

WOMEN'S FOOTBALL

ISSUE 37

MAGAZINE

MAY 2020



#StaySafeStayHome

NEVILLE LEAVING LIONESSES

Marissa Thomas looks at how Phil Neville can redeem himself before he leaves the England post, Charlotte Stacey tells us what makes women's football so special, Georgia Stevens lets us in on what she has been up to during lockdown and Allie Coker is back with a tongue-in-cheek 'how to' guide

THE WOMEN'S FOOTBALL MAGAZINE



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Hello and welcome to Issue 35!

Hello everyone, welcome to our latest issue.

We hope you are all keeping safe and healthy during these difficult times.

It has been a mixed month for women's football. Phil Neville was leaving his position as England boss at the end of the contract, Euro 2021 is officially now moved to 2022 and Reading have been the first WSL team to be furloughed.

We were disappointed to hear the news from AFC Fylde. We are sending all our love and support to the players and staff of AFC Fylde Women and we hope you get the support you deserve. You can read all about the shocking news later in the issue.

Coming up in the issue, Marissa Thomas looks at how Phil Neville can redeem himself in his final year as Lionesses boss, Ali Rampling interviews Sunderland's Keira Ramshaw and Allie Coker has a tongue in cheek look at how to run a women's football team.

Enjoy the issue and keep safe!

Helen Rowe-Willcocks

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WOMEN'S SUPER LEAGUE



From Fan Photos to Fanfiction: This is what makes women's football so special



By Charlotte Stacey

Perhaps it is the growing accessibility of the game, the sportsmanship of the players, the personal flourishes peppered throughout the fan base. Or maybe it was a childhood hobby, the spectacle of the recent World Cup, or even an enthrallment with that infamous Beckham film that sparked curiosity. However it came to be, it is safe to say that interest in women's football is the highest it's been in recent times.

With televised coverage beginning to shape up, and the birth of applications such as the FA Player, women's football is more accessible than ever. What is being established is a movement in which female players, especially those in the national side, are breaking in to the mainstream media. It was pretty pleasing to see Ellen

White, Nikita Parris and Jill Scott appear alongside their male counterparts in a recent food delivery service advert. It seems that the world is finally opening its eyes to the power of women in sport.

As gratifying as it is to see the Lionesses deservedly becoming household names, what is more exciting is the sheer number of people that they, and the sport as a whole, is bringing together. As the sport grows, so does the very foundation on which it sits, its upstanding fan base. Take for instance, January's sell-out London derby or the Lionesses epic at Wembley Stadium last year.

"Wembley was unimaginable" says presenter and producer Helen Hardy, "75,000 fans screaming and waving flags", unthinkable even just a few years ago.

It is difficult to pinpoint exactly what it is that makes women's football so endearing, it surely varies from person to person. But the women's game boasts a certain charm that is seemingly not reflected elsewhere. It could be argued that although male and female players play the same sport, they play a slightly different game.

When comparing the two, there is an identifiable variance in both flow and endurance, with 'Edge of the Area' blog founder Lucy Fuller quite aptly distinguishing, "how often do you see women rolling around on the floor trying to milk every challenge? Very rarely."

But more than a match itself is the magic of women's football as a whole. The WSL now flaunts some of the best female players in the world, and supporters are able to get up close and personal to the action for a minimal cost.

"I think this is really good value for money when compared to how much it costs to go to matches in the Premier League" says frequent attendee Paul Donegan.

Being able to see the world's finest for such a reasonable fee undoubtedly factors in the observably expanding crowds. However, it is perhaps the goodwill and nature of the players that sees them return.

"[Players] always generously give their time at the end of the game to interact with fans" comments 'Since 71' founder and girls youth football coach Stuart Barker. In fact, Barker's comment was echoed by many, well documenting that typically, players are liberal with their time for fans at the end of matches. Furthermore, this act is usually carried out regardless of outcome, with one supporter noting, "not only did players from [team] come over for signatures and photos, the players from the opposition did as well."

Whilst this is certainly not expected, it is absolutely appreciated. A gesture that quite simply outweighs anything money could buy. As the game grows, Fuller considers that it may be "harder for players to stay involved" with this full-time tradition. This would certainly be a shame, and 'The Women's Football Magazine'



editor-in-chief Helen Rowe-Willcocks surely speaks for the masses when she adds she “hopes it’s something that we never lose from the game”.

But whether this custom diminishes or not, these personal touches will always remain at the very heart of women’s football. Yet gameday is not the only time in which players take the time to involve themselves with their fan base. Many female players are no strangers to social media. Of these, a large number use their accounts to interact with supporter’s groups, blogs, and, in some cases, individual fans. The impact of these little acknowledgements here and there cannot be underestimated, especially in the current uncertain climate. One fan comments that the content provided by players over the course of the lockdown, “clearly demonstrate[s] that our teams do appreciate supporters”, and it is most comforting to speculate that the gratitude fans have for players is reciprocated.

Player and supporter interactions are quite perfectly summed up by ‘It’s Not Soccer’ podcast host Hannah Inglis, “the time players commit after games to sign autographs, and on social media to engage with fans; they truly are inspiring a generation.”

Whether they aspired to be or not, these women are fast becoming role models, and it seems that they certainly value this. Unlike the youth of yesteryear, children are able to watch and engage with female “athletes at the top of their game”; it is rather wonderful that “young girls have these accessible role models my generation never did”, affirms Hardy.

The younger generation indeed makes up a large part of the fan base. Women’s games are known to attract families, and once one has attended a match, it is easy to see why. If the players are friendly, then the fans are positively cordial. “I’ve never once felt unsafe at a women’s game” says Inglis, a nod to the characteristically harmonious atmosphere felt at a women’s match, unlike the hostility sometimes endured at a men’s.

However, that is not to say that there are no welcoming communities within the men’s game. There absolutely are. But these tend to be formed as a part of a single club, as opposed to the fan base as a whole.

In comparison, spectators at women’s games are respectful of each other, regardless of who they are there to support.

“I have never noticed any issues between different sides supporters” says Donegan, who goes on to note his observation of a mixed stand at the Manchester derby. A scene that simply would not exist in the Premier League. What is more, this merging does not just occur at the grounds, “fans from different clubs get together before and after matches” observes Rowe-Willcocks, showing that an opposing preference but a shared passion can quite amicably exist side by side.

As is the case in all sport, loyalties and rivalries run through the women’s game. Of course, this is an important part of healthy competition.

“There is a banter rivalry there but there is no malice” notes Rowe-Willcocks. Indeed the almost neighbourly nature of the fan base means supporters of different clubs can voice their views without the fear of repercussions.

“Everyone has their own opinions”, says Fuller, “fans can more often than not argue the points in a pleasant way”. This is certainly seen within typical footballing practices, such as chanting, on gameday.

Unlike the men’s game, pitch side antics remain clean. Albeit they may be a little quieter than the warble of the men’s, supporters’ clubs “invest a lot of time writing creative chants in honour of their teams” says Barker.

Yet these chants are solely supportive of their respective clubs, and never become derogatory towards players or fans of the opposition. Patrons of the game would surely be disappointed to see these turn into anything more sinister. However,

supporters recognise that perhaps there is ground for the rousing noise of a men's game, and the mutual respect of the women's, to meet somewhere in the middle.

Inclusion is arguably the most important aspect of women's football. The women's game is, without exception, completely inclusive, and there is absolutely no room for anything else. With a number of female players openly regarding their sexuality, the LGBTQ+ community is well represented on both sides of the side-lines.

Having openly gay role models is undoubtably a comfort to anyone who is perhaps struggling in coming to terms with their own personal affairs. With players leading by example, and supporters clubs supporting Pride events, the fan base is rightly proud of its sanctuary for the LGBTQ+ community. Delving a little deeper, there is an almost romanticised element that runs through the fan base. A side that is perhaps a little less interested in footballing ability, and little more interested in the personal lives of players.

It is not unheard of for fans of any sport to develop an affection for a particular player, and women's football is certainly no exception to this. But instead of embarrassment or closeted admiration, having an attraction to a player of the same sex is freely accepted, and can open doors to meeting likeminded people. In a similar fashion, some fans enjoy writing fanfiction. A way to perhaps develop a closer

connection with their favourite players through storytelling, developing their own versions of player friendships and relationships. Fan pages, player edits and adoration videos also make up a large part of the sport's online existence.

Of course, this is not to say that all women's football supporters engage with such content; it may not be everybody's cup of tea. Yet it is not met with any resistance within the community. Fans are safe in the knowledge that if it is a pastime they enjoy, they are absolutely welcome to indulge. Right now we find ourselves in a situation no one could have possibly imagined, a time that is completely alien to all of us, whether we are usually on the field or in the stands.

The full extent of damage to the game will remain unknown long after this is all over, and it is likely that what returns will be slightly different to what we left behind. But with that being said, there is one constant certainty that remains; from the grassroots up, being a part of the women's game is something altogether unique.

"We are applauded for our different walks of life" says Inglis, a statement that truly captures the very essence of women's football; a community that welcomes all.

So, whether you are completely new or old hat, whether you are young or old, a player or fan, or both; it simply does not matter. There is room for everyone, and we wouldn't want it any other way.





Finishing the 2019/20 season: The latest



The latest advice about finishing the Women's Super League season has been discussed.

It is believed that the WSL 2019/20 season could be completed over a six-week period, with the 45 games left played behind closed doors at one central base.

St George's Park is understood to be under consideration to host teams and matches.

The remaining options for this campaign were outlined to WSL clubs during a conference call, including the possibility of having to void the season.

An FA spokesperson told BBC Sport: "We are in the early stages of assessing what options are available for when it is safe and

appropriate to resume the FA WSL and FA WC seasons.

"This includes the potential use of neutral venues.

"Any scenarios are under constant review in line with the latest government advice.

"We are in regular contact with all clubs and the safety and welfare of everybody involved remains our priority."

No WSL fixtures have been played since February 23 because of the spread of the coronavirus pandemic.

WSL clubs have between six and nine league matches remaining this season.

Finishing the 2019/20 season:

The latest

A new temporary rule could be introduced to the WSL and Women's Championship once the competitions restart according to Sky Sports.

Matches are expected to initially be staged behind-closed-doors and played within a relatively short period, putting a real strain on clubs' squads, particularly in the FA Women's Championship where many players are part-time.

To help ease the added fitness demands which the hectic end to the season could cause and to reduce the risk of injury, it is understood that world football's governing body FIFA are set to alter the rule for permitted substitutes from three changes per match to five.

It is thought that the proposed change, which will also cover the 2020/2021 campaign, has been referred to the International Football Association Board (IFAB) who will now make a decision on whether this can be approved.

The proposal could see FA Women's Super League and FA Women's Championship clubs make up to five substitutions per game during four separate periods, those being half-time and at up to three other intervals during the match.

In this season's Women's FA Cup, clubs will be allowed to make a sixth substitution if extra-time must be played to decide the winner, that change would have to be made during the additional 30 minutes. Allowing a maximum of six substitutions may also be extended into next season's competition, as well as the knockout stages of the FA Women's Continental League Cup.

It is hoped that a decision on the temporary rule change could be made by the International Football Association Board (IFAB) soon.



WSL table

as it stands

		P	W	D	L	GF	GA	GD	P
1	Manchester City	16	13	1	2	39	9	30	40
2	Chelsea	15	12	3	0	47	11	36	39
3	Arsenal	15	12	0	3	40	13	27	36
4	Manchester United	14	7	2	5	24	12	12	23
5	Reading	14	6	3	5	21	24	-3	21
6	Tottenham Hotspur	15	6	2	7	15	24	-9	20
7	Everton	14	6	1	7	21	21	0	19
8	West Ham United	14	5	1	8	19	34	-15	16
9	Brighton & Hove Albion	16	3	4	9	11	30	-19	13
10	Bristol City	14	2	3	9	9	38	-29	9
11	Birmingham City	13	2	1	10	5	23	-18	7
12	Liverpool	14	1	3	10	8	20	-12	6

— Champions League spots

— Relegation zone



Reading Women become first WSL club to furlough players



© Joerdeli Photography | Daniela Porcelli

Reading have become the first club in the Women's Super League to put players on the government's furlough scheme.

The club have said they will pay the remaining 20% of players' salaries.

At the club, the men's U23s players have also been furloughed along with large numbers of the non-playing staff.

Reading are currently fifth in the WSL table, with 21 points from 14 games.

No WSL fixtures have been played since February 23 because of the spread of the coronavirus pandemic.

The Football Association has said that its consultation with clubs and stakeholders is ongoing.

Several clubs in the Women's Championship have already furloughed players but Reading are the first to do so in the top tier.

