDonald, Davy Smyth, Tommy Huston, Paul Carland, Eddie Spiers, Owen Daly.

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# THE BIG INTERVIEW: MARK RANDALL IAN CAHOON

EXPERIENCED midfielder Mark Randall believes the Larne squad have got 'fire in their bellies' ahead of the crucial split fixtures in April.

The Inver Reds go into the month with five games remaining, whilst also enjoying a five-point advantage at the summit.

They also come into April off the back of their first defeat in 16 matches, having lost 2-0 to Ballymena United in the Irish Cup semi-final at Seaview.

It has led to some onlookers questioning whether this is the start of a wobble, or whether they can see out the title for claim a first top flight title in the club's history.

Randall believes the disappointment in North Belfast will be fuel for the fire to complete the job.

"I think all the talk about 'a bad run' after one defeat this year shows how much mentality has changed," he said.

"We know that it was a great chance to get into the final of the Irish Cup and we all desperately wanted to do that, so the fact we haven't is gutting.

"It really hurt every single one of us to be honest, that was clear to see.

"The mentality of the squad this year is that it really gets to us when we lose and I think that has been the big change in us.

"We're hoping that losing the game before the split, could work in our favour however because I think it's really put that fire in our belly for the league now."

While others have questioned if Larne can handle the pressure which comes with being top, the former Arsenal, MK Dons and Chesterfield midfielder believes it's something they'd much rather be dealing with than hoping to get into Europe through the playoffs.

"There's obviously pressure with the territory, but it's good pressure."

"You'd much rather be playing for winning the league, than trying to get through to win the playoffs, like the last few years.

"So, it's a good pressure to have. I feel we normally perform well as a team in big games and we have five of those coming up in April.

Larne will now face the five teams directly below them in the table in a straight shoot-out for the title.



Randall, 33, is looking forward to the 'mini-league' to finish off the season.

He added: "To be honest there are no easy games. Even when you play the bottom six teams they are really tough games, so it's no different to what we face throughout the season.

"All those top six teams are playing each other now and it's whoever can come out on top of this mini-league.

"We have to go into it with confidence with what we've done already this season. We've beaten all the teams we're going to face so we know we can do it.

"It's about getting our heads down, working hard and seeing how many points we can get in these last five games.

"Our defence has been brilliant this year and we are hard to beat, so we know that we can score goals and win games."

Tiernan Lynch's side will enjoy home advantage against Glentoran and Linfield and Randall feels playing at Inver could be crucial in both games.

"I think playing at Inver is a big factor for us," he added.

"Watching from the sidelines when I've been injured you see that other teams don't really fancy coming here and that's because of how well the boys have done.

"No-one is going to come to Inver and lie down either though, so we know we have to earn whatever we get but we know what we're capable of.

"We also have to remember that we only have two games out of the five at home, so we have a job to do away from home.

"We need to go away from home and dig in. We need to make sure we get our fans onside and home the home fans get restless and that would suit us."

Randall returned from injury at the end of March having spent a number of weeks on the sidelines.

He admits he was unsure when he would return, but after getting the all clear to play again he feels he has a new lease of life going into the final weeks of the season.

"You watch games with a different eye and try to be ready for things when you get back.

"I wasn't in a great place for a while because I didn't know if I would get back before the end of the season so I'm really pleased that I got good news and I'm enjoying being out there again.

"It's all about me trying to help out the team now. Whether that is when I'm playing or I'm not playing or starting games.

"You can give your all in training and encourage the rest of the lads and I'll be doing that.

"We have good depth in the squad and that competition is always healthy. It helps the manager and it keeps us on our toes.



"It means when you get your chance you have to take it otherwise there's someone else ready to come in."

Randall joined the club in the summer of 2019, making a new life not only on the pitch but moving his young family to the town in the process.

It is the longest he has spent at any senior club in his career and he believes the chance to be settled off the pitch is a big benefit to him on it.

"Yeah, there is definitely extra motivation there," he said.

"Having been here for the last four years I know how much it would mean to the fans and the whole community.

"When you talk to people you know how hungry they are for success and no-one would love it more than the fans - and the players and staff would love to deliver it for them.

"I absolutely love it here. I love the people and I'm really settled and that makes a massive difference to how you play your football.

