

# WOMEN'S FOOTBALL

ISSUE 45

MAGAZINE

JANUARY 2021



## THE YEAR THE FOOTBALL STOPPED

We look back over 2020 and how the Covid-19 pandemic changed women's football in the UK, we interview players about the year and look back at some of the best moments and teams.

# **THE WOMEN'S FOOTBALL MAGAZINE**



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# Welcome

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## Hello and welcome to Issue 45!

Hello everyone, welcome to our latest issue.

So as we move in 2021, we are back in lockdown here in the UK, with teams lower than the Championship once again on hold.

It's been a funny old few weeks with cancellations, positive Covid tests and of course #DubaiGate.

The transfer windows are back open so we have all the latest signings across the leagues, we look back on a tumultuous year and pick out some of the best players and teams across the league, look ahead to what we can hope for 2021 and Simon is back with his latest column.

Whilst we are in lockdown, I just wanted to take the time to say look after yourselves, make sure you talk if you are feeling down and remember that whatever you achieve—even if it is nothing—is an achievement during a pandemic.

Keep safe.

Helen Rowe-Willcocks

Editor-in-Chief

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**THE WOMEN'S  
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# Simply the Best



## By Ali Rampling

2020 was a different year for women's football. We should now be well into the countdown for the 2021 European Championships, many leagues were decided on points per game or leagues were cancelled and many players lost on out game time.

Despite all this, there were a lot of success stories in 2020 and Ali Rampling looks at the year's best teams across the world.



### UK: Chelsea

Chelsea have successfully gone a full calendar year unbeaten in the WSL in

2020, and Emma Hayes' side's only defeat in the 1

last 12 months was their FA Cup quarter final loss to Everton in September.

The Blues completed the double during the 2019/20 season, beating Arsenal 2-1 in the Continental Cup final in February to win the competition for the first time in the club's history, before being named WSL champions in June. Chelsea subsequently donated their WSL prize money to domestic abuse charity Refuge. They head into 2021 very much in the title race, and as one of just two teams yet to taste defeat in the WSL this season.



## USA: Houston Dash

The 2020 regular NWSL season was replaced with the NWSL Challenge Cup due to the coronavirus pandemic, and underdogs Houston Dash emerged victorious. The Dash

won just one of their four preliminary round matches, but came alive in the knockout stages.

They beat Utah Royals on penalties in the quarter finals and Rachel's Daly's third goal of the competition was enough to see off Portland Thorns - the team responsible for eliminating pre-tournament favourites North Carolina Courage - to book their place in the final. A Daly assist in helped the Dash to a 2-0 win over Chicago Red Stars and NWSL Cup glory - and resulted in the England international scooping the Golden Boot and MVP award.



Andrea Vilchez / Sports Press Photo



## France: Lyon

Lyon's unrelenting brilliance continued in 2020 as they stormed to the treble. Jean-Luc Vasseur's side were named Division 1 Féminine champions in April, before

securing the Coupe de France Féminine in August.

Later that month, Lyon won their fifth successive Champions League crown via victory over Wolfsburg. They did see their astonishing 80-game unbeaten league streak come to an end in November at the hands of PSG, but the year concluded with both Wendie Renard and Lucy Bronze - key members of Lyon's treble-winning side - being nominated for the Best FIFA Women's Player 2020 award.



Ryszard Dreger / Sports Press Photo

## Germany: Wolfsburg



The Frauen Bundesliga was one of the few domestic women's leagues in Europe to resume their 2019/20 season following the coronavirus

pandemic - and it was business as usual for Wolfsburg.

The She Wolves stormed to their fifth



Tatjana Herzberg / Sports Press Photo





Gerard Franco / Sports Press Photo



Ryszard Dreger / Sports Press Photo

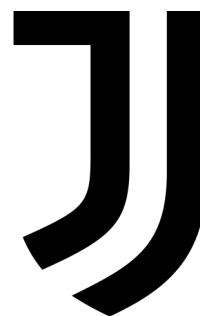
successive league title, going the entire campaign unbeaten and dropping just four points all season. On the European front, Wolfsburg reached the Champions League final, beating Glasgow City 9-1 in the quarter finals thanks to a Pernille Harder masterclass, but ultimately fell just short against the might of Lyon.



## Spain: Barcelona

Barcelona wrestled the Primera División title off Atletico Madrid during the 2019/20 season as they were crowned champions of Spain for the first time in five years - and they have not lost a single league game in 2020.

Blaugranes were unbeaten in the league prior to the intervention of Covid-19, collecting 59 points from a possible 63. Barcelona have continued this form into the 2020/21 season, winning 11 from 11 - including a 4-0 victory over Real Madrid in women's football's first El Clásico - to leave them top of the Primera División with games in hand. They also reached the Champions League last four in August, but were denied a place in the final with a narrow 1-0 loss to Lyon.