Aidan Boxall appointed West Ham General manager



West Ham United Women have announced the appointment Aiden Boxall.

Boxall will be the women's team general manager and moves to the Women's Super League from New City College where he was a deputy group curriculum director.

He takes over from Russ Fraser who has left the Hammers after 18 months as the general manager.

Boxall told the official website: "I'm delighted to join West Ham United as the women's general manager.

"This is an unbelievable opportunity to join a Club that has recently turned professional and help to further build an infrastructure to take this Club to where we want to be."

Jordan Nobbs signs new Arsenal contract



England midfielder Jordan Nobbs has extended her contract with Women's Super League side Arsenal.

The 27-year-old joined the WSL club from Sunderland in 2019 and has scored 66 goals in 206 appearances.

Speaking to the official website, Jordan Nobbs said: "Arsenal is my everything now.

"I think football has overtaken my life since the age of seven, but I think I've got Arsenal in my blood now and I'm very proud to say that. I think I've got some great years to come."

Head coach Joe Montemurro added: "Putting football aside, she personifies what Arsenal means.

"To have players staying here for pretty much their whole career is something that's very, very special from a coaching perspective.

"They're unique situations in coaching and in forming groups to have players who are engrained in the fabric of the club and we wish her all the best going forward.

"She's an important part of our making as a squad."

Good Things Come in Small Packages



With the highest number of right footed goals in WSL history, and a notably impressive comeback to both league and international football, England and Arsenal midfielder Jordan Nobbs has rooted herself as an essential figure in the minds of many.

Jordan Nobbs is a big presence in a petite frame. Standing at 5'3, arguably Nobbs is perhaps not the most physically intimidating player. But what she lacks in stature, she makes up for with a bold conviction in outwitting the most aggressive defenders.

Her progressive approach and unwavering resolve have her pegged as one of the league's most apt central midfielders. Possessing a winning combination of creativity and sharp foresight, Nobbs is, more often than not, one of the most innovative players on the field. Her knack of darting into threatening positions, paired with her ability to create a play from a single touch, is somewhat worrying for a

defensive line.

Nobbs' first touch is first class. She is clever in her take, spraying dinks and links all over the place, and she finishes them with daring runs others perhaps do not have the nerve to make. Her game is quick, yet she is not hasty. Nobbs' initiative both on and off the ball means she is problematic.

With her capacity to both read and create scoring opportunities, it really is no wonder she boasts such a remarkable record. Her accuracy from range has seen her sink more than a few screamers. After a lengthy recovery from her ACL injury, it was more than pleasing to see Nobbs return to the national side. Clearly not one to take the easy option, Nobbs immediately threw herself back into the thick of it, and in doing so, has quickly re-established herself as one of the Lionesses key players.

Casting back to the SheBelieves Cup, Nobbs certainly made an impression. Her performance against the USWNT in

particular springs to mind. After being subbed on for the latter part of the match, Nobbs noticeably changed the dynamic of the Lionesses game.

Promptly tightening up communication, wasting no time in making those nifty trademark runs, and assisting in the Lionesses best chance of the night, Nobbs plainly reminded us of what we had been missing. Nobbs demonstrates a true skill for leadership. Having captained the national side at youth levels, as well as regularly heading up Arsenal in the absence of their usual skipper, there is no denying that she is, effortlessly, a leader.

It is there in every run she makes, in every frank call to the officials, in every fibre of her being. It is perhaps ill-fated that Nobbs has not yet had the opportunity to don the armband, serving her own captaincy, at senior level. But her distinguished form alongside her experience in the role, speculates that she is surely high up the

ranks to succeed her teammates, at both international and club level, when the time comes. Off the pitch Nobbs is lovable.

Her down to earth demeanour and her laid-back nature, evident in every interview, is a far cry from the Jordan Nobbs seen on the field. All business on game day, all laughs everywhere else. But it is this sense of amusement, alongside her honest character, that makes her a firm fan favourite.

And her punditry is not bad either. It is perhaps a little frustrating that Nobbs' road back to full fitness has had to stop so abruptly, but it is of course for the most paramount reason.

Although the future of football is uncertain at the moment, Lionesses fans and Gooners should not fret. For when it is up and running, one thing is for certain. Jordan Nobbs is a weapon of a player to have in our arsenal.





FA to study why ACL injuries are more common in women

The Football Association has launched an audit and formed an advisory group to study why anterior cruciate ligament injuries are more common in female footballers.

Women are eight times more likely to injure their ACLs than male athletes.

Twelve players in the Women's Super League and Women's Championship have suffered from the serious knee injury this season.

Players who are currently rehabilitating following ACL injuries include Manchester City defender Aoife Manion, Bristol City's Abi Harrison and Brighton's Ellie Brazil.

The FA says the audit is currently in its early stages and will be conducted by "a group of experts from institutions involved in producing research around female athletes and/or women's football."

The FA added: "We will then be able to assess any trends with particular injuries, including ACL injuries. We can then analyse rates of injuries, comparing to previous audits in men's and women's football and other sports."



FA gives an update on turnover for year ending July 2019



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English soccer's Football Association (FA) has revealed total turnover of UK£467.2 million (US\$580.2 million) for the year ending July 31st 2019.

The revenue figure marks a steep increase on the UK£375.5 million (US\$466.4 million) recorded for the 2017/18 financial year, owing largely to the national governing body's new domestic and international broadcast deals for the FA Cup club knockout tournament and England national team fixtures.

All told, the FA's broadcast income was up UK£116.7 million to UK£262.6 million (US\$326.2 million). New FA Cup deals struck during the year with UK free-to-air broadcasters the BBC and ITV mean all domestic and international broadcast rights for the competition are now tied up until 2024.

However, sponsorship income fell UK£15.7 million to UK£63.4 million (US\$78.7 million), which the FA said was due to Fifa World Cup bonus payments in the previous year and the expiry of several commercial agreements at the end of the 2017/18 season, including the organisation's headline partnership with carmaker Vauxhall.

The FA has since found a replacement for Vauxhall in the form of telecommunications giant BT, while 2018/19 also ushered in new sponsorship deals with the likes of food delivery service Deliveroo and banking company Barclays, which is paying a reported UK£10 million to title sponsor the Women's Super League (WSL).

The FA ended the year with an operating profit of UK£62.7 million (US\$77.8 million), a marked improvement on the UK£1.7 million (US\$2.1 million) operating loss for the previous year.

The positive financial results allowed the FA to invest a record UK£165.6 million (US\$205.7 million) back into every level of English soccer, although just UK£11 million (US\$13.6 million) of that total went towards women's soccer, the equivalent of just under seven per cent of the overall figure.

By way of comparison, UK£51 million (US\$63.3 million) was spent on FA competition prize funds, UK£19 million (US\$23.6 million) on facilities and UK£8 million (US\$9.9 million) on coaching and participation. A further UK£25 million (US\$31 million) went to other soccer organisations, UK£17 million (US\$21.1 million) to county football associations and UK£5 million (US\$6.2 million) to disability, equality and child protection.

The FA's financial statement was accompanied by statements from chairman Greg Clarke and chief executive Mark Bullingham, predating the Covid-19 pandemic.

Commenting on the financial results, Bullingham said: "We're fortunate to be in a very good position financially thanks to several strong commercial partnerships in the 2018/19 season.

"This means that for seven years in a row, we were able to invest record amounts of money back into the game at all levels."



CHAMPIONSHIP



Virtual opening evening for Aston Villa Women's academy



A virtual open evening for Aston Villa Women's new elite Academy will take place on Thursday May 7.

Prospective players and parents will be able to “get a feel for the dual careers football and education programme” during the online session.

The Academy offers females aged 16-21 the chance to combine studies with an elite football programme that will take place at the club's training ground—Bodmoor Heath.

The virtual open evening will give an insight into what's on offer, including the pathway through to the first team and the academic opportunities.

It will be ran by Jack Thomas Peel who has been named as he Academy Manager for the Championship side.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the first two phases of trials - scheduled for 29th March and 15th April - have had to be postponed.

To register your interest in attending the virtual open evening, go to www.avfc.co.uk.

Open evening: Thursday, May 7 from 8pm.

Durham Girls Football Academy named champions



Durham Women's FC Girls' Football Academy have been named as National Football Youth League champions for the 2019/20 season.

With the campaign ending prematurely due to the Covid-19 crisis, the Wildcats' academy side—who run in conjunction with Durham Sixth Form Centre—were named as Norther Premier Division champions.

The programme sees students combine playing football with a top class education.

Manager Graham Smith told the official website: "It was a good test for the girls this year.

"We only had one game left to play this season, which everyone was well up for, but we're delighted to have won the league after some really good performances and the girls have been absolutely fantastic.

"They should be really proud of what they've achieved this season."

Championship table

as it stands

		P	W	D	L	GF	GA	GD	P
1	Aston Villa	14	13	1	0	39	11	28	40
2	Sheffield United	14	11	1	2	46	16	30	34
3	Durham	14	10	2	2	33	10	23	32
4	London City Lionesses	15	8	2	5	25	24	1	26
5	London Bees	12	4	3	5	16	19	-3	15
6	Leicester City	15	4	3	8	22	35	-13	15
7	Blackburn	12	3	1	8	13	25	-12	10
8	Crystal Palace	14	2	4	8	15	33	-18	10
9	Lewes	12	2	3	7	10	18	-8	9
10	Coventry United	14	2	3	9	19	35	-16	9
11	Charlton Athletic	12	0	7	5	9	21	-12	7

- Promotion
- Relegation zone

Fifpro: Women's football could be hit much harder than men's



World players' union Fifpro warns that women's football faces "concrete risks" and could be hit much harder by the Covid-19 pandemic than the men's game.

Following the 2019 Women's World Cup, women's football has seen a widespread growth.

But Fifpro's general secretary Jonas Baer-Hoffmann is concerned investments in the women's game may stall.

Speaking to the BBC, Baer-Hoffmann said: "It has been on an upward trend, but a positive trend can still be quite fragile.

"We do see a threat that certain programmes will shut down or not see the same attention as before.

"The long-term consequences [of the pandemic] in terms of the equality and the diversity in our game could be much harder hit on the women's side."

"There are a couple of concrete risks.

"One is a stalling of the investment we've recently seen - we need to still keep building up investment in women's football to sustain professional development.

"We've also seen the postponement of international tournaments.

"The women's game still requires to have these big public events, like a World Cup, Olympics, Euros, because these events are massive platforms on which many players are building their careers.

"That's because it's the only international platform on which they're seen by clubs who might be interested in their services afterwards."

Fifpro released a paper in March outlining the "existential threat" facing the women's game because of the pandemic.

Chief women's football officer Amanda Vandevort added: "Now is the time to have this conversation about women's football. Not in a couple of weeks or a couple of months, now."

"We do have deep concerns about investments in the women's game being reduced or withdrawn."

"Together the industry has to build a common vision. Together we'll achieve sustainable growth."



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NATIONAL PREMIER LEAGUE



THE WOMEN'S
FOOTBALL
MAGAZINE

KEIRA RAMSHAW

Despite finishing the 2017/18 WSL campaign in seventh, comfortably clear of the relegation zone, the following season Sunderland found themselves plying their trade in English football's third tier.

The successive relegations suffered by their male counterparts resulted in Sunderland Ladies' funding being slashed, and when the FA reshuffled the leagues, the Black Cats were demoted two divisions to the National League.

Just four senior players remained with the club, and the squad assembled to mount a promotion charge consisted primarily of youngsters from the Sunderland development team.

One of the senior players to stay loyal was Keira Ramshaw. Ali Rampling chats to her about her time at the Black Cats.

The 26-year-old is Sunderland born and bred, and hit 25 goals in 26 appearances as she led a new-look, youthful Black Cats side to second in their

inaugural Northern Premier Division season.

Her performances did not go unnoticed, as Ramshaw was voted as the Women's Football Magazine's National League player of the season for 2018/19.

Reflecting on receiving the award, Ramshaw said: "It's a fantastic feeling. Obviously I've been at the club a long time and playing at this level was new to us in that year but it was a fantastic season.

"The girls are absolutely tremendous and we've played against some fantastic sides, but to get recognised as player of the year, amongst many fantastic players in that league, it was a real big achievement."

Following Sunderland's relegation from the WSL, Ramshaw received offers from elsewhere. She could have moved on and continued

playing professional football. However, as a lifelong Sunderland supporter, that was never an option.

"This club's the only club for me," she added. "I think everyone in the football club knows that because they know how loyal I've been towards them, but I just want to try and get back to where we belong and that would be my biggest achievement and my dream come true really."