"Hopefully I've shown that to people on the pitch and we're desperate to deliver for people."



***"Having been here for the last four years I know how much it would mean to the fans and the whole community"***

# THE MONTH AHEAD

## ANDREW MORRISON

As we head into the split we sit top of the league and five points clear with all to play for. The month ahead presents five huge fixtures against some very tough opponents who we have had some great recent encounters with.

### 07/04/23 GLENTORAN (H)

Our first game of the split will also be our penultimate home game of the season as we take on Glentoran at Inver Park

The last time we face the East Belfast side we ran out victorious at The Oval as Lee Bonis headed us to a 1-0 win in what proved to be then Manager Mick McDermott's final game in charge.

This upcoming meeting could be very different to our other meetings this season with Rodney McAree now at the helm.

Of those previous encounter we remain tied with our upcoming opponents with both sides picking up four points from the three games.

Key players to watch out for include the familiar face of Conor McMenamin who has been a star player in the Irish league for a few seasons now whilst Niall McGinn has been in fine form since joining the Glens in the January window.



### 11/04/23 CLIFTONVILLE (A)

In our second game of the split we go to the scene of our last league defeat, Solitude.

In what seems like a long time ago we traveled away to Cliftonville on January 2nd and despite a promising performance on the day, we left with nothing.

Tieman Lynch and the side will be hoping to rectify that defeat and get a result to match the performance this time round against the side with the best home record in the league this season.

However, there is plenty of reason to be optimistic as the Inver Reds have been in superb form away this campaign and rank top for points taken on the road this year.

Meanwhile many fans will look back fondly to our convincing 4-0 over the same opponents back in our first meeting of 2022/23.

## 14/04/23 CRUSADERS (A)

The Inver Reds have fond memories at Seaview this season having won the County Antrim Shield at the ground in January.

However, when it comes to playing the Hatchetmen we have had our difficulties this season. A 1-1 draw away and a 0-0 draw have proved Stephen Baxter's side are capable of a result.

Meanwhile a 3-1 win at Inver Park has also shown that our squad is more than capable of taking all three points from this opposition.

With the North Belfast side still hopeful of qualifying for Europe the preview of the Irish Cup final next month looks set to be a tough encounter.



## 21/04/23 LINFIELD (H)

At time of writing Linfield represent our closest rivals at the top of the league. Furthermore they are also the opponent we have faced the most this season.

In five games we have lost just one of our match-ups this season but this upcoming game could be the most important of the lot.

Linfield are fresh off the back of scoring 12 goals in their last two games and seem to have hit form at just the right time of the season and with the likes of Chris McKee and Joel Cooper leading the line they prove a threat for anyone.

That said, this game will also see the best defence of the league take on the best attack, so will it be the unstoppable force or the immovable object?



## 29/04/23 COLERAINE (A)

Away to Coleraine it about as difficult as it gets when it comes to final games of the season and our recent 0-0 draw against the same opponents shows just why.

Oran Kearney's side are the only away team to have won at Inver Park this season and whilst this game is at the Showgrounds, they are one of a handful of teams to take all three points from us.

In fact, with just two goals against them in our three meetings this season we face a tough game on matchday 38.

However, the form and ability the Inver Reds have showcased this season should give everyone faith in getting a result in what could be a dramatic final day





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# TEAMMATES WITH ANDY RYAN

## ANDREW MORRISON



### **WORST DRIVER: SHAUN WANT**

*"He is the only person who has driven me around much, but even at that I think it is safe to say that nobody in the squad could be worse than him."*

### **LEAST ORGANISED: THOMAS MAGUIRE**

*"Everyday he forgets something for training, whether it's his boots, vest or shin pads there is always something that he doesn't have with him."*



### **CHEAPSKATE: FUAD SULE**

*"He refuses to drive any of the lads anywhere, but on the rare occasion that he does, he tries to charge you for petrol money!"*

### **WORST DRESSED: TOMAS COSGROVE**

*"His gear is absolutely shocking, I have already seen a few things that have looked terrible, I'm now convinced that he gets dressed in the dark."*



### **WORST TASTE IN MUSIC: LEROY MILLAR**

*"There are a few in the squad but one time in the car park I caught Leroy in his car listening to country and western music so it has to be him."*