## Other European: Juventus

Juventus have also gone the entirety of 2020 without suffering a league defeat. They won the 2019/20 Serie A title - their third on the trot - following the league's curtailment due to Covid-19 having taken 44 points from a possible 48.

Despite going six months without playing a competitive game, Juventus have carried on from where they left off this term and top Serie A after taking maximum points from their first 10 games.

One of their victories came over title rivals AC Milan in October in the first ever women's match to be played at the San Siro.



## Australia: Melbourne City

Melbourne City were the dominant force in the W League during the 2019/20 season, qualifying for the finals series as league premiers with 11 wins from 12.

After drawing their first match of the season, City went on a 13-game winning streak, beating West Sydney Wanderers 5-1 in the semi finals, followed by a 1-0 win over Sydney FC in the Grand Final to be crowned champions. City became just the third side in W League history to go the full regular season unbeaten, and victory in March's Grand Final saw them crowned W League champions for the fourth time in five years.



## Asia: Urawa Red Diamonds

Urawa Reds ended NTV Beleza's reign of dominance in Japan's Nadeshiko League in 2020, as they were crowned champions of Japan for the first time since 2014.

Record 17-time champions NTV Beleza had secured the league title five years on the trot and are the reigning AFC Women's Club

Championship holders. However, they could only finish third during the 2020 season as Urawa Reds recorded 14 wins from 18 and topped the Nadeshiko League by nine points. Urawa forward Yuika Sugawara finished as the league's top scorer with 17 goals as her club celebrated their fourth Nadeshiko League title in their history.



## South America: Sante Fe

Sante Fe made Colombian women's football history in 2020, as they became the first ever team to win a second Liga Femenina Dimayor title. Based in Colombia's capital Bogotá, Sante Fe won their maiden Liga Femenina Dimayor title in 2016 - the league's debut season - and secured their second in December 2020 having lost just one game all campaign.

Sante Fe won eight from eight to top their group and progress to the knockout stages, and went on to beat América de Cali 4-1 over two legs in the final. Forward Ysaura Viso was on target in the first leg of the final, her 13th goal of the campaign as she finished as the league's top scorer - no other player managed to hit double figures.





# WOMEN'S SUPER LEAGUE





# 2020: The year of Mewis



## By Charlotte Stacey

Describing the year 2020 could quite accurately serve as a dictionary definition of the word ‘impossible’. Sports events, entire seasons and prestigious international competitions were all cruelly whipped away from us by an aggressively obnoxious predator. But amongst the ever-present dread emerged positives to grab on to, rising to the top of the void with little shards of light.

Indeed, women’s football returned, albeit slightly differently to what we are used to. This began in The States when The National Women’s Soccer League dosed us with a much-needed tonic, hosting a month long knock-out tournament that was streamed worldwide. That was it, all eyes on the Challenge Cup.

The tournament brought an incentive to those long lockdown days, gave us an NWSL education, as well as familiarising us with a catalogue of internationally acclaimed players.

Amongst these, there were plenty that impressed, yet a sibling duo stood out as integral fixtures in their respective teams. Sam and Kristie Mewis distinguished themselves from the pack, each exerting their tailored command of the midfield to derive the strengths of those around them. As time progressed, it became clear that the Challenge Cup was merely the beginning for the sisters.

Younger sister, Sam Mewis, began the year in an Atlantic blue North Carolina Courage strip, and is ending it over 3500 miles away from her homeland, donning Manchester City’s iconic sky blue. Mewis started in all five of the Courage’s Challenge Cup games before the top seeds surprisingly crashed out in the first of the knock-out rounds.

The 28-year-old was then one of five US national team members to make the move across the Atlantic to join the Women’s Super League for the 2020/21 season. Bringing with them an enticing excitement, the impact of



these players had the potential to swing one of two ways. Yet each have made a mark, with Mewis leading the line, arguably finding her feet the quickest of the quintet.

Infiltrating Manchester City's established midfield was never going to be an easy task, even for a World Cup winner, yet Mewis took to it like a duck to water; feet under the table with immediate effect. In fact, Mewis has slotted in with such an immaculate ease, it is becoming increasingly difficult to recall a time in which Mewis was not nullifying defensive lines in the English league.

Since joining Manchester City in the summer, Mewis has racked up six goals, including bagging her first European goal in her Champions League debut. She also became only the third American player to score in an FA Cup final, which City ultimately went on to win. But her goalscoring escapades are merely the tip of the iceberg. Mewis' aerial abilities, startling agility and ingenuity to assist are what truly mark her as one of the finest signings of the league.

To polish off her successful year, rather fittingly Mewis has also just been named 'US Female Soccer Player of the Year'. Undoubtedly a deserved feat given her consistent performances across all clubs, leagues and competitions.