Instead of departing for pastures new, Ramshaw was handed the captaincy ahead of the 2018/19 season, which was quite a moment for the die hard Mackem.

"I've watched Sunderland, I grew up in the middle of Sunderland so I've supported them my whole life," she added.

"My family were absolutely over the moon when I got the armband, it was a big achievement for my community as well as myself.

"It's fantastic, it's a dream come true really. I've been at the club for 10 years now so I've gone through the good and the bad with Sunderland.

“This club's the only club for me”

The Big Interview

“It’s just fantastic to try and get the girls back to where we belong and to reward the armband as well is just a fantastic achievement.”

Having turned down the opportunity to play full time in order to stay loyal to Sunderland, Ramshaw now balances her football career with a full time job.

She works as a teaching assistant in Gateshead, and although she admits it can be difficult juggling both at times, the 26-year-old says the school have always been accommodating.

“It’s quite tricky sometimes but I’m lucky in aspects of we get the school holidays so we can train a lot in them, we get early finishes so it’s like a 4 o’clock finish.

“Before this, I did work at a private nursery and it was like 5 o’clock, 6 o’clock finishes and that was hard. But the school’s very supportive of what I do and I’m lucky for that.”

And the pupils?

“I get a few boos as a joke sometimes walking down the corridor! The kids are all really supportive, and they think it’s amazing that I captain Sunderland, and they’re always asking to do football skills and things like that.”

Ramshaw made her Sunderland debut as a 16-year-old in 2010, alongside future Lionesses Demi Stokes and

Jordan Nobbs. She had played local football with the pair since the age of five.

In the ten years since her senior debut, Sunderland have endured a real rollercoaster decade.

The club worked tirelessly to earn their place among English football’s elite, winning three consecutive Premier League National Division titles before being accepted into WSL 2 in 2014.

The Black Cats topped the league in their debut season to earn promotion to the top tier of English football. They would stay in the WSL for four seasons before having their licence application rejected in 2018.

This season, Sunderland had been on course to return to the Championship before the coronavirus outbreak halted proceedings.

They had sat 11 points clear at the summit of the Northern Premier Division, with Ramshaw hitting 14 goals in the process.

However, all divisions below the WSL have had their seasons cancelled and results expunged, meaning the Black Cats’ Championship return has been put on pause for another year at least.

Despite the setback, Ramshaw is remaining characteristically optimistic that Sunderland can go again next season.

“Experience in the top two tiers with Sunderland was absolutely amazing,” Ramshaw said.

“We’d worked so hard to get there, but obviously to get demoted through non-football reasons was quite gutting.

“My only dream then was to try and get Sunderland back to where we belong because I know that’s where we do belong and hopefully we can get the club there before I retire! Which is many, many years hopefully.

“It would be an honour really (to captain the side to promotion), especially after what we’ve been through as a club as a whole.



“It would just be amazing for the girls now. Practically most of our development team stepped up when we got demoted from WSL 1, and none of them have experienced top tier football really, I think it’s only about two or three of them that have.

“So it would be a fantastic achievement for the club but also for those individuals to be able to say ‘I’m in a better league now and I’m going to push myself forward’.”

In the absence of football, Ramshaw has been keeping herself occupied with Tik-Tok, and the club have assigned players exercise to do from home so that they are fit and raring to push for promotion once more when the new season kicks off.

“We’ve been keeping ourselves busy with the home based program that our strength and conditioning coach has given us,” she explained.

“We do daily things and report into him daily about what we’re doing, and that’s keeping us busy in lockdown.

“We just can’t wait to get back on the pitch together. We’re keeping in touch every single day, we’ve got a great momentum and hopefully we can get together soon in training and hope to repeat to do what we’ve done this season.”



Disappointment as AFC Fylde disbanded



AFC Fylde have issued a statement on the future—or lack there of—their women's team.

The announcement was followed by a backlash from players, other clubs and fans alike as it was announced that the women's team would be disbanded.

The statement said: "AFC Fylde CEO, Jonty Castle can give the following update on Fylde Women FC.

"With the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic across the world, I feel it is right that we offer the most transparent and clearest communication possible with regards to our current position.

"I have had in-depth discussions with Chairman, David Haythornthwaite and we recognise that as a community based football club, AFC Fylde always wanted to operate a

Women's team.

"The Women's team, lead by manager, Conrad Prendergast has been a credit to the football club and the local area.

"However, due to the current and ongoing fluid situation regarding the COVID-19 virus, the Chairman has had to take the tough decision to disband the Women's team in its current format.

"We have spoken with Conrad and he is aware of the plans we have put in place, and we thank him for his understanding at this difficult and uncertain time.

"We wholeheartedly understand and accept this is not the news anyone wanted to give, or to receive and everyone at the club would like to offer our best wishes to all current players and staff for their future careers.

“I sincerely hope that all supporters both of the men’s and women’s team, along with all your families, are keeping safe and well at this difficult time.”

After the news broke it was not long before people took to social media to discuss the news.

Player Danielle Young wrote: “Truly gutted. So sad for the staff and everyone who has worked so hard to get this club to where it is.

“Heartbroken for my teammates who are a credit to themselves.

“What a pleasure it’s been leading you and I love you all.

“From Preston to Fylde you brought me back to life and I thank you.”

The news seems to have shocked many with the staff and players—including Young—pointing out that there were currently no running costs for the ladies teams as they had been suspended since March.

Assistant manager Kim Turner told the Times that staff were given just 15 minutes notice before they had to tell the players that the club had collapsed because of the coronavirus outbreak.

The statement came just one month after a previous statement which said that the club was “committed to the women’s team.”

Former manager Luke Swindlehurst added: “Very sad to hear my former team Fylde Women are being disbanded.

“Worked incredibly hard to move them from Preston North End to AFC Fylde to maintain their future.

“Any players from Fylde need a club let me know. I Will support you to get a fresh start.”

Jonathan Gibbon-Hayes wrote: “Absolutely gutted to hear the news about the Fylde Women team it’s shocking news, fantastic footballing side with great players and staff hope they can find some light at the end of the tunnel

In a video interview for the AFC Fylde website , owner Haythornwaite said: “You might say that’s against your principles.

“It is against my principles because I always wanted Fylde to be more than just a football club.

“We’ve got a hockey club involved. The ladies’ team was a natural part of that.

“But the problem is, when you come down to saying, ‘Can we live with a ladies’ team or can we live without them?’ the answer is we can live without a ladies’ team.

“It doesn’t mean we’re without a ladies team forever.

“I think it’s more a ‘mothball’ than not having a ladies’ team in the future.

“But just running a ladies’ team, with all the things involved – coaches, kit, transportation, paying players – is probably somewhere around £35,000-£40,000 a year.

“At times like this you have to take those tough decisions, so unfortunately the ladies’ team is a casualty and I apologise to anybody who has been a fan of the ladies’ team.

“Maybe this time next year we’re talking about bringing it back but for the time being that’s one of the first casualties.”





Has Refereeing of Women's Football Failed to Keep Pace with the Growth of the Game?



By Leed United's Emily Cassidy

The question mark hanging over the head of referees at the recent 2019 Women's World Cup in France doesn't just stop there, it funnels down into some of the biggest leagues of Women's Football. Included in this, is the Women's National Northern Premier Division, the 3rd highest tier of women's football in England. Being the 3rd highest tier, you'd expect full-time, high standard trained referees, unfortunately this is not the case all the time.

It seems that the standard of refereeing has failed to keep pace with the growth of women's football in recent years.

One recent stand out example being when Manchester United midfielder Katie Zelem, headed the ball clear, yet it was mistaken as hand ball and a penalty was given. A decision that seemed ludicrous. This is proven to cost

teams, as the game ended 1-1, meaning United missed out on a potentially vital 2 points.

Players of tier 3, the equivalent to league 1 of Men's football in England, had a lot of opinions on how standard of refereeing can affects their club, the overall result of an important game or the chance of even getting promoted or relegated. I spoke to some of the players within the WNL Northern Premier to gain an insight into their thoughts and opinions on the standard of referees.

One player said "I think that across the whole of the women's level, including top level, the referees are not at a good enough standard.

"In my league, they are too slow to keep up with the game. I'm sure that many other players in my league would agree.

"In my last 2 years in this league, I have seen a lot of questionable decisions to say the least.

They have cost my own team points and I have friends in other teams that I know have cost them points from decisions as well.”

She added, “On social media such as twitter, I’ve seen many bad decisions even in the top two leagues of women’s football.

“For example, the penalty given against Katie Zelem is an awful decision that circulated on twitter. In hindsight, gave women’s football a slating for it.”

She finished off by saying “The standard of refereeing needs stepping up. If we’re expected to work hard to play at that level, then we should be given highly trained or professional referees in the higher tiers.”

Another WNL Northern Premier player did not have many positives to speak about officials saying “I think the standard [refereeing] is massively below where it should be for this level of football.

“Even when you watch the WSL or Championship, its poor and not consistent to the men’s at all.

“Things like yellow cards aren’t used enough to control the game, or in some cases used too much and through this, the ref has lost control of the game.”

She finished off by stating “I don’t think that the refs in our league realise it is a contact sport sometimes, with a lot of them pulling up or blowing their whistle for a good tackle just because it’s a strong one.”

“I think that sometimes it ruins the women’s game as it makes it very stop start and doesn’t let the game flow.

“A lot of people do not watch women’s football because they say it’s too slow, therefore refs aren’t doing it any favours in that department.”

Finally, a former WSL and Championship, now Women’s National League North player said “The refereeing is varied.

“I realised there was no women refs.

“Most refs thought they were above the players and struggled to keep the game under



control allowing players to put in dangerous tackles with a lack of cards shown.”

“In the WSL and Championship, the refereeing was a bit better, but they still came across as graduate referees to me that were “chucked” in at the deep end and struggled with the pressure of big games.

“This year in the National Northern Premier, has definitely been the worst refereeing I have witnessed.

“It’s sad to see because women’s football is vastly growing and becoming more popular and unfortunately some of the refereeing ruins the game at times and affects all the hard work we put in sometimes.

“I think it makes it more heart breaking as football is not our full-time job and obviously it means a lot to us.”

Maybe we should be looking at full time referees for the top two leagues of women’s football?

This would hopefully in hindsight counter a few dubious decisions made in the top league for women’s football in England; potentially having a ripple effect to leagues lower down which should not be seen as any less important.



Jo Stimpson: Female refereeing has made huge strides



Jo Stimpson, the FA's women's professional game refereeing manager, explains about the development of match officials in women's football.

Female refereeing has made huge strides in recent years and creating opportunities is an essential part of growing this area of the game.

We've been working with a number of female referees who are at varying levels of their careers and who officiate across all levels of women's football, from grassroots through to the elite.

In February, we hosted our third annual grassroots development event at St George's Park. It was another inspirational event for us, with over 100 female referees in attendance, many of which are all within their first few seasons of officiating.

Referees from as young as 14 spent the day with FA staff, tutors and senior referees, and our aim was to provide referee education and to support their development.

But most importantly, it's an opportunity for the girls to network, engage and share their experiences with their female colleagues from around the country.

Hearing some of the feedback, with several attendees personally sharing how the day reaffirmed their ambition to make a career out of refereeing, it really shows how powerful these events can be for our young, aspiring officials. Helping to develop and encourage the next generation of female referees is a core focus for us.

And in March, we hosted the senior women's refereeing camp at Warwick University, which is one of two annual events we host in addition to regional training days.

It's attended by all female referees operating within the Barclays FA Women's Super League and FA Women's Championship and includes fitness and nutrition sessions, as well as bespoke development and education workshops, with information drawn from the findings of the WSL's evaluation system, observer reports, and club feedback. It's so valuable to give the referees opportunities to learn and reflect from each other.

These events continue to be a great success and to see the ongoing development of female officials gives us great pride, and the improvements are clear to see.

what we're seeing through the match evaluation system is that a large proportion of decisions are correct. On average, match officials make over 340 decisions per game, and 98.3 per cent of all decisions in the league so far this season have been correct. Broken down, this amounts to:

- 98.5 per cent correct decisions made by referees
- 98 per cent correct decisions made by assistant referees
- 97.9 per cent correct decisions made by fourth officials



The Barclays FA WSL now implements the same match evaluation system that is used in the Premier League, which brings many benefits and continues to improve standards.

Using match footage, it allows video analysis of every decision/non-decision made by officials, offering forensic analysis of refereeing in elite women's football for the first time.

With evaluators having specialist training in the women's game, we can identify common trends which means we can tailor referee development across the women's game.

Three quarters of the way through the season,

This indicates the level of decision making is very good and is continuously improving, much like the standard of the women's game as a whole. It gives us a strong baseline to work from as we try to ensure our referees are given adequate development opportunities and support to ensure they meet the growing demands of the game.