### **MOST VAIN: SHAUN WANT**

*"I live with Shaun so I'm always waiting on him to get ready and I can never get him away from the mirror."*



### **TOUGHEST: ALBERT WATSON**

*"There is only one answer and that is Albert Watson because he is a big guy and there is no way you would want to mess with him."*

### **WORST HABIT: BJ BANDA**

*"BJ never stops farting, it is disgusting and the amount he does it he has to have problems with his stomach."*



# CLUB HONOURS

## LARNE FOOTBALL CLUB & LARNE OLYMPIC

Highest League Position: 3rd (1925/1926) Post War – 4th (1976/77, 1986/87, 2020/21)

Ulster Cup Winners (Twice): (1949/50, 1987/88)

County Antrim Shield Winners (Twice): (2020/21, 2021/22)

B Division/Bluefin Sport Championship (Second Tier) Champions (11 times): (1954/55, 1956/57, 1963/64, 1964/65, 1965/66, 1966/67, 1967/68, 1968/69, 1969/70, 1970/71, 1971/72, 2018/19)

Steel & Sons Cup Winners (11 times): 1909/10, 1941/42, 1942/43, 1956/57, 1958/59, 1959/60, 1964/65, 1968/69, 1969/70, 1970/71, 1971/72

George Wilson Cup Winner (4 times): 1958/59, 1959/60, 1968/69, 1970/71

Louis Moore Cup Winners (Twice): 1956/57 (Shared with Banbridge Town), 1958/59

Intermediate Cup Winners (3 times): 1942/43, 1958/59, 1969/70

Irish Youth Cup (Once): 1977/78

Irish Junior Cup (Once): 1900/01

Irish Cup Finalists (6 times): 1927/28, 1934/35, 1986/87, 1988/89, 2004/05, 2020/21

League Cup Finalists (Twice): 1991/92, 2003/04

LARNE LADIES (Formed 2004, Re-Formed 2018)

NIWFA Division 1 Champions (Once): 2021

NIWFA Division North 2 Champions (Once): 2018

Intermediate B League Champions (Once): 2007

Intermediate B League Cup Winners (Once): 2006

Intermediate B League Runners-Up: 2006

Intermediate A League Cup Runners-Up: 2007

Division 1 Cup Runners-Up: 2012, 2013

NIWFA North 2 League Cup Runners-Up: 2018

(Larne Olympic) NIWFA Division 4 Cup Runners Up: 2019

# CLUB DIRECTORY

## Larne Football Club Board of Directors:

Chairman: Gareth Clements  
Vice Chairman & NIFL and Co. Antrim FA Representative: Andrew Scullion  
Secretary: Neil Clarke  
Director (Finance): Jayne Liddle  
Director (Youth): John Ross  
Director (Facilities): Andrew McNickle  
Director & Club Chaplain (Media): Ian Cahoon  
Director (Player Welfare): Lyn Kernohan  
Director (Commercial): David Hunter  
Director (Supporter Liaison and Community Engagement): Joel Neill  
Director (Girl's Academy): Amanda Morton

Honorary President: Archie Smyth  
General Manager: Niall Curneen  
Finance Officer: Jayne Liddle  
Assistant Club Secretary: Linda Ross  
1889 Sports and Social Club Managers: Leigh Douglas & Heather Millar  
Administrative Executives: Sara Houston  
Marketing Executives: Chris Liddle, Dean Houston & Andrew Neill  
Media & Marketing Team: Ian Cahoon, Chris Liddle, Jamie Brennan, Caolan Hay, Dean Houston, Lewis McAdam, Kyle McClure, Mark McKillen, Andrew Neill, Ross Nicholson, Mark Strange, Peter Wilson, Jon- Marc Maguire, Andrew Morrison  
Programme Editor: Mark Strange  
Programme Design: Andrew Morrison  
Club Shop: Lynne Carson, Angie McNickle,  
Mental Health Advisor: Tom Magee

Mental Health Champions: Jeff Hughes & Katherine Haveron  
Supporter Liaison Officers: Richard Todd & Margaret Ferguson  
Disability Access Officer: Claire Taggart  
Stadium Maintenance: Gary Hanna, Spencer Allen & Gary James  
Safety Officer: Michael Wilson  
Head Steward: Alan Withers  
Stadium PA: Derek Reid, Ollie Reid & Mark Strange  
Scoreboard: Lewis McAdam & Kyle McClure