Across the pond, older sister, Kristie Mewis, continues to work wonders in the heart of Houston Dash. The Dash became the somewhat unlikely winners of the Challenge Cup. With every game they saw off the competition while exuding an alluring charm and a rousing of unity. This sense of togetherness drew out the very best in each player, yet the eye, almost unconsciously, was repeatedly drawn to Houston's middle third, and in particular, Mewis.

Mewis' mouth-watering passing ability,

menacing runs and her cognition in envisioning pockets of play made her the ultimate creator, one simply to be held in the highest regard. The captain's band may not have been wrapped around her upper arm, but Mewis was unmistakably the central cog that propelled the Dash to victory.

The 29-year-old has since carried this exquisite form into the Fall Series. The Dash respectably finished in second place, with Mewis impressively scoring twice and notching up five assists in just four games. It is no wonder then, that Mewis was subsequently called up to the national team for their October and November training camps.

Throughout her career, Mewis has endured her fair share of turbulence. Being traded five times, overcoming disappointment with the national team, suffering an excruciating ACL injury and being halted in her tracks by a global pandemic, it certainly has not been the easiest of rides. But through sheer resilient grit, Mewis made her return to the international scene, six years since her last appearance, in a friendly against The Netherlands this December. Of course, as fate would have it, this match topped Mewis' year off in style as she claimed her second international goal, 2722 days after her last.

And so, in what has been possibly the most intense period of upheaval many of us have experienced, the Mewises, Mewis', Mewii, Mewes (insert alternative plural here) have presented a welcomed break from our collectively bleak affairs with a glint of excellence.

But more than that, Kristie Mewis' story is one that brings a smile, yet it is a story that is far from over. Her tale is one of utter perseverance; a reminder that even in the very worst of times, there are always better days ahead.







# 10 Best WSL players of 2020



Martin Smith / Sports Press Photo



Leo Winter / Sports Press Photo

Whilst 2020 did not go according to plan, there were a number of players who shone brightly. Marissa Thomas takes a look at the top 10 players of the WSL in 2020.

## Sophie Baggaley

For the last two seasons, Bristol City have been in relegation trouble. They were three points away from the drop last term and are the only winless side in the 2020-21 campaign. While things are bad, they would be even worse without Sophie Baggaley who routinely keeps her side in games.

Baggaley has made 54 saves so far this season, showing just how busy she is in goal for Bristol City. There is no doubt that Baggaley is one of the most exciting goalkeeping prospects in England.

If she keeps up her performance levels, even in a struggling side, her England dreams may become a reality.

## Ashleigh Neville

During their two seasons in the WSL, Ashleigh Neville has been a consistent performer for Tottenham Hotspur. She is reliable, consistent and puts her body on the line for the team.

As well as being solid defensively, Neville is more than capable of getting forward and has scored twice for Spurs this campaign. Alex Morgan's arrival at the club may have got all the headlines, but now that her stay has come to an end, players like Neville should get their chance to shine.

## Vivianne Miedema



Few players make scoring goals look as easy as Vivianne Miedema. The Dutch striker is deadly in the box but has also improved her long-range shooting, giving her another way to catch defences off guard. Miedema scored 16 WSL goals last season and is already up to 11 in the current campaign.

Record-breaking has become the norm for Miedema in an Arsenal shirt. She scored a first-half hat-trick against Spurs in October to become the first player to reach 50 Women's Super League goals.

## Leah Williamson



The only way is up for modern-day centre-back Leah Williamson. The life-long Arsenal fan excels in the backline for the club. Her passes are more than capable of splitting defences and her positive forward movements often enable Arsenal to go on the attack.

At just 23, Williamson has made over 150 appearances for the club, an incredible milestone to reach at this early stage of her career. Williamson has been an ever-present for Arsenal in 2020 and that looks set to continue into next year.

## Fran Kirby



Having developed pericarditis, Fran Kirby was out ill for the majority of last season. Chelsea certainly had the quality of players to cope without Kirby but now that she is back to her best, it is clear once again what a special player she is.

Even though she only made her comeback in August's Community Shield, Kirby has more than made up for lost time. Her link up play and quality on the ball is superb and she looks just as good as before. Kirby has three goals and four assists this season in an extremely talented Chelsea side and became the Blues' record goal scorer in a 5-0 victory over Benfica in the Champions League.

## Leah Galton



There is no doubt that Man United are on the up. They finished fourth last season but are already aiming higher this term as they currently sit top of the table. One of the main reasons for their improved and more consistent performances is Leah Galton.

She has scored five goals so far this campaign, better last season's tally of four, and has two assists. Galton has created 24 chances at a rate of 2.40 per 90 minutes played. While she is clearly capable of finding the back of the net, Galton's all-round play enhances the team and has ensured Man United are unbeaten heading into 2021.