A big part in ensuring the continuous improvement in the standards of refereeing is providing all Barclays FA WSL match officials with an individual specialist coach who offers one-to-one support prior, during and post-matchdays.

We're mindful that while it's important for match officials to understand if an incorrect decision is made, the emphasis is put on understanding the rationale behind why an individual makes a decision, providing thoughts on how we can continue to improve and develop.

We also provide bespoke training camps both nationally and regionally, focused on women's football, while the FA's refereeing department works closely with all Barclays FA WSL clubs, analysing feedback after every match to ensure we are adhering to the expectations of the league.

Four female referees and five assistant referees are now on the FIFA list of match officials and it's our ambition to ensure we have a pathway in place, so people feel refereeing in the women's game is viable career option.

At the beginning of the 2019-20 season, we introduced the women's game pathway, which allows match officials to progress solely within the women's game. The pathway exposes match officials to women's football at

all levels, gaining vast experience and understanding of the women's game. I very much see it as a crucial step in the journey to professionalisation of refereeing within the English women's game in future.

In last year's Gameplan for Growth update, the number of referees in the women's game was up 13 per cent to 1,727 and, while a further update will be released in the coming months, I can share that there has been a 20.6 per cent increase in female referees from February 2019-February 2020.

These figures, along with an ongoing commitment to supporting and developing female referees, show that officiating across all levels of the women's game is in a strong place and we are well positioned to see this strengthen even further.

It's a very exciting time for the women's game and we will continue to work tirelessly to raise these standards.



All change at Chorley Women



Chorley FC Women have made some exciting announcements over the last month.

Changes include a new manager, assistant manager and home ground.

Ben Gooden has been announced as the new manager of the side.

Speaking on his appointment, he said: "I'm delighted to be announced as the new Chorley manager and excited for the new challenges it will bring.

"Once I had the chance to come here, it was a no brainier and it's a privilege to be given the opportunity."

Amy Bland has been named as the new 1st team assistant coach for the 20/21 season.

In a statement, the club said: "We are delighted to have Amy on board her wealth of experience in women's football as a player and coach can only be a positive for the club."

The team will now play their home games at

Balinscough Park, home of Coppull United FC.

A new reserve side has also been announced and will be coached by Rob Cooper.

He said: "We are looking to create a clear pathway from reserve football to the first team for those who want to progress.

"We will do this within the right environment, emphasising team spirit at a competitive level."

After the conclusion on the FA Women's National League ND1 prematurely due to Coronavirus, the club have already started looking ahead to next season.

The club are looking for players who may be interested in joining the club.

If you are interested in joining Chorley FC Women, go to @chorleyfc_women to fill in the form at the top of their Twitter page.

Barnsley Women's latest statement

PRESS RELEASE - 14 APRIL 2020

The FA's decision-making process was severely flawed, was unfair to Women's Clubs, and was not fit for purpose

Barnsley Women's Football Club has investigated the decision-making process by which The FA ended the 2019/20 Season and expunged the results of the Women's National League, and we have found the process to be severely flawed, unfair to the Women's Clubs, and not fit for purpose. We set out below details of The FA's decision-making process relating to the Women's National League.

Firstly, we are grateful to all the key workers and to the NHS for their immeasurable contribution to the ongoing Covid-19 crisis and we all are playing our part at home or as key workers.

It has been extremely difficult to get information from The FA. We have sent many emails requesting information, and most of them have been unanswered. One reply stated: "I'm afraid I cannot help with any information about the [ending] of the season 2019/20 and the results etc being expunged. The FA wants the meeting and any findings kept strictly private and confidential."

We would like to thank the very small number of people within The FA who have answered our emails. We believe The FA should be a transparent organisation, and we are grateful to those individuals who have provided information, which should properly be in the Public domain.

We understand that the decision to end the 2019/20 season and expunge the results had already been made by The FA, before the Women's National League were first contacted on Tuesday 24 March 2020, and that The FA then went through the motions, for the next 48 hours, of getting the Women's National League to agree to the decision.

We know that the Women's National League was first contacted by The FA on Tuesday 24 March 2020, to discuss options and scenarios relating to how to conclude the 2019/20 season. Options were discussed but no decisions were made that day.

The original intention of the Women's National League after that meeting, was to discuss options at the scheduled Women's National League Management Committee meeting on Monday 30 March 2020, with follow up dialogue with the Clubs to gauge views.

A phone call from The FA to the Women's National League was received during the afternoon of Wednesday 25 March 2020 (no-one will tell us the exact time of this call), to inform that an Emergency Meeting of The Women's Football Conference had been called for later that evening, and that a decision was required to be made at that meeting, to facilitate an announcement the following day. The Women's National League raised concerns regarding the timeframe and the speed of this process.

The decision to bring the season to an immediate end, and to expunge all results, for the Women's National League was announced by The FA to the 71 Clubs under embargo at 11.59am on Thursday 26 March 2020, less than 24 hours after the Women's National League had received the phone call from The FA.

This means that the whole process to make this decision in relation to the Women's National League took less than 48 hours. Furthermore, the process gave the Women's National League less than 7 hours from The FA notifying them in the phone call, that the Emergency Meeting of the Women's Football Conference had been called, to having to be a party to a decision at that meeting. This was a totally unreasonable position to force onto the Women's National League, who were then in an impossible situation.

A proper and fair process, to make and announce a decision of this magnitude, would have needed to be, in sequence:

1. Consultation with the 71 Women's National League Clubs
2. A Meeting of the Women's National League Management Committee
3. A Meeting of the Women's Football Conference
4. A Meeting of the FA Women's Football Board
5. A Meeting of the FA Board
6. And finally, release of the FA Statement of 26 March 2020

A proper and fair process would have taken several days, but this whole process was crammed into a few hours by The FA, to arrive at the position that The FA had already decided before the process commenced. We know that there was no consultation with any of the 71 Clubs in the Women's National League.

The Women's Football Conference met at 7pm on 25 March 2020, less than 7 hours after the Women's National League were contacted by phone call to inform them that a decision had to be made at that meeting. The FA Women's Football Board met at 10.30am on 26 March 2020, less than 90 minutes before Barnsley Women received the embargoed Press Release. We have been informed that at each of these two meetings, the decision was unanimous.

It is extremely difficult to see how, within the timescale available, any of these meetings could have involved proper scrutiny, discussion, debate and consideration of such a monumental decision. It is obvious that this was all part of a rubber-stamping exercise for a decision, which had already been made.

There was no FA Board Meeting held to discuss, debate and approve this decision. To anyone who knows anything about corporate governance, it will be clear and obvious that a decision of this magnitude, which is so unusual, affects so many Clubs and so many people, should not have been made and/or announced without final approval at an FA Board Meeting, which had sufficient time to question, challenge and consider the proposal.

Furthermore, any decision which required ratification by the FA Council, should surely have been approved at an FA Board Meeting, before being finalised and announced to millions of people.

We have been informed by The FA, that all FA Board members were contacted on 25 March 2020, and each member gave approval of the decision. Therefore the FA Board Members gave approval of the decision, before the consultation and approval process had been completed, and before the FA Women's Football Board had met, and probably before the Women's Football Conference had been held. Again, it is obvious that this was all part of a rubber-stamping exercise for a decision which had already been made.

It is hard to understand why the Independent Non-Executive Directors on the FA Board did not challenge the Executives for not bringing this decision to a properly constituted FA Board Meeting, and why they did not speak out accordingly.

It is obvious that there was no meaningful consultation with the Women's National League or its Clubs, that no genuine consensus was reached, and that the decision was forced onto the Women's National League by The FA, in a process that lasted less than 48 hours in total.

This is in stark contrast to the consultation with and the different decision made for the Men's National League.

We are calling on The FA to immediately suspend the decision to end the 2019/20 Season and expunge results, in respect of the Women's National League, and to agree to treat the Women's National League in the same manner as the Men's National League.

How the tables finished

Northern Premier Division

		P	W	D	L	GF	GA	GD	P
1	Sunderland	14	13	1	0	53	10	43	40
2	Derby County	15	9	2	4	46	17	29	29
3	Nottingham Forest	13	9	1	3	27	19	8	28
4	Stoke City	14	8	1	5	32	17	15	25
5	Burnley	11	7	1	3	19	13	6	22
6	Huddersfield Town	12	5	3	4	35	22	13	18
7	West Bromwich Albion	11	5	2	4	31	20	11	17
8	Middlesbrough	15	4	2	9	27	52	-25	14
9	Fylde	14	3	4	7	15	24	-9	13
10	Loughborough Foxes	15	4	1	10	24	42	-18	13
11	Hull City	14	2	0	12	23	64	-41	6
12	Sheffield FC	10	1	0	9	7	39	-32	3

Southern Premier Division

		P	W	D	L	GF	GA	GD	P
1	Crawley Wasps	14	12	1	1	36	9	27	37
2	Watford	11	9	1	1	40	14	26	28
3	Oxford United	14	9	0	5	44	20	24	27
4	Plymouth Argyle	14	9	0	5	42	18	24	27
5	Yeovil Town	13	8	2	3	47	17	30	26
6	Cardiff City	13	8	1	4	23	9	14	25
7	Portsmouth	9	5	0	4	28	15	13	15
8	Milton Keynes Dons	14	4	1	9	18	30	-12	13
9	Gillingham	11	3	2	6	12	27	-15	11
10	Keynsham Town	12	2	1	9	9	39	-30	7
11	Hounslow	14	0	3	11	4	74	-70	3
12	Chichester City	13	0	2	11	6	37	-31	2

***Please note the decision to end the season means no teams will be promoted or relegated from these tables.*

How the tables finished

Division One North

		P	W	D	L	GF	GA	GD	P
1	Barnsley	14	12	2	0	39	14	25	38
2	Leeds United	17	12	2	3	37	16	21	38
3	Brighouse Town	12	8	4	0	25	10	15	28
4	Liverpool Feds	15	8	2	5	29	16	13	26
5	Durham Cestria	14	6	4	4	33	17	16	22
6	Newcastle United	15	6	2	7	19	23	-4	20
7	Chester le Street Town	14	5	3	6	26	29	-3	18
8	Norton & Stockton Ancients	13	3	4	6	25	33	-8	13
9	Chorley	14	3	2	9	13	19	-6	11
10	Bolton Wanderers	15	3	2	10	16	33	-17	11
11	Stockport County	15	3	2	10	25	41	-16	10
12	Bradford City	14	2	1	11	9	45	-36	7

Division One Midlands

		P	W	D	L	GF	GA	GD	P
1	Wolverhampton Wanderers	15	14	0	1	83	10	73	42
2	Birmingham & West Midlands	16	10	3	3	52	23	29	33
3	Bedworth United	16	9	3	4	50	34	16	30
4	The New Saints	16	9	3	4	46	33	13	30
5	Lincoln City	14	8	0	6	44	25	19	24
6	Long Eaton United	15	7	1	7	25	23	2	22
7	Leicester United	13	6	1	6	28	41	-13	19
8	Leafield Athletic	14	5	1	8	30	35	-5	16
9	Sporting Khalsa	15	5	1	9	30	36	-6	16
10	Doncaster Belles	16	5	1	10	24	39	-15	16
11	Solihull Moors	14	3	0	11	18	53	-35	9
12	Burton Albion	12	0	0	12	10	88	-78	0

***Please note the decision to end the season means no teams will be promoted or relegated from these tables.*

How the tables finished

Division One South East

		P	W	D	L	GF	GA	GD	P
1	Ipswich Town	14	11	1	2	53	11	42	34
2	AFC Wimbledon	14	10	3	1	30	12	18	33
3	AFC Basildon	14	9	2	3	44	31	13	29
4	Billericay Town	12	9	1	2	39	12	27	28
5	Leyton Orient	12	8	1	3	27	14	13	25
6	Enfield Town	13	7	3	3	32	17	15	24
7	Actonians	12	5	1	6	20	25	-5	16
8	Cambridge United	15	4	2	9	16	31	-15	14
9	Norwich City	16	3	2	11	34	69	-35	11
10	Stevenage	15	3	1	11	32	56	-24	10
11	Cambridge City	13	2	3	8	16	33	-17	9
12	Kent Football United	14	1	0	13	18	50	-32	3

Division One South West

		P	W	D	L	GF	GA	GD	P
1	Southampton FC	11	10	1	0	53	5	48	31
2	Southampton Women's	12	9	2	1	39	13	26	29
3	Exeter City	12	8	1	3	38	27	11	25
4	Cheltenham Town	11	9	1	1	19	10	9	25
5	Chesham United	12	6	2	4	39	31	8	20
6	Larkhall Athletic	8	5	1	2	19	15	4	16
7	Buckland Athletic	12	3	2	7	22	26	-4	11
8	Brislington	11	2	2	7	22	35	-13	8
9	Maidenhead United	12	2	0	10	8	42	-34	6
10	Poole Town	11	1	0	10	11	37	-26	3
11	Swindon Town	12	1	0	11	15	44	-29	3

***Please note the decision to end the season means no teams will be promoted or relegated from these tables.*



Hitting between the Stix with Georgia Stevens

@Stix_Official_9

As a nation, we're currently still in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic and are still in lockdown. Once again, I would like to extend my thanks to the NHS staff and key workers in these times, who are the real heroes. I'd also like to share my condolences with those who have lost loved ones over the past few weeks.