## First Team:

Manager: Tiernan Lynch  
Assistant Manager: Seamus Lynch  
Coaches: Gary Haveron & Matthew Crawford  
Goalkeeping Coach: Alan Blayney  
Head Sports Therapist: Michael O'Boyle  
Assistant Sports Therapist: Stuart McCammon  
Club Doctor: Adam McClintock  
Sports Therapist: Joe Crawford  
Sports Massage Therapist: Simeon Paine  
Team Attendant: Martin Bird  
Performance Analyst: Matthew Crawford  
Recruitment and Player Pathways: Gerry Flynn  
Team Caterer: Colin Baxter

## Development Squad (Olympic & U18's)

Head Coach: Keith O'Hara  
Head of Academy: Gary Haveron  
Scholarship Programme Coordinator: Seamus Lynch  
Scholarship Head of Academics: Emmett Clerkin (SGA)

## Women's Football Committee:

Secretary: Linda Ross  
Manager: William Noble  
Finance Officer: Sam Slade  
Youth Liaison Officer: Elaine Hamill-Stewart  
Kit Officer: Elaine Kernohan  
Player Representative: Katherine Haveron  
Media & Marketing: Kyle McClure

## First Team:

First Team Manager: William Noble  
Coach: Gary Hood  
Team Attendant: Elaine Kernohan  
Goalkeeper Coach: Bradley McAdam

## Olympic Team:

Head Coach: Helen Curneen

## Larne Youth:

Head of Academy: Gary Haveron  
Head of Girls Academy: Amanda Morton  
Chairman: John Ross  
Secretary: Andrew McNickle  
Child Protection Officers: Andrew McNickle, Sam Slade & Elaine Hamill-Stewart

## Matchday Volunteers Team:

Donna Marie Maguire, Karen Clements, Lynne Carson, Angie McNickle, Julianne Liken, Jodie McKinstry, Chris McAdam, Grant Slinn, Leah King, Abbie Best, Richard Todd, Derek McWhirter, Kate Maxwell, Teah Maxwell, Ellie Clements & Trevor Black

# UEFA TEN POINT PLAN

Larne Football Club supports and endorses the UEFA 10 Point Plan. We will not tolerate racism/sectarianism and will take action against those engaged in such behaviour by removing them from the ground and reporting such behaviour to the relevant authorities. As part of our ongoing commitment to the I.F.A.'s Football For All campaign, 'Kick it Out and to equality, anyone caught making racist or sectarian comments may be arrested, prosecuted and banned from the club. If you hear any abuse of this nature, please report it to your nearest steward or call the help line number 0800 169 9414. Thank you for your cooperation and support.

The plan sets out a number of measures that clubs can take to combat the problem of racism. 1. Issue a statement saying the club will not tolerate racism; spelling out the action it will take against those engaged in racist chanting. The statement should be printed in all matchday programmes and displayed permanently and prominently around the ground. 2. Make public address announcements condemning racist chanting at matches. 3. Make it a condition for season-ticket holders that they don't take part in racist chanting. 4. Take action to prevent racist literature being distributed in and around the ground. 5. Take disciplinary action against those who take part in racist abuse. 6. Contact other clubs to make sure they understand the club's policy on racism. 7. Encourage a common strategy for stewards and police for dealing with racist abuse. 8. Remove all racist graffiti from the ground as a matter of urgency. 9. Adopt an equal opportunities policy in relation to employment and service provision. 10. Work with all other groups and agencies, such as players union, supporters, schools, voluntary organisations, youth clubs, sponsors, local authorities, local businesses and police to develop pro-active programmes and make progress to raise awareness of campaigning to eliminate racial abuse and discrimination.




# LARNE NI SUPPORTERS CLUB

Larne NISC run buses to all the Larne FC away matches, picking up at Larne Rangers Club and the Larne FC Supporters Club on Station road.

**TO BOOK CONTACT -**  
A club member or check out Church End Chat for details



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## Monday & Wednesday

4 - 7yrs

5:15pm - 6:00pm

8 - 11yrs

6:15pm - 7:15pm

Teens & Adults

7:30pm - 8:30pm

## Friday

Sparring Class (All Ages)

6:00pm - 7:00pm





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