## Millie Bright



Some of the best players are so consistent that they are only missed when they are not in the team. That certainly applies to Chelsea's Millie Bright. For many seasons, Bright has been a rock at the back for Chelsea and it was no surprise that she was included in the 2019/20 FIFA FIFPRO Women's World11.

The Blues were unbeaten last campaign as they won the league and Bright was part of a defence that kept six clean sheets on the way to their third WSL title.

## Millie Turner



Man United's attacking players have understandably been stealing the show this season but their defence is also something to shout about. Millie Turner and Amy Turner have formed one of the best centre-back partnerships in the WSL, laying the foundations for the team to flourish higher up on the pitch knowing they are covered at the back. As well as progressing at United, Turner has attended senior camps with England which will have helped improve her game even further.

Her importance to United is illustrated by the fact that only Hayley Ladd (21) made more appearances for the club in 2020 than Turner and Jackie Groenen who made 20 each.

## Maya Le Tissier



At just 18 years of age, Maya Le Tissier has become a main stay in Brighton's defence this campaign. The England youth international already has ambitions to be better than Man City's Lucy Bronze. With the praise that is being lavished on her already and her performances on the pitch backing it up, the sky is the limit for the young right-back.

Le Tissier is part of a Brighton side that has kept three clean sheets this season, just one less than the previous campaign. Two of those shut-outs helped manager Hope Powell win the September Manager of the Month award after an unbeaten month.

## Bethany England



Chelsea were crowned WSL champions on a point-per-game basis last season and Beth England's goals were hugely influential in their title win. England scored 14 goals in 15 WSL appearances as the Blues went unbeaten throughout the season.

Given the quality forwards that Chelsea have signed recently, England has shown that she is more than capable of competing with or playing alongside the likes of Sam Kerr and Pernille Harder. As Chelsea look to defend their WSL title, England will need to be amongst the goals once again.

# Dubai-Gate:

## *How one holiday changed the season*



**By Charlotte Stacey & Edward Payne**

The opening weekend of the second half of the season should have been a happily anticipated occasion with the nation locked down once again. Instead, it has been subject to annihilation by a handful of irresponsible decisions in what has now dubbed as “Dubai-gate”.

The last FA Barclays WSL game was played on 20th December 2020, yet no more than 48 hours had passed before social media was awash with images of players sunning themselves on golden beaches against a backdrop of glistening high-rise towers. No, this wasn't Blackpool Pleasure Beach but Dubai and the Maldives.

On 19th December 2020, the government announced that London and the South East would move into Tier 4 the following day. The restrictions of Tier 4 were explicitly clear; stay at home, no overnight stays, international travel should not be undertaken unless for work and holidays abroad are not allowed.

Manchester, at the time, remained a Tier 3 area. Whilst the restrictions of Tier 3 were not legally binding, the government still advised that travel outside of your area should be abstained unless it was essential, this included international travel.

Fast forward a couple of weeks and we find ourselves in a national lockdown. With this comes the relegation of leisure outlets, constraint, not only on one's physical needs, but also their mental escapism. This lockdown, though perhaps inevitable, was helped on its way by those who bent the rules.

Group sport is now only available to a lucky few, so, imagine the deep personal upset felt when it was reported that players from Arsenal, Manchester City, Manchester United, Birmingham City, West Ham, and some suspected within the Championship, had all flown abroad. Of these it is known that one Arsenal player and four City players have all tested positive for Covid-19. Arsenal also have several other players in isolation.



It has been reported that Arsenal were not aware of their players intention, but have since accepted evidence that the trips were made for business. But with zoom calls and remote working, the tech-savvy among us will question, what sort of essential business requires a footballer to frolic on a sun-drenched beach with a cocktail in hand?

It remains to be seen as to whether West Ham or Birmingham had prior knowledge of their players vacation plans. But it has emerged that Manchester City and Manchester United sanctioned their players overseas trips, and so these players travelled with the full permission of their respective clubs. These decisions, whilst feasibly intended with individual players best interests in mind, did not reflect that of the collective picture.

The stark reality in which we have all bared witness to the harrowing images on the news; in which we have all taken knocks; in which we have all been starved of the simplest comforts; in which we have all had to make sacrifices. Many continue to face uncertainty with employment, financial stability, and most worryingly, health.

Specifically, in the footballing world, only a few weeks ago, Arsenal defender, Jen Beattie, revealed that she had been receiving treatment for breast cancer. Beattie's announcement was met with universal support across the WSL and the Championship. Players, including those who have since travelled to sunnier climes, expressed their admiration of Beattie in dealing with this devastating news, in some instances, alone. When considering this recent tribulation faced by one of their own, it really does put the escapade of a few days in the sun into a rather blunt perspective.

Quite rightly, uproar erupted on social media. To put it politely, the farcical decision to travel overseas at a time when families and friends could not spend the holidays together, when NHS staff and other key workers are at breaking point, when children are unable to hug their grandparents, did not sit well.