I'm certain that April 2020 will be a period that everybody will look back on in years to come. Here is my recap for this past month.

My appearances on RedMenTV have continued throughout this month, albeit in a slightly different manner. Given the current circumstances, everything is done remotely. This has now meant that everybody's work spaces have become their own little studios, and set design is taking much longer than before!

It's been great to appear on live Daily News shows as well as longer podcasts, and since the Premier League has been halted, it's given us an opportunity to touch on some much more broader topics than we have before.

As I mentioned last month, my article with The Culture Division (found here: <https://>

theculturedivision.com/diamond-fc-a-new-chapter) has been doing really well and it's been great to hear feedback from people who've read it.

I've got a lot more content to release over the coming weeks so please keep your eye out on my Twitter (@Stix_Official_9) and now my Instagram too (@Georgia.stevo). It's been great to be able to bring some ideas to life with the TCD team, as well as being able to delve into the world of digital content creation. I look forward to hearing your reactions soon!

In terms of football, I've been making sure that I am ticking over and I'm looking forward to entering the next season a better and fitter player.

My daily exercise has ranged from shuttle runs and 5K's to much longer 10 and 15K runs. Hitting PBs and gradually improving in these areas has been great and has really helped to keep my mind focused. Dedicating time every day to fitness has benefitted me massively, but I can't wait to get back on the pitch.

Over with Huddersfield, I cannot praise our staff highly enough for the effort and commitment they've shown during this period.

Every week we have up to four sessions as a squad, over Zoom, which usually centres around HIIT (High Intensity Interval Training) sessions. This has really helped to keep the togetherness of the team, as well as keeping everybody focus on our goals ahead of next season.

A special mention must also go to our media team who have done a wonderful job of keeping the social media active during this downtime and providing content for everyone.

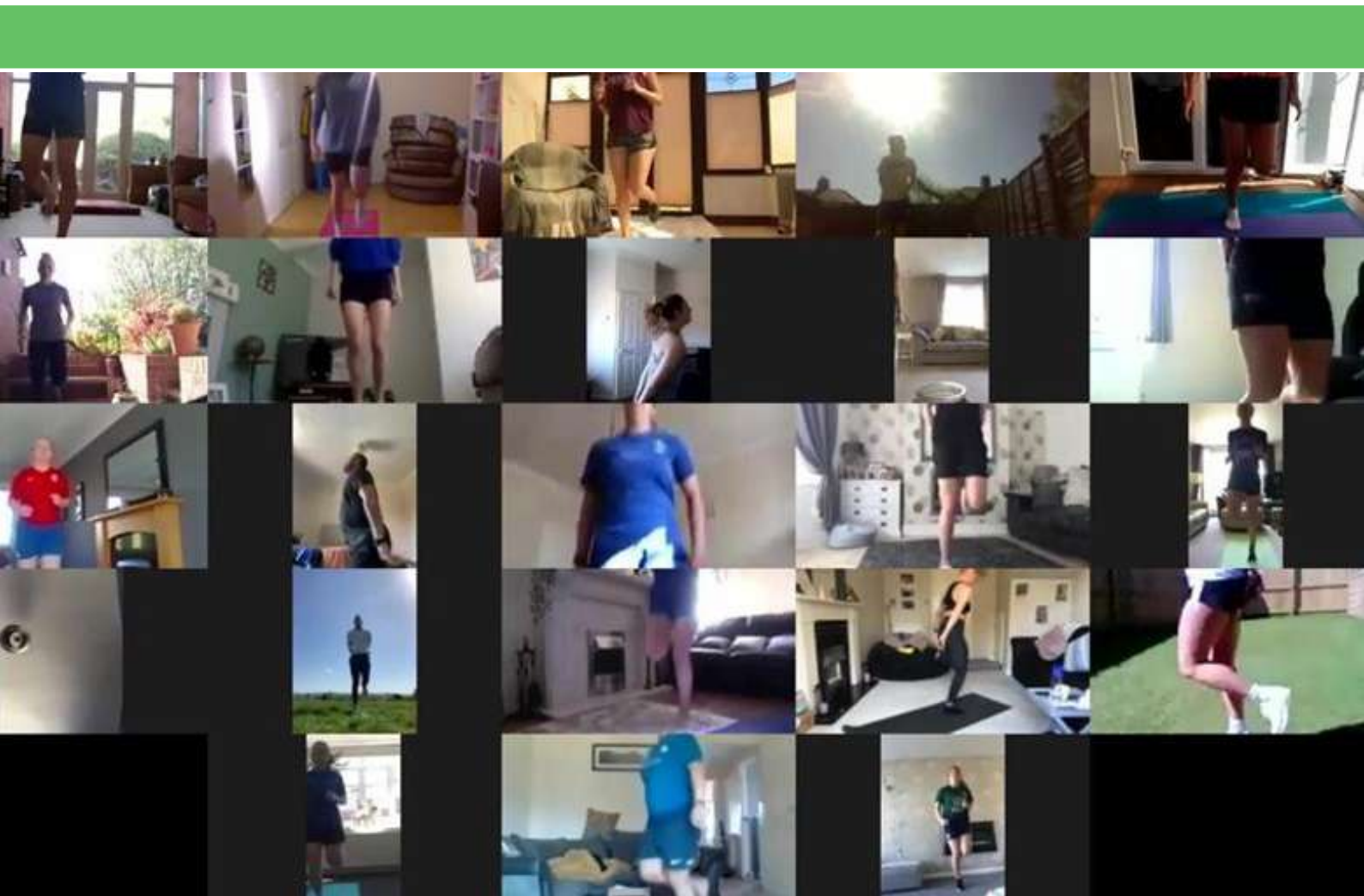
They've recently started our own YouTube page (HTAFC Women) where there's plenty to keep you entertained, and there'll be some exciting things heading there once our season is back up and running.

Finally, as a Scouser and a Liverpool supporter, April has always been a poignant time of the year for those in our city.

On April 15th, it was the 31st anniversary of the Hillsborough disaster, in which 96 Liverpool fans lost their lives. The Hillsborough Family Support Group (HFSG) had planned to hold their final memorial service at Anfield to mark the anniversary but this was unfortunately postponed. Across the city a minute's silence in memory of the 96 was held, they are never forgotten.

I'd like to end this month's recap with the same message as March - by thanking the work of those in the NHS.

I'd also like to reiterate the message that everyone is spreading at the moment: Stay at Home, Protect the NHS and Save Lives. Please look after yourselves and loved ones.



GRASSROOTS



My favourite match

By Aaron Moore

I've watched a number of Women's games this season as I followed both Tottenham Hotspur Women and Harlow Town Ladies so when it comes to choosing my favourite game, it's a hard decision.

I could have chosen my first game watching the Spurs Women at the London Stadium as they faced West Ham United in the Women's Super League or the two-all draw with Everton Women in the WSL which saw Emma Mitchell score a cracker of a free-kick from distance to rescue a point.

I could've even chosen the Women's North London Derby at the Tottenham Hotspur Stadium (even though Tottenham lost) and the same could be said about a number of Harlow games too.

Flicking through my matchday programmes and my match reports, the game that always catches my eye was the Harlow Town Ladies 11-1 win over Haringey Borough in the Eastern Region Women's Football League.

It was an incredible game of football from a Harlow point of view as they showed their attacking capabilities and their finishing prowess. The reserve fixture at the Harlow Town Arena had finished 10-2 with a home win for Harlow so the game at Coles Park promised plenty of goals.

There is one simple reason why this has to be my favourite game. The quality of

players in Women's football. The quality doesn't get enough credit and to be at Coles Park, the home of Haringey Borough, to witness the quality of finishing that I saw,

was incredible. Yes, many Women's Super League and Women's Championship teams may score plenty of goals but that gets far more attention than what was seen in North London.

Not only was there 6 different scorers, but there was 2 hattricks scored by Georgia Box and Becky Shephard. Chloe Bassett added two for herself whilst Beth Chambers, Amy Nash and Abbey Dell also scored.

Whilst the likes of Vivianne Miedema and Bethany England have 14 goals each this season in the Women's Super League, Harlow have their own superstars. Georgia Box has 11 goals in 11 games this season whilst Becky Shepard has 19 goals in 15 games. An incredible record at any level.

Before the lower leagues were brought to an end due to the global pandemic, Harlow sat top of the Premier Division and were on course for promotion having not lost a game this season and sat 6-points clear of second-placed Luton Town Ladies.

The work done by Dean Perrett, Joe Perrett and Billy Cove is second to none whilst the others who have worked behind the scenes deserve a lot of credit. There were a few games I could've chosen but the Haringey vs Harlow game was by far, my favourite game!



How to run a women's football team

Allie Coker's tongue-in-cheek 'how to' guide



In times like these sometimes you just need to have a chuckle and this might be the perfect article to do just that. So sit back, grab a cuppa and enjoy as Allie Coker tells us how it should be done.

Good afternoon gentlemen (and this will be primarily gentlemen). I believe you're here because you've heard of that newfangled thing called women's football, which has ultimately led you to the decision of adding a women's team to your footballing family. The problem is, you don't know where to start. Well, have no fear – you've come to the right place.

Follow my simple rules and you too will be able to have a successful team.

DO have a social media presence.

The easiest way to engage with fans and players alike will be across all social media platforms. Regularly post and update interesting content. If you want your players to be known and loved, then behind the scenes videos will show the delightful goofs that we know them to be. Give the fans what they truly want and they will come.

DO NOT share social media with your men's team.

Yes, you may feel like it's a great way to build a fanbase and save money by only having one social media intern, but it does not work! You basically end up with two sets of irritated fans seeing content that they don't want on their feed. And your men's-team-only fans will be



fans will be VERY vocal about it. Why ruin the day for two sets of fans? Invest in another intern - you can pay them in exposure and biscuits anyway. (That was my poor attempt at humour, please actually pay your interns).

DO spend some money.

Speaking of investment, it's time to actually spend some money. Gone are the days when your female players are expected to wash their own kit and play on fields which have the added hazard of dogs and small children.

A better striker this does not make.

So, please spend some money on the training, on the stadium in which they have play, and most importantly, on the players themselves. That way, they can live their passion and stay loyal to you. Otherwise, you might find that Lyon has gained your star player.

DO NOT accept the first money deal that comes your way.

The sad truth is that most women's teams run at a loss, so the temptation will be there. However, please do not accept just any old sponsorship deal. Trust me when I say that if you get something very gender-specific, you will become the laughing stock of the league. Everyone will remember the team sponsored by the make-up supplier or the women's 'health' provider. You WILL be talked about and it will not be good.

DO have team-specific merchandise.

One of the biggest frustrations as a women's football fan is the lack of merchandise built towards your team. Yes, we do want specific t-shirts, scarfs, hats, bags, and even tea cosies.

We want to be visible and present in our support. This also works in the advertising on your website and your shops. Have the two captains together; use your female players as you do your male players. After all, it's free modelling labour.

Plaster them EVERYWHERE.

If nothing else, you can help to offset your running costs by not having to pay for the aforementioned models.

DO NOT make it all pink.

A trap that most merchandisers fall into is that when they think female, they think pink. Fine, but this will not appeal to all. If we want to grow the game, then pink is going to distance women's teams in a way that makes it easy for people to dismiss them as being a 'girl' thing.

We want to go after men, women and all that identify in between. So, go crazy, use all of the crayons in your box and let your imagination fly. Most of all, make sure to have your women's team names in the automatic selector in the pre-printed shirt section shop. Us fans will truly thank you for it, as many players have names that take a while to spell. More importantly, it shows true equality.

DO NOT leave them out in the cold.

I know we've already had a don't, but I've had to throw in another as there are so many pitfalls in running a women's club.

