



**This week, Ireland's U21s will set off for the prestigious Maurice Revello Toulon Tournament in France as they enter the 12 team competition for the first time since 2002.**

One player who will be on the plane to Provence this week is talented UCD defender Liam Scales after the 20-year old was selected in Stephen Kenny's squad ahead of the tournament which begins for the Republic with a **tricky clash against China on June 3rd**.

"I'm really looking forward to it," Scales told *Pundit Arena* as he prepared for not only the tournament but for his club's clash with Dundalk on Monday night.



"We leave for France on Saturday. It's such a prestigious tournament and some of the world's best players have played in it and I think with our group we have a great chance of qualification like we avoided France and England so hopefully, we can do well."

Entering the competition for the first time in 17 years Ireland will certainly be looking to impress against some of world football's biggest hitters with the likes of Brazil's U23s and England's U20s involved in Toulon.

Scales has been a part of all three of Stephen Kenny's U21 squads since he took over the role in January, being included for the home-based training squad as well as the European Championship qualifier against Luxembourg in March.



The talented defender is clearly well-liked by the Kenny, but how has Scales found working alongside the former Dundalk and Shamrock Rovers manager?

"I've found him great, he's a great coach, he's very thorough in everything. He really wants to get his point across and get you playing the way he likes to play."

"You can see with the job he's done at Dundalk and other places before how successful he's been so yeah I really enjoy working with him, he's a really nice man too."



Scales was on the bench for Ireland's first competitive game under Kenny, an impressive 3-0 victory over Luxembourg in their European Championship qualifying opener.

Although expected to win the game, the Boys in Green looked sharp in possession, strong in defence and clinical in attack as they proved far too much for their opponents and impressed the onlooking support at Tallaght Stadium, making it difficult to believe that it was the first game they had played together as a squad.

Scales feels that Ireland's togetherness is a mixture of both the work done in helping to bond the squad by Kenny, but also the ease at which the players feel in each others company following their first week as a group.

"Yeah, I think it's a bit of Stephen's influence and us as players too," explained Scales.

"I think before the Luxembourg game we were in for almost a week training, in the hotel together every day, eating breakfast and lunch every day and even with the recovery sessions we were just in each others company for a full week and it helped to bond the squad together and in the game against Luxembourg we played together really well as a team."

"I think it's a bit of both though, Stephen has an influence on us as well like with team bonding and stuff so yeah."



The win over Luxembourg instilled huge confidence in the side and acted as a perfect opener for Kenny's young and vibrant side.

According to Scales, the victory, although it came against a team perceived as being weaker, was vitally important and will act as an excellent base for the Boys in Green to kick on at the tournament in June.

"Luxembourg could have been a potential slip up. People look at Luxembourg and think 'oh right well that'll be an easy game' but if you look back at their recent results they drew with one of the strongest U21s sides in Europe in France so it wasn't an easy game at all but we were told that by Stephen."

"That was a real point he hammered home that it was never going to be an easy game and it showed like, we played really well. It would've been nice to have a couple more games under our belts but look we'll go into the Toulon tournament with a 100% record so you can't ask for much more than that."

The young defender's inclusion in the Irish setup has come off the back a tremendous season in the First Division with UCD which saw him included in the team of the year, as the students gained promotion.



This season Scales has made the step up to the Premier Division with the students and although they have found victories hard to come by, he has been one of their standout performers.

He explained that although the jump up to the top-flight has been difficult, the defender has enjoyed the challenge of, as he puts it "doing a lot more defending"

"On a personal level it has been a step up from the First Division and we knew that coming in. As a defender, I suppose I'm doing a lot more defending because we weren't as dominant as we had been last season in the First Division which has helped me and has improved that side of my game."

"It's hard to keep the faith when the results aren't going your way and we've been unlucky at times but in general, I am really enjoying the step up even though we're not winning as many games but it's enjoyable and it's challenging."



Scales' performances at the heart of the UCD defence have not only been catching the eye of Irish fans but also garnering the attention of one of the biggest clubs in the world.

In March, it was reported that Scales and his teammate Neil Farrugia had been invited for trials and Premier League champions Manchester City.

Scales outlined that he wasn't in a position to discuss the massive opportunity but there's no doubt that it's validation for the 20-year old as he continues to grow and progress in the game.

**TACKLE YOUR FEELINGS**

**TACKLE YOUR FEELINGS AND TAKE CONTROL OF YOUR MENTAL WELLBEING**

[CLICK HERE TO START YOUR JOURNEY TODAY](#)

LOGIN >
REGISTER >

All personal data collated under this Promotion will be used solely for the purposes of this Promotion by the Promoter and/or by any agent appointed by it to assist with running the Promotion on behalf of the Promoter and will not be disclosed to a third party for any other purpose. An entrant's personal data will be handled in accordance with all relevant data protection legislation currently in force and with the Promoter's privacy policy, available at: <http://www.rugbyplayersireland.com/its-services/privacy>. Personal data shall be stored in our email marketing client. This system shall also render our opt-in email as part of GDPR.



**ABOUT OISIN MCQUEIRNS**

Oisín McQueirns is a digital journalist at Pundit Arena. Massive fan of Leeds United, Ric Flair and Trusting The Process. Contact him here [oisin@punditarena.com](mailto:oisin@punditarena.com)