Manchester United boss, Casey Stoney, has been the first manager to honestly address the





part her players have played in the debacle. "... on reflection it was a poor error in judgement from me. I am sincerely sorry for that. The buck starts with me and stops with me so I am sorry for that."

Stoney's gracious apology is widely appreciated, but one must argue that this is not solely her doing. After all, it was not Stoney who stepped on the plane. Whilst in the eyes of the law, some of these players did not break the rules, morally they have pushed their position to the absolute limit, and still not a single player has come forward to take responsibility for their actions. Their silence remains deafeningly loud.



With this in mind, it feels perhaps for the first time, that there is an elitist attitude creeping into women's football. It is well known that female footballers do not earn the same extortionate weekly salaries as their male counterparts but there are some, not all, footballers within the women's game who are earning six-figure yearly salaries. Financial gain is not, and has never been, what women's football is about. The WSL is not the Premier League and most supporters would agree that we do not wish it to be. Yet, this incident has opened eyes. It feels as if there one rule for one, one rule for another. This is not just amongst players, but threading through the FA itself.



Due to the number of positive tests returning, the FA have had to make decisions regarding this weekend's fixtures. The rumours regarding possible postponement of matches for Arsenal and City started late on Wednesday and continued early into Thursday morning before formal confirmation was announced later in the day. City have also had Wednesday's Continental Cup tie against Chelsea postponed.



Both clubs convinced the FA that they were unable to meet the criteria in order to play. The FA have issued rules stating a team must be able field a squad of fourteen players for fixtures to go ahead. An alleged appeal from Aston Villa against the FA's decision to postpone this weekends fixture against Arsenal was rejected. This now means that



Villa, West Ham and Chelsea face a possible fixture congestion at a later stage, in addition to Arsenal and City now having the luxury of their first team players being available following respective periods of isolation.

Earlier in the season, a depleted Bristol City requested postponement of their match against a fully fit Manchester City due to the self-isolation of five first team players. The FA stated that Bristol were still required to fulfil this fixture, in which they were ultimately beaten 8-1, as they were able to include academy players in their squad. Players that less than a week previously, the FA had deemed as “non-elite”. It seems that Bristol City did nothing but follow government advice, yet were penalised for doing so. In contrast, it appears Manchester City have stretched guidelines within an inch of their life, yet have been rewarded for their actions. Such contrasting rulings make a complete mockery of the game so many are desperately trying to grow.

Everton have also had their match postponed against Manchester United, citing a reduced squad. The Toffees have reported that five players contracted coronavirus over the Christmas break, plus they have another six players out with injury, meaning they are only able to field thirteen players. No questions asked. However, Birmingham City requested postponement for their match against Tottenham Hotspur as the Blues only have ten available players. But yes, you guessed it, Birmingham were expected to play, despite not even being able to scrape together a full starting eleven. Birmingham’s match has since been called off, yet the Blues remain clear with their wording, “an application for a postponement was submitted to the FA but this request was denied.”

This is where we see the emergence of the power that status and wealth yields. At a time when footballers in tiers 3 downwards of the pyramid have been suspended, it does not seem fair that players and clubs are flouting or bending the rules to suit. It shows a complete disrespect towards women’s football, supporters, and the very foundations on which the elite rest. When murmurings of early rounds of the Vitality Women’s FA Cup involving lower tiered sides could be settled by the toss of a coin, it truly adds insult to injury. Quite simply, the integrity of the FA has never been more fragile.

Circling back to the players from which this entire episode has derived, the words of Casey Stoney ring absolutely true. We are all human; we all make mistakes. And so, this must not become a witch hunt. This must not become a vendetta. One, of course, hopes that these players are well, but that they have recognised their ill judgment and are remorseful for their actions. Regardless of whether it was out and out rule breaking, a manipulation or misinterpretation of the rules, being in a privileged position does not mean you are immune to moral obligations and one must be accountable to that.

Unanimous with a bitter disappointment, there is no questioning that supporters have been let down. Their fuelled upset and frustrations are justified and their mere request for an apology is far from unreasonable. Relationships between supporters, clubs and players have been damaged and they cannot be fully rebuilt with the easy fix of sweeping it under the rug.

For surely, clubs and players must realise, that one holds a great deal of respect for those who hold their hands up and face the music.