The biggest 'do not' of all is forgetting that they are part of your club's family and failing to treat them as such. This means providing them with the same facilities to train, the same kit, the same protections from the club. Don't put their ground a million miles away so that even a seasoned local would have issues locating it. They are not an afterthought, not something you own to show

how politically correct you are or that you have moved on from your thuggish '80s past. Pay as much attention to them as you do your existing players. Above all, remember that they are not excess fat that you can trim away when the going gets tough.

DO listen to your fans.

Let's be honest, your fans are going to know more about what they want than you do. Most of them will have been following another women's team before now, patiently waiting for you to pull your finger out.

With that said, you need to listen to their ideas and not be offended if they tell you that your totally inclusive yet highly offensive idea isn't going to work. Do be careful of favouring one set of fans over the other, though. Noses will be put out of joint and turf wars will ensue. You need to build your fan base, not split it up before you've even begun.

So, there you have it - my guide to running a successful women's club. Take these words of wisdom with a generous dose of sodium chloride.

The most important rule - the golden one, if you will - is this: if you wouldn't do it to your men's team, don't do it your women's team.



Home Nations



**THE WOMEN'S
FOOTBALL
MAGAZINE**

England

How Neville can salvage his tenure as England boss in his final year



© Joerdeli Photography | Daniela Porcelli

By Marissa Thomas

"No-one cares about silver and bronze - it's the gold medal everyone wants. My players now want to win. If we don't get the right result, we'll feel the disappointment and we'll see that as a failure."

England Women boss Phil Neville made this bold statement before England faced USA in the Women's World Cup semi-final which they lost 2-1 with captain Steph Houghton missing an 84th minute penalty and Millie Bright getting sent off two minutes later. For the third major tournament in a row, England were out at the last-four stage. Neville had talked the talk throughout the tournament but ultimately his team failed to walk the walk.

To make matters worse, England lost the third-place play-off against Sweden and left the tournament empty handed. Four years prior,

the Lionesses had won a bronze medal against Germany, the best result of any England team since the men's side won the tournament in 1966. This achievement was clearly lost on Neville when he stated that the third-place play-off was a "nonsense game." The 23 women who won a bronze medal in 2015 would certainly beg to differ with Neville's dismissive remark.

More often than not during his tenure as Lionesses boss, this has been Neville's problem. The former Manchester United and Everton defender tends to speak before he thinks and, in an effort to seem confident, he can come across as arrogant. England coming third at the Women's World Cup was an unforgettable moment for millions and Neville's failure to recognise that doesn't show him in a particularly good light.

Nor does the fact that since the World Cup in July 2019, England have lost seven of 11 games. Neville's lack of flexibility, inability to fix defensive issues and over protection of his players has highlighted frailties in his leadership and the team as a whole.

Due to coronavirus and various events in the sporting calendar after being rescheduled as a result, UEFA decided to postpone the Women's Euro to 2022 which will see Phil Neville leave his role as England Women's boss in July 2021.

The FA's director of women's football, Sue Campbell said: "In light of the impact of current global events on the sporting calendar and in the best interests of the England Women's team, both parties were in agreement that our shared priority was to ensure the Lionesses have continuity of coaching going into the home EURO and looking towards the 2023 FIFA World Cup.

"Once football returns after this difficult period, Phil will continue his work with the Lionesses on the further development of his squad.

"I will support him fully with that important task whilst moving forward with the crucial succession planning process.

"We will now discuss next steps with the British Olympic Association and the home nations with regard to Team GB Football and we are not in a position to make any further comment at this time."

In order to make some semblance of success of his reign as England boss, Neville must make some sweeping changes. There are many young talented players currently plying their trade in the Women's Super League who should be looked at for the senior England squad.

To his credit, this was a process that Neville started with the youthful squad he named for the SheBelieves Cup in February when six of the players selected had competed for the Young Lionesses at the FIFA U20 World Cup in 2018.



Leah Williamson, a versatile player who can excel in both defence and midfield has been used sparingly by Neville despite being a vital cog in the Arsenal side that won the WSL last season. Neville's reluctance to break up the Houghton-Bright centre back pairing has proved costly especially when they have both been responsible for defensive errors during England's poor run of form. Neville's players need to know that they will not keep their places after sloppy performances.

In the words of Nikita Parris: "Too many of us are living off the hype of the World Cup. We haven't improved and we have to take responsibility. Phil has protected us for far too long and ultimately we have got to step up."

England have gone backwards since they were crowned SheBelieves Cup champions in 2019.

In his final year in charge, Neville need to be humbler and more realistic when talking about his squad, who are clearly still far away from being near the level of world champions USA, in order to manage expectations.

Perhaps if Neville goes back to basics, is more willing to make changes to his squad and lets his players do the talking on the pitch as opposed to his braggadocious statements in press conferences, his tenure can be looked back on with some fondness.

As a player or manager, the aim is always to leave the team in a better position than you found them. Unless things change dramatically in the next year, this cannot be said for Phil Neville and England.





Phil Neville:

The official statement

The FA released a statement on April 24



Following UEFA's decision to postpone the UEFA Women's EURO to 2022, Phil Neville has confirmed he is committed to honouring the full term of his contract with The FA, which will see him leave the role in July 2021.

The FA's director of women's football, Sue Campbell said: "In light of the impact of current global events on the sporting calendar and in the best interests of the England Women's team, both parties were in agreement that our shared priority was to ensure the Lionesses have continuity of coaching going into the home EURO and looking towards the 2023 FIFA World Cup.

"Once football returns after this difficult period, Phil will continue his work with the Lionesses on the further development of his squad.

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important task whilst moving forward with the crucial succession planning process.

"We will now discuss next steps with the British Olympic Association and the home nations with regard to Team GB Football and we are not in a position to make any further comment at this time."

Phil Neville said: "As a result of the changes to the proposed tournament scheduling we will now be working to plan for a revised match calendar once it is safe and appropriate to do so.

"I am looking forward to getting back to work with the team as soon as possible.

"We have a fantastic squad of players and there is plenty to work on as we look to progress as a team going into 2021."

Lionesses donate money to support NHS



England Women's footballers have donated to an initiative set up by the Premier League to support the NHS and other frontline staff during the coronavirus pandemic.

The Lionesses made the announcement to donate to the fund #PlayersTogether on their personal social media accounts.

The fund was established after meetings between Premier League players including captain Jordan Henderson and Manchester United's Harry Maguire.

The Lionesses statement said: "The Senior Women's football squad otherwise known as the Lionesses, have been discussing the best way in which we could offer our support to the NHS and its frontline staff over the past few weeks.

"The squad have recognised the importance of the statement last week from the Premier League players with regards to setting up the #PlayersTogether fund and the potential impact it can make to support and assist over 150 registered NHS charities.

"After discussions with a number of Premier League players, we are delighted to confirm that the whole of the Lionesses squad will make a collective donation to the #PlayersTogether fund partnering with NHS Charities Together, in unison with the Premier League players in order to support the amazing NHS.

"Stay Home. Protect the NHS. Save Lives."

My favourite match

By Rachael Carrott

The match which will stick in my memory forever is England's opening match of Euro 2017.

We were up against our neighbours Scotland on that magical night in Utrecht. The England squad was packed with quality and brimming with confidence.

The Scottish team were making their debut at an international tournament but no doubt missing their midfield maestro, Kim Little through injury.

As the match kicked off, the unexpected nearly happened as Scotland broke forward immediately as Jane Ross steered a long distance shot towards the goal which was parried away by Karen Bardsley.

The tartan army, playing in pink, weren't in Holland just to make the numbers up.

England's number 9, Jodie Taylor went on to score a hat-trick, the first ever by an English player at a European Championships.

Ellen White pounced and celebrated her goal in a way that we have all come to expect!

Jordan Nobbs scored an unbelievable volley and Toni Duggan added a late goal to round up the proceedings.

The game finished 6-0 and left us England fans in the stadium euphoric.

But this match wasn't all about the scoreline, this game was something else, something more.

This was the Lionesses "arriving" to the nation.

This was the summer when every boy and girl in England were playing football in their garden, pretending to be 'Lucy'.

This game was incredible but it's the impact that it had on women's football in this country which makes it my favourite match!





How successful was Neville?

Manager	Played	Won	Lost	Win %
Phil Neville	35	19	11	54%
Mark Sampson	59	38	13	64%

Positives

- Knowledge of dealing with the media and changes as players became more popular
- SheBelieves 2019 has to be the highlight of his tenure
- Lionesses moved up to second in Fifa world rankings in March 2018

Negatives

- Many feel like this was a failed experiment by the FA in picking someone with no managerial experience
- Comments at the Women's World Cup regarding the third-placed play-off game lost a lot of respect
- Had to apologise for historical controversial tweets about women
- Tactics questioned by using players such as Lucy Bronze out of position



Who might replace Phil Neville as England boss?



TWFM picks out a few options for who might become the new manager of the Lionesses. Let us know your thoughts on the TWFM social media channels.

Jill Ellis

The two-time World Cup winner is currently a free agent after leaving her role as USA boss after the 2019 Women's World Cup. Ellis is definitely a fan favourite and taking the job would see her reunite with Dawn Scott who has recently re-joined the Lionesses.



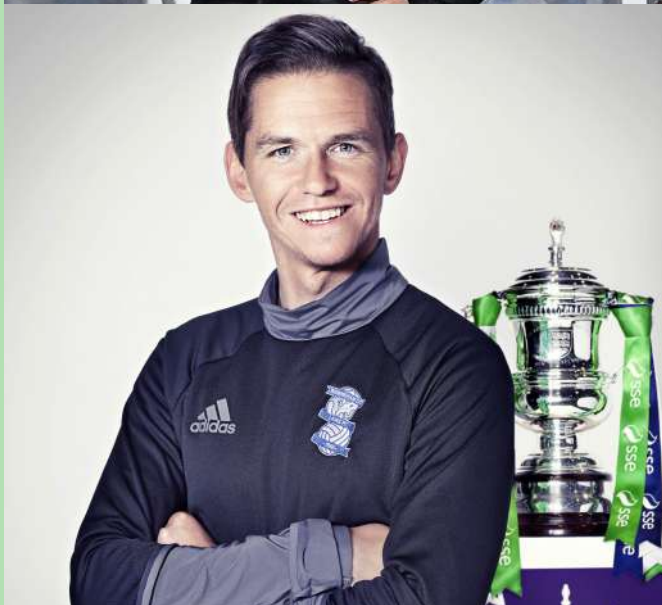
Casey Stoney

The Manchester United manager has definitely been earmarked as a future England boss but will this appointment come too early for her? After a brief stint as Neville's number two, she became the Red Devils boss and it will be unlikely she will be ready to leave them just yet. Definitely one for the future though.



Emma Hayes

Emma Hayes ruled herself out of the England job last time round. There is no doubting she has been in the game a long time and achieved a lot but the lack of Champions League title with Chelsea could stop her being interested.



Laura Harvey

The former Arsenal and Utah Royals manager has been named a few times as being in contention with fans. She was recently appointed as the US U20s head coach and was believed to be on the shortlist before Neville was handed the job.

Mark Skinner

The former Birmingham City boss could be an outside contender. He is currently struggling as Orlando Pride boss and is not as highly thought of in the US as he is over here but many fans like his style of play and he achieved a lot on a small budget with City.

The latest from Scotland



The Scottish Women's Premier League One and Two literally played one game of their 2020 season before the league was postponed due to the Coronavirus outbreak.

A statement from Scottish Women's Football said: the Joint Response Group can confirm the decision of the Scottish FA Board to suspend ALL domestic professional and grassroots football under the jurisdiction of the Scottish FA until further notice.

The Scottish FA and SPFL will continue to liaise with governments and UEFA in relation to domestic, European and International fixtures in the coming days and more information will be communicated at the appropriate time.

The Scottish FA Board made its decision in the interests of the health and safety of players, match officials, staff, supporters and the general public.

Ian Maxwell, Scottish FA Chief Executive: "Since the guidance outlined by governments last night we have been engaged in extensive dialogue to clarify the position and implications of that guidance for Scottish football.

"Today's announcement is made in the interests of public health but, equally, the health and safety of players, match officials, and staff across the game. This is of paramount importance as the country enters the 'delay' phase of the coronavirus pandemic.

"It is also why the Scottish FA is compelled to ensure that the suspension is cascaded through the non-professional and grassroots games until further notice."

All Scottish Women's Football matches are therefore suspended indefinitely. Please note this includes friendly matches.

SWF will work to keep our members updated in due course.



