



# Architect McMillan out to redraw frontiers as Lilies aim for stars in Europe

John Fallon

AS A qualified architect, the dilapidated Oriel Park represents a project of personal interest for David McMillan, but the striker is perfectly happy doing his bit for Dundalk by redesigning their history books.

The 27-year-old has been instrumental in propelling the Lilywhites to the brink of a new frontier for any League of Ireland club, his four goals in the last two rounds of the UEFA Champions League setting up a play-off against Legia Warsaw next week for a place in the hallowed group stages.

His ascent has won McMillan new friends far and wide – an enterprising Russian-based agent tried enlisting him as a client through Facebook – yet the quietly-spoken striker is

still barely recognised when he crosses schoolyards of children to undertake a building inspection as part of his day-job.

Beating the Polish champions over two legs would change all that.

Although much of the attention since Dundalk slayed BATE Borisov last week has centred on the €6m windfall secured and the fallback of Europa League group action, it's the giants of Spain, Italy and Germany McMillan has in his sights.

"I don't see it as a free game even if it's worth a few million to the club," the Dubliner said about the Legia double-header, first up in Dublin a week today.

"It would be fantastic to have the Europa League but, for us, the Champions League is the Premier competition. No Irish team has been there before and we've a huge

opportunity.

"That's not to talk down the Europa League because it's fantastic but sides don't put out their strongest teams.

"Whereas, in the Champions League, be it Barcelona or Juventus, they do it every single game. They all take it massively seriously.

"And what a great chance to go and play in those stadiums, something that we may never get again. It's great to have the Europa League, it's a fantastic achievement in itself, but why not aim higher and keep going for it?"

At a time of such euphoria, it says much about the plight of the modern-day footballer in Ireland that the livelihood of the SSE Airtricity/SWAI Player of the Month award for July remains so precarious.

His contract, as with most of his team-mates, officially expires in two months' time and is only certain to be extended due to their European foray into the winter.

McMillan took the pragmatic approach in his late teens of prioritising his studies while many of his peers followed the neon lights of the English meat-market.

A decade later and, despite his stock rising, that mindset has stayed intact.

"If a full-time opportunity came, it would have to be a really brilliant one, because where I am at the moment is, it doesn't really get that much better," said the player who works 25 hours per week with Dublin-based O'Brien Finucane Architects.

"I am really happy with the combination of football and work and I wouldn't think of leaving

unless it was for something astronomical.

"I am progressing to try and become registered with the RIAI (Royal Institute of Architects Ireland), which would make me more qualified. It means I could go work on my own in the future and that's what I'm working towards."

If and when he finally does decide to give his undivided attention to architecture, McMillan concedes that only then will he fully appreciate his scoring exploits on the European stage.

His five strikes make him the top scorer in Champions League history for an Irish-based player and his overall total of seven across both competitions shuttles him to within four of Glen Crowe's all-time record.

He'll have another eight games this season alone to create more history.

"It's crazy really because I wouldn't have had a clue about any of these things starting out," he admitted with typical modesty.

"When we played FH from Iceland in the second round, someone was told me I'd become Dundalk's scorer in Europe with four.

"Then obviously I went ahead of Jason Byrne and Glen Crowe for Champions League top scorer in the last round, which is another thing I didn't know about or wouldn't have expected.

"These things are great, but it's the end of your career when you look back on those sort of things and acknowledge them.

"For now, I'm just happy to have two more games in the Champions League to hopefully maintain that run."



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David McMillan with his Player of the Month trophy for July