# TheFA Women's Super League

Table after Jan 10		P	W	D	L	GD	Pts
1	Manchester United	10	8	2	0	18	26
2	Chelsea	9	7	2	0	23	23
3	Arsenal	10	7	1	2	30	22
4	Manchester City	9	5	3	1	14	18
5	Everton	9	4	2	3	2	14
6	Reading	11	3	4	4	-7	13
7	Birmingham City	8	3	0	5	-4	9
8	Tottenham Hotspur	9	2	3	4	-6	9
9	Brighton & Hove Albion	10	2	2	6	-12	8
10	West Ham United	9	2	1	6	-10	7
11	Aston Villa	8	2	0	6	-9	6
12	Bristol City	10	0	2	8	-39	2

## January fixtures

### Saturday, January 9

Aston Villa P-P Arsenal

Manchester City P-P West Ham United

### Sunday, January 10

Everton P-P Manchester United

Bristol City P-P Brighton & HA

Reading 0-5 Chelsea

Tottenham Hotspur P-P Birmingham City

### Sunday, January 17

Manchester City vs Aston Villa (12:30)

Everton vs Bristol City (13:00)

Birmingham City vs Brighton & HA (14:00)

Reading vs Arsenal (14:00)

Chelsea vs Manchester United (14:30)

West Ham United vs Tottenham Hotspur

(15:00)

### Wednesday, January 20

Birmingham City vs Everton (19:00)

Chelsea vs Tottenham Hotspur (19:00)

### Saturday, January 23

Aston Villa vs Reading

### Sunday, January 24

Arsenal vs West Ham United (12:00)

Manchester United vs Birmingham City (12:00)

Brighton & HA vs Manchester City (14:00)

Bristol City vs Chelsea (14:00)

Tottenham Hotspur vs Everton (14:30)

### Wednesday, January 27

Aston Villa vs Chelsea (19:30)



# World Cup bronze medal winner Potter announces retirement



Former England and Reading player Jo Potter has announced her retirement from football.

Potter, whose contract with the Women's Super League side was not renewed in the summer, made the announcement over social media.

She wrote: "The time has to come for every professional footballer to hang up their playing boots... after 21 years of senior football my time is now.

"Mentally ready for the next chapter of my life, whatever & wherever that may be. Thank you to everyone who has been a part of my journey."

Potter was known as a bit of a journeywoman as she rarely spent more than a year at most clubs.

Her clubs included Chesterfield, Sheffield Wednesday, Birmingham City, Arsenal, Charlton Athletic, Everton, Leicester City, Notts County and Reading.

In 2004, Potter received her first England call-up and made her debut against Nigeria.

After narrowly missing out on selection for the 2005 European Championships and then had a seven-year absence from the squad.

In 2014 Mark Sampson recalled her to the squad and she was part of the squad who won bronze at the 2015 World Cup in Canada.

Since 2007, Potter has been a regular pundit on the BBC.

# Beattie's battle with breast cancer



**By Charlotte Stacey**

On Saturday 12th December 2020, Arsenal and Scotland defender, Jennifer Beattie, revealed that she has been diagnosed with breast cancer.

A sequence of letters that one naturally assumed would never leave their fingertips when writing about athletes at the top of their game, yet, here we are.

This marks the first piece of work I have written in the first person. However, I must admit, I briefly considered taking an altogether different approach. I toyed with the idea of tackling the subject with my typical, almost academically natured dictation, yet such thoughts were very quickly dismissed. This is a piece that needs to come from a place much closer to home.

I realised this as I sat at my laptop unravelling the words before me. A small window of time, in which, I am unashamed to say, the prickling sensation of welling tears threatened to derail my composure. I cannot tell you why the cold, nauseating feeling of upset hit me as hard as it did. Blindsided, maybe. Shock, probably. Guilt, even.

You see, it struck me rather viciously, that in a year in which we have all been caught up with personal demons, it has become somewhat easier to forget that life goes on outside of our own four walls. That, sometimes, it can take horrifically sobering news to bring you crashing back down to Earth.

To clarify, I do not know Jen Beattie, I have never met her. But she is a part of something I hold so very dearly, and so, the news of her diagnosis, perhaps a little unexpectedly,



caught me off guard.

Jen Beattie, is a steadfast, resolute player. Experienced and reliable in any given situation, she is every bit a resourceful defender, who at 29, is in the prime of her career. Beattie emits a stout winning mentality; she has won four FA titles, plus several other league titles with Arsenal, and with former club, Manchester City.

A mentality that she, quite evidently, carries with her elsewhere. Here, even when dealing with such devastating personal news, Beattie's robust mindset has prevailed. Not only is she sharing her ongoing experience, something she is by no means obliged to do, she is also personally urging us to look after ourselves. When no one could accuse self-care of being egotistical, Beattie is, rather admirably, bringing visibility to a subject that is infrequently discussed.

This unselfish deed becomes even more commendable when considering the restrictions that Covid-19 has placed upon Beattie, in what no doubt continues to be, the scariest months of her life. As Beattie has opted to continue to play football, she has been unable to fully feel the support of her family in Scotland.

So begins a moment of reflection. As I re-watch the now, poignant, moment Beattie scored against Brighton in October, I recognise Lia Walti's comforting kiss on the cheek, Leah Williamson's literal interpretation of having one's back. I understand the gravity of Arsenal's eleven standing shoulder to shoulder, surrounding their number 5, a protective huddle encasing the dignity of one of their own.