How the tables stand

SWPL 1

		P	W	D	L	GF	GA	GD	P
1	Rangers	1	1	0	0	3	0	3	3
2	Celtic	1	1	0	0	2	1	1	3
3	Hibernian	1	1	0	0	1	0	1	3
4	Motherwell	1	1	0	0	1	0	1	3
5	Glasgow City	1	0	0	1	1	2	-1	0
6	Forfar Farmington	1	0	0	1	0	1	-1	0
7	Spartans	1	0	0	1	0	1	-1	0
8	Hearts	1	0	0	1	0	3	-3	0

— Relegation play-off

— Relegation

SWPL 2

		P	W	D	L	GF	GA	GD	P
1	Hamilton Academical	1	1	0	0	5	0	5	3
2	Dundee United	1	1	0	0	8	4	4	3
3	St Johnstone	1	1	0	0	4	2	2	3
4	Partick Thistle	1	1	0	0	2	0	2	3
5	Kilmarnock	1	0	1	0	1	1	0	1
6	Aberdeen	1	0	1	0	1	1	0	1
7	Queens Park	1	0	0	1	2	4	-2	0
8	Glasgow Women	1	0	0	1	0	2	-2	0
9	Boroughmuir Thistle	1	0	0	1	4	8	-4	0
10	Stirling University	1	0	0	1	0	5	-5	0

— Promotion play-off

— Relegation play-off

— Relegated to SWF Championship

Glasgow City star helping with hand sanitiser



Former Scotland player Jo Love has been speaking to FIFA.com about the current Covid-19 pandemic.

The midfielder has been producing hand sanitiser for under-resourced health workers.

Glasgow City Council recently put a video on social media showing a scientist working in her lab producing hand sanitiser and fans were quick to point out it was the former Scotland international Love.

The midfielder, who has 191 caps for Scotland, still plays domestically for Glasgow City.

Speaking to FIFA.com, she said: "This definitely isn't what I expected to be doing.

"But the whole world is adjusting to this new situation and people's health is paramount, so I'm just happy to be doing anything I can to help.

"It's a drop in the ocean compared to what the frontline staff in the NHS (National Health Service) are doing, but hopefully it's making a small difference.

"If I had the skills and the qualifications, I would put myself out on the front line. I'd like to think I'm a person who tries to help others, pandemic or not, and in this situation the hand sanitiser stuff is just something I can do to help the people who're doing most.

"It became obvious pretty early in all of this that there was a shortage of sanitiser, and of the alcohol to create it.

"We jumped on that because we knew we had some supplies in the lab and were able to use that to start production. From there, it's just grown arms and legs.

"In fact, we just received a big order of 1,000 litres that will ramp things up a lot.

"We're working on producing sanitiser all the time right now and, from the chemical side of things to the likes of ordering in bottles, handling the labelling, we've become like a little factory.

"It's hard going with just three people in the lab, especially when you factor in social distancing. But hopefully we're doing enough to make a small difference."

The 34-year-old has juggled a job as a scientist and being a part-time footballer for a number of years after making her Scotland debut in 2002.

She admits it has become tougher as the game has risen.

"I like to think I've managed it pretty well.

"Although I'm not a full-time player, I've always tried to maintain high standards and

train like a professional.

"My only issue now is age, and that's one thing I can't do anything about!

"If I'd started out in the game a few years later than I did, maybe I would have done things differently and looked at the professional route.

"But I'm very comfortable with how it's all worked out for me and the balance I've been able to strike.

"In the current situation, I definitely think that having another job makes it easier for me than it is for the other girls.

"I'm grateful to have something else to focus on."







Wales

football latest

The Football Association of Wales has taken the decision to extend the current suspension of all domestic football in Wales until at least Friday, 15 May 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

In March the FAW's Board of Directors exercised their powers to indefinitely extend the 2019/20 season for all National Leagues, National Cup Competitions and the FAW Futsal League.

The current working documents for the Cymru Leagues and Welsh Premier Women's League have been shared with Clubs, in order to find a solution for the resumption of football when it is safe to do so.

A statement from the FAW stated:

"Above all, the most important priority for the FAW is the health and wellbeing of everyone.

"The FAW encourages everyone to follow the advice of the UK & Welsh Governments and Public Health Wales.

"Our thoughts are with everyone affected by the pandemic."



© Joerdell Photography | Daniela

Re-watch some of Wales women best games



The FAW have announced that they will be showing re-runs of Wales Women's games in May.

On Tuesday May 5, Wales fans can watch their game against England from the Women's World Cup qualifiers.

The game, held at Southampton's Saint Mary's, finished 0-0 with Jayne Ludlow classing it as one of the best games in their history.

The second game, shown a week later on May 12, will see Wales take on Russia.

A brace from Kayleigh Green and a brilliant strike from Tash Harding earned the side a 3-0 win at Newport's Spytty Park.

The game originally took place in June 2018.

Both matches will be available to watch free of charge on the FAW Facebook and Youtube channels.

The matches will be streamed at 19:30 BST.

FAW said: "The COVID-19 outbreak is having a large impact on our daily lives, with many people required to self-isolate and everyone being asked to adhere to social distancing measures.

"The FAW understands that this can create worry for anyone and even greater anxiety for those with an existing mental health problem.

"The FAW hopes the re-runs will provide some light relief during these challenging times."





Shiels pens open letter ahead of original NI qualifier date

Northern Ireland Women's manager Kenny Shiels took to the Northern Ireland official website to pen an open letter to fans ahead of their original game date for their Euro qualifier against Belarus.

He wrote:

This weekend I should have been preparing the Northern Ireland senior women's team for a Women's Euro qualifier away to Belarus early next week.

That game, which was due to played on Tuesday (14 April), has been postponed as well as a further two qualifiers scheduled for June, home matches against Belarus and Faroe Islands.

Naturally, I am disappointed that the team will not be able to take to the international stage in the coming months. We have been building up good momentum recently, with the players buying in to a more expansive style of play.

We must work together in tackling the spread of Covid-19 and continue to follow the guidelines issued by the Government and the health authorities

We did well at the Pinatar Cup in Spain last month, producing decent performances against national teams much higher up the world rankings than us.

We don't know when we will have another competitive match at this stage, but right now football is not exactly front of our minds.

Yes, we are encouraging the players to train at home and follow exercise programmes which myself and some members of my backroom staff have developed in a bid to keep them fit.

However, we are living in unprecedented times in which the coronavirus pandemic is all-consuming, and rightly so.

We may be managers, coaches or players, but we are also human beings with families, friends, colleagues and neighbours.

This is a time for people to look out for each other, and especially for the more vulnerable in our society.

While we are currently living in circumstances that were unthinkable just a short time ago, we must all do our best to adapt to them.

We must work together in tackling the spread of Covid-19 and continue to follow the guidelines issued by the Government and the health authorities.

I am sure that when we do eventually play competitively again we will be able to count on your support as we bid to climb up the table in our qualifying group and give ourselves a chance of making it to a play-off for the next Women's Euro final tournament. It was, of course, scheduled to take place in summer 2021 but has now been moved to the following summer due to the knock-on effects of the coronavirus pandemic.

If we all follow the rules then hopefully it won't be too long before we can all enjoy football again.

Please stay at home and only go outside for food, health reasons or work (if you cannot work from home). If you do go out stay two metres (6ft) away from other people at all times and wash your hands as soon as you get home. Please do not meet others, even friends or family. You can spread the virus even if you don't have symptoms.

Stay safe.



Linfield Ladies become first NI women's team to be granted new European licence



Linfield Ladies have become the first Northern Ireland women's team to be granted a Uefa Women's Licence for the 2020-21 season.

The new licence is now a mandatory requirement for teams to compete in European competitions.

Linfield, who are current Women's Premiership champions, have won four titles and played Champions League football last season.

Licences will be valid for one season only.

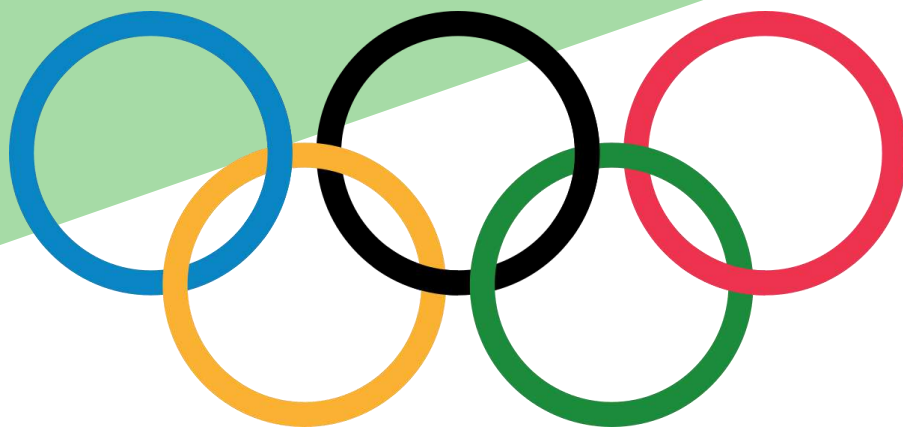
Linfield Ladies secretary said: "There is little difference in the licensing of clubs between the male and female games so quite a bit of work has gone into the granting of it.

"Of course it's nice to be the first Northern Irish club to do so and allows us to carry on the preparations for competing against some top sides, hopefully continuing to improve results against them, before the format changes for the following year."

The 2020 Women's Irish Premiership season was due to start in April but has been postponed.

Tokyo 2020:

What does the Neville news mean for Team GB?



With the FA announcing that Phil Neville will leave his position as manager of England Women at the end of the contract, there is uncertainty surrounding Team GB's Tokyo dreams.

The 2020 Olympics have been moved to 2021 and will take place between Friday, July 23 and Sunday, August 8.

Neville's contract runs out in the middle of the tournament so will he take Great Britain's women's team to Tokyo?

Neville had been due to take charge of Team GB in Tokyo this summer, however the FA remained vague on whether he would remain in post for the postponed competition, likely wishing to keep the option on the table when discussing the post with potential successors.

FA clarified their position with regards to a manager for Team GB and said: "There isn't a separate coaching contract for the Olympics.

"It is up to The FA, with the appropriate approval of the other home nations, to determine who is nominated as Team GB coach.

"That is ordinarily the current coach of the lead association. That nomination is then put to the BOA for ratification."

Tokyo 2020:

Will Team GB still send a women's football team?



TOKYO 2020



Wales forward Natasha Harding believes Team GB should forget about attending the Tokyo Olympics—now in 2021 to help ease fixture congestion.

Speaking to the Daily Mail, the Reading forward, who is expected to be in contention for a place in the Team GB squad, things they should pull out of the tournament.

It has been heavily debated as to whether we should send a squad in the Olympics in the first place.

The team had a squad at London 2012 but did not send one to Rio in 2016 because Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland voted against it.

Harding told the Daily Mail: “Even though the Olympics are a great thing and it would be phenomenal to have a Welsh player at them, for the next one it would be wise to postpone a GB women's team.

“When you break it down it's a lot to ask, especially in the female game where you see a lot more ACL injuries.

“There has to be some sacrifice within the league or existing structures, but I definitely think that the Olympics is one that could be put on the back-burner.”

Uefa Women's Euro to 'take centre stage' in 2022



Uefa released a statement on April 23 updating fans on the latest for the Women's Euros.

The UEFA Executive Committee confirm that the postponed UEFA Women's EURO 2021 will be played in England from 6 July to 31 July 2022.

It is planned to use the same venues that were originally proposed to host the event.

Commenting on the rescheduling, UEFA president Aleksander Čeferin said: "When we had to take an urgent decision on the postponement of UEFA EURO 2020, we always had the impact on UEFA Women's EURO 2021 in mind.

"We have carefully considered all options, with our commitment to the growth of women's football at the forefront of our thinking.

"By moving UEFA Women's EURO to the

following year, we are ensuring that our flagship women's competition will be the only major football tournament of the summer, providing it with the spotlight it deserves."

The decision to move UEFA Women's EURO came after UEFA announced on 17 March that UEFA EURO 2020 would be postponed to 2021 following the global outbreak of COVID-19 and the duty of UEFA to protect the health of all those involved in the game, while allowing domestic leagues and European competitions to be completed.

The extensive discussions leading to the move included talks with organisers of the Birmingham 2022 Commonwealth Games, with whom UEFA and the English Football Association continue to work with collaboratively to ensure that 2022 provides a memorable summer of elite sport.

UEFA's chief of women's football, Nadine Kessler, said: "The core question guiding us together with the English FA was: What is best for women's football? With the Olympics now being confirmed for summer 2021, we firmly believe that moving to 2022 is in the best interests of the tournament, the players, the fans, women's football partners and everybody involved in all areas and at all levels of the game."

"UEFA Women's EURO is Europe's biggest women's sport event."

"It is also among the biggest sports events in the world, and therefore needs and deserves a platform of its own."