Yet, I believe, this is a protective huddle that reaches beyond the borders of Arsenal's touchlines. It is a huddle that assembles far and wide, cascading a with widespread watchful eye. Because when someone, anyone, who is a part of our community suffers such a blow, we find common ground. We push our rivalries, our differences, our opinions, aside, and we stand together.

As I reach the end of this "open article", I appreciate that some may feel it is too much. Some may feel, perhaps, it is not my place to write such pouring a piece. Yet, my intention is not to gush, my intention is to thank.

I thank you, Jen Beattie, for sharing your experience. I thank you for bringing attention to a somewhat taboo topic. I thank you for reminding us that we are all guilty of neglecting ourselves from time to time. But most of all, I thank you for being honest.

As Arsenal and Manchester City met at the Academy stadium, though the stands may have been physically empty, they were overflowing in spirit with support, respect and admiration.

We are with you Jen, all the way.



# WSL and Championship pledge to support #TakeAStand campaign



The Barclays FA Women's Super League and FA Women's Championship will reaffirm their commitment to eliminating all forms of discrimination from the beautiful game as clubs from both divisions will continue to show their support for Kick it Out's Take a Stand campaign, commencing this weekend (12-13 December).

Clubs across the top two divisions have been invited to wear shirt patches depicting the Take a Stand logo to highlight an ongoing commitment to driving positive change on and off the pitch.

All clubs are supportive of The FA's and Kick It Out's commitment to delivering a game free from discrimination, however some clubs will show their support by wearing the logo on their training tops, or through alternative campaigns they had already planned to tackle this issue.

All clubs that accept the invitation to don the Take a Stand logo on their shirts will do so for the remainder of the season to highlight the respective league's commitment to driving discrimination out of football.

A number of football fans may have witnessed some form of discrimination in football – on the terraces, in dressing rooms or on social media – and campaigns like this will help raise awareness and create further conversation. Take A Stand is a challenge and an invitation for individuals and organisations to publicly

commit to their own pledge. It is also a movement that everyone can play a part in and is one the Barclays FA Women's Super League and FA Women's Championship are proud to support.

Edleen John, The FA's International, Corporate Affairs and Co-Partner for Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Director, says: "We are committed to delivering a game that is free from discrimination and it is important that everybody plays their part in helping to achieve that. Take A Stand will give fans and others involved in the game the impetus to support us on this journey and tackle this issue head-on. We know that discrimination exists in society and often manifests itself through football, and only by working together across the game to drive meaningful change through action, can we truly ensure the game is a safe and enjoyable environment for all."

For those who would like to make a pledge, either individually or as an organisation, or want more information on how to do this, please contact Kick It Out at [info@kickitout.org](mailto:info@kickitout.org). For more information about Take A Stand, visit: [www.kickitout.org/take-a-stand](http://www.kickitout.org/take-a-stand).

You can also make a pledge by joining the conversation on social media, just use #TakeAStand and tag Kick It Out in your posts.



# West Ham announce Olli Harder as new manager



West Ham have announced the appointment of Olli Harder as the new manager.

The New Zealander joins the club on a two-and-a-half year deal following the departure of Matt Beard.

West Ham United Women's Managing Director, Jack Sullivan, said: "I'd like to welcome Olli to West Ham United and everyone here is very excited about his appointment.

"We had a huge number of incredibly strong candidates for this role, but Olli stood out predominantly due to his progressive coaching style and exceptional attention to detail, which is backed by strong experience and achievements in the women's game.

"I'm confident Olli will ensure a work ethic and an organisation from the team to accompany his track record of giving young players a chance which aligns with the club's values. He has lots of new ideas that we are looking forward to implement, and I can't wait to work with Olli, who I believe will help us to continue the positive progress we have made in the WSL so far."

Olli Harder said: "I'm looking forward to the opportunity of not only working with such a historic club but, more importantly, a club that has committed itself to the development and progression of the women's game.

"I'm relishing the challenge of moving forward the West Ham United women's team into what will no doubt be a bright future."

# Carla Ward receives ban and fine for post-match comments



Orlagh Gardner/Sports Press Photo

Birmingham City boss Carla Ward received a one-game touchline ban and was fined £375 for comments she made following December's league defeat at Arsenal.

Birmingham were beaten by three second-half goals with the last a penalty.

But Ward said that Blues had penalty claims of their own turned down by match referee Cristiana Hattersley - and that the fourth official had suggested her players had to 'go down' to win decisions.

"I asked whether my players had to go down. There were a couple where it looked like they had to go down," Ward said after the game.

"The fourth official said to me 'Did you watch Match of the Day last night? Sadly you have to go down to get something.'

"I said 'Listen, I'm not going in there and telling my players to go down.'