"This decision puts us in a position to deliver a tournament that attracts global attention, maximises media coverage and increases stadium attendances, and is therefore helping us to meet our core objective of inspiring the next generation of footballers."

"2022 also allows for further promotion and partner activation, which would have been much more difficult in what is now a

crowded summer in 2021.

"It is a clear sign of commitment to our dedicated partners who have joined us since we decided to separate the sponsorship of women's football from men's football."

UEFA president Aleksander Čeferin added: "I would also like to thank The Football Association, the local organising committee and our member associations, who are as convinced as we are that the postponement to 2022 will be to the benefit of women's football at large."

"The football family has once again shown unity, and we are now not only in a position to look forward to a European summer of football in 2021, but in 2022 as well."

"We are grateful for the cooperation of FIFA and the Commonwealth Games Federation in arriving at these dates."

Further details, including potential amendments to the match calendar or the name of the tournament, will be announced in due course.



FA Q&A on Euro 2021



Why did UEFA decide to postpone UEFA Women's EURO to 2022?

Nadine Kessler: Over the last few weeks, together with all stakeholders, we were reconsidering the date of our next UEFA Women's EURO. When the International Olympic Committee decided to postpone the Olympic Games to the summer of 2021, there was no sportingly viable alternative left than to postpone the Women's EURO to 2022. The Olympic Games is an important part of the women's football international match calendar. It's a prestigious tournament for the women's game, and one which our players and member associations care deeply about.

Additional guiding factors in this decision-making process were venue availability of host cities selected for the Women's EURO, maximum exposure for women's football and the goal to provide the tournament with the centre stage it deserves. This led to a joint conclusion with the Local Organising Committee that 2022 would be the best solution in terms of the development of women's football.

We firmly believe that this decision is in the best interests of the tournament, the players, the fans, women's football partners and everybody involved in all areas and at all levels of the game. UEFA Women's EURO is Europe's biggest women's sport event, as well as a major event in worldwide terms. For this reason alone, it's deserving of its own special and privileged platform.

Sue Campbell: To add to this, I think it's also important to acknowledge that this in an unprecedented time in which the health and safety of our communities must be our combined priority. We therefore also wanted to ensure that host cities and venues had time to recover from the uncertain situation we all currently find ourselves in, allowing for recovery and stabilisation to deliver the best event possible. When considering all factors together, it was clear that a move to 2022 was the right decision and one which the FA was fully supportive of.

Was there any doubt that England would continue as tournament host?

Sue Campbell: No, never. The commitment and drive from the FA and its partners to deliver a record-breaking women's EURO has been unwavering. In addition, the support and engagement the tournament has seen to date from host cities, venues, fans, media and other stakeholders across the game has been fantastic and I have no doubt will continue as we look forward to 2022.

Why was the decision not taken at the same time as the postponement of UEFA EURO 2020?

Nadine Kessler: Firstly, UEFA had to take an urgent decision on the postponement of UEFA EURO 2020, as the tournament was only three months away. I know for a fact that the impact that such a postponement would have on UEFA Women's EURO 2021 was always a key part of the decision-making process. In some ways,

we're lucky that we've had more time for the decision on the Women's EURO. It's given us more time to hold discussions not only with our tournament hosts, the English Football Association, our member associations and clubs, but also with other competition organisers such as the Commonwealth Games Federation. This has enabled us to reflect and find the best way forward.

How will the postponement affect the FA's planning and delivery of the tournament?

Sue Campbell: Postponing a major event obviously comes with its challenges, but the immediate priority for us will be to reconfirm all cities and venues as well as the support of our delivery partners, needing of course to be respectful of the challenges and priorities that we all currently face as a result of COVID-19.

We are already starting to review our delivery plans, the tournament roadmap and key milestones in the calendar. The postponement ultimately gives us more time in our planning; to support our cities in their plans for a great match day experience and a sustainable tournament legacy, to work with venues on the upgrades and overlay required and, importantly, to communicate with and grow our audiences in the hope that they engage with both the tournament and the wider women's game.

Over the coming months we will seek to formalise our arrangements for 2022. We're fortunate to have a dedicated team at the FA who have risen to the challenge they have been presented with and will continue to work with UEFA and our numerous partners to deliver a record-breaking women's EURO in two years' time.

Will the current ten venues – including Old Trafford – still be involved in hosting games in 2022? And can you also remind us how the venues were selected?

Sue Campbell: Our intention is to stage the same tournament that was being planned for 2021 in 2022 and we very much hope that all current venues and cities will continue to play a role in hosting the tournament. They've all been fantastic partners to work with to date, showing

a great level of commitment and support both for the delivery of the tournament and women's football more broadly.

Prior to being awarded the tournament, we undertook a rigorous process to identify venues and cities who were interested in staging games. Notice was sent to all cities and councils, County FAs, Premier League, English Football League and FA Women's Super League clubs. A total of 25 cities expressed an interest, and a Bid Steering group then reviewed all submitted responses.

The final decision was based on the venues which adhered to the numerous technical requirements from UEFA, as well as host cities that could provide the required level of support to deliver a major event. A commitment from the City Council to support the wider legacy and sustainable development of the women's game was also an important factor.

This was coupled with the need to strike the right balance for the tournament. Setting an ambitious ticket target – with more than 700,000 tickets available for fans – whilst seeking to achieve full venues where possible. This is a balance we believe we have achieved in the selected venues and cities, with England's Lionesses due to play all of their group stage games at Premier League grounds across the country.

Have you already decided whether the tournament will be called UEFA Women's EURO 2021 or 2022?

Nadine Kessler: No decision on this has been taken as yet, but we'll discuss it in the upcoming months with all relevant stakeholders.

Do you have any regrets at moving the tournament?

Nadine Kessler: We shouldn't forget the context in which we took this decision. The move is due to unprecedented circumstances caused by the global COVID-19 pandemic, and the impact that it is having not only on the global fixture calendar and on football, but also, most importantly, on people's lives across the world.

Around the World





News from around the world

French Women's league cancelled

Prime Minister Edouard Philippe announced that major sports fixtures—including those behind closed doors—will not be permitted before September.

Speaking in Parliament, Philippe said: “The 2019/20 season of professional sport, notably football, won't be able to return.

The French League (LFP) has announced that for the men's leagues, final standings would be based on a points-per-game ratio.

This means that in the men's PSG have been declared Ligue 1 champions and Champions League positions have been announced.

This is relevant for the women's leagues because it is expected they will follow the same suit.

This would see Lyon crowned Division 1 Feminine champions as they were leading when play was suspended.

We will have to wait and see what happens for the French women's leagues. It will have a great impact on the Women's Champions League and what will happen if leagues cannot be finished.



Bouhaddi to leave Lyon

French international goalkeeper Sarah Bouhaddi has confirmed she will leave Lyon after 11 years at the club.

Bouhaddi has won the Champions League six times with Lyon as well as ten domestic league titles and seven Coupe de France trophies.

The France goalkeeper has made 149 for the international teams and is well in excess of that for Lyon.

She has been linked with NWSL side Utah Royals and it is thought that teammate Dzenifer Marozcan could also be joining her.

Marozcan is out of contract in June and has been at Lyon since 2016.

She was awarded the UNFP best women's player in 2017, 2018 and 2019.





News from around the world

Bayern Frauen signs Sweden international Glas

Bayern Frauen have signed Sweden international Hanna Glas.

The 26-year-old defender will join the club from Paris Saint German, who she joined in 2018.

Speaking to the German club about the announcement, she said: "I chose FC Bayern because it is a large club that wants to win titles.

"That motivates me a lot. I like the game philosophy and think that it fits me well.

"The club and coach have shown a very sincere interest in me for a long time, which was also crucial.

"I want to win every competition in which we compete. I don't want to be second or third; I want to win.

"I know that is ambitious, but the club, my future teammates, and the fans all have the same goal here."



Judge dismisses USWNT's equal pay claim

A federal judge has thrown out the unequal pay claim by players on the US women's national soccer team.

Players led by Alex Morgan sued in March 2019, claiming they have not been paid equally under their collective bargaining agreement to what the men's national team receives.

They asked for more than \$66m in damages.

US district judge R Gary Klausner said: "The history of negotiations between the parties demonstrates that the WNT rejected an offer to be paid under the same pay-to-play structure as the MNT, and the WNT was willing to forgo higher bonuses for benefits, such as greater base compensation and the guarantee of a higher number of contracted players.

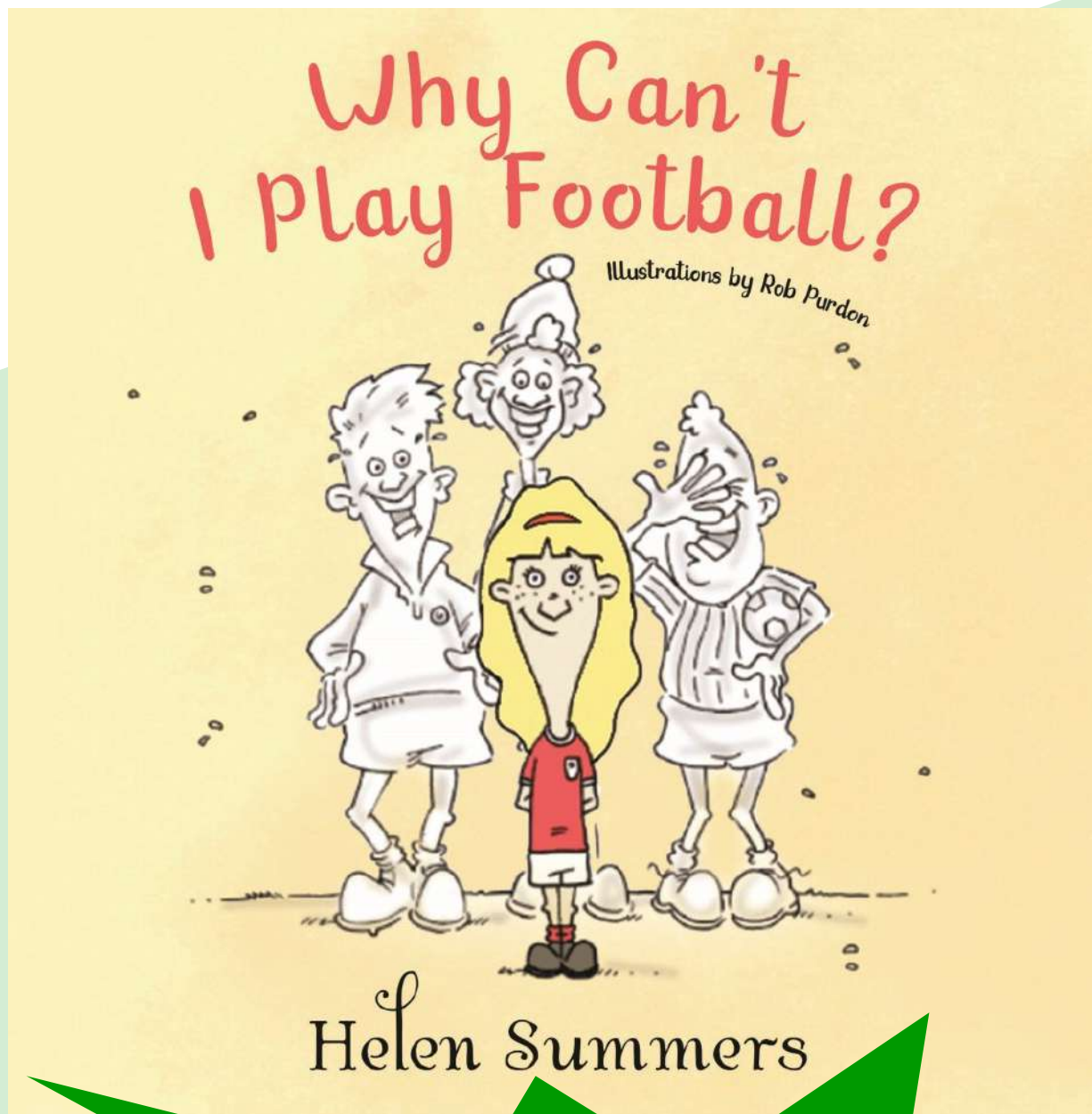
"Accordingly, plaintiffs cannot now retroactively deem their CBA worse than the MNT CBA by reference to what they would have made had they been paid under the MNT's pay-to-play terms structure when they themselves rejected such a structure.

Klausner has left intact claims that USSF discriminated in the money it spent on commercial airfare, hotel accommodation and medical and training support services.

Megan Rapinoe took to Twitter saying: "We will never for fighting for equality."

Alex Morgan added: "Although disappointing to hear this news, this will not discourage us in our fight for equality."

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