"I asked very clearly at half-time, 'Do I have to ask my players to go down to get anything here today and jump around?' Because that's not how I like things.

"She [the referee] said she takes it on board. Did she?

"Arsenal are an exceptional side with unbelievable ability but we played against more than 11 today for sure."

The FA said in their statement that Ward's comments "question the integrity of the match official and/or were personally offensive and/or bring the game into disrepute."

She was set to miss Birmingham's WSL tie against Tottenham but the game was postponed.





# Erin Cuthbert reveals she 'hated football' for a period after World Cup disappointment on BBC podcast



Scotland duo Erin Cutbert and Rachel Corrie joined Bex Smith on the latest episode of podcast 'The Players'.

The pair opened up about how they overcame huge recent disappointments such as their departure from the 2019 World Cup and their failure to qualify for Euro 2022.

Erin revealed she hated football following the immense disappointment of World Cup defeat with Scotland, before eventually falling back in love with the sport: "I think the months that followed after the World Cup were the hardest ones I've ever had in my life.

"I know a lot of Scotland players have never been to a tournament before so I felt incredibly lucky and I still do feel incredibly lucky. But I think that was the first one where I've started to slip off the edge a little bit after the World Cup. It took me a long time to get over.

"As a young player I really, really struggled because Scotland's my country. It means the bloody World to me to play for my country. To be able to be at those games is amazing

and I'll be completely honest here, there was nothing worse than getting home and watching the games and seeing the other teams there.

"Seeing Japan, seeing England in our group there, there was nothing worse. I hated football. I actually hated it. I hated it for how it made me feel. I really did. Football's such a love/hate sport and I realise now you can't get too high. You can't also get too low on the lows, as clichéd as that sounds.

"I went back to the club and all the girls were talking about it, and I didn't want to talk about it. I really, really didn't want to talk about it because I was so traumatised by what happened that night in Paris. And I will always have that memory of Paris, I hate that."

"I went away and then I came back and I got injured. Emma Hayes said to me the week before: 'Your head's not in it, you don't look right.' She was like: 'I'm worried about you.' And then literally the week after I go and do my ankle quite badly in training, the day before we flew out for a pre-season tour, and I



got left behind.”

“That was probably the loneliest part because when you’re down in London, you have your teammates and that’s really it for me. As much as you try and expand your network, it’s just about your team, and when your team weren’t here, I didn’t really have anyone so that was tough. But I’m still very grateful for it because I needed the time away from football to appreciate it again and to get my love back because after the World Cup I hated the sport so much.”

Cuthbert also discussed how she learned to love football again after the World Cup: “I needed it taken away from me. I needed to sit on the physio’s bench and watch the girls playing and loving it. I was envious, I was jealous. I needed to sit on the side-lines for a month and take myself back a bit. This is what I do, this is what I love. This is what I grew up as a little girl absolutely adoring.”

“We’re so busy and we’re so consumed. Our brain is always just football, football, football, so taking a step away actually allowed me to love it again. I felt excited every time we had a training session, every time we had a game. I was determined not to let the World Cup define who I was.”

Scotland have recently failed to qualify for the 2022 Women’s European Championship and Corsie added that it has brought back trauma she had failed to deal with: “I had to keep going so I didn’t really grieve (after the World Cup). I sort of packaged it up. This time round with the Euros, and the failure that that’s been, has hit me much harder. I think it’s bringing up some of the stuff from the World Cup and it’s time to address them. It’s something that will be hard, but you need to go through it.”

***The Players is available now on BBC Sounds.***



# Kirk signs new contract with Everton



Everton manager Willie Kirk has signed a new contract with the WSL club.

The new deal, which also includes a new deal for assistant Chris Roberts, will see the pair stay with the club until June 2023.

Kirk told the official website: “We want to take the standards at Everton to a completely different level. A higher level than it's ever been before.

"I'm desperate to bring silverware to Everton Women and we want to qualify for the Champions League.

“There are a lot of building blocks but that’s what we want to do.”



# Transfer latest

## Arsenal



Anna Patten has re-signed for Arsenal after spending four years playing and studying in America.

Patten, who joined the club aged 12, spent two years at the University of Carolina and two at Florida State University.

She told the official website: "It's such an amazing feeling. To be back and be able to fully sign for the team really is like a dream come true."

## Aston Villa



Aston Villa have announced the signing of Japan international Mana Iwabuchi from INAC Kobe Leonessa.

The 27-year-old has over 70 international caps and was part of the Japan side to win the World Cup in 2011.

Head Coach, Davies said: "We are exceptionally excited that a player of Mana's calibre will be joining us in January. Not only will she bring a wealth of experience to the squad, but she will also add a different dimension to our attacking play."

## Birmingham City



Birmingham have confirmed the signing of Veatriki Sarri from Sheffield United.

The 22-year-old forward has penned an 18-month deal which will see her stay with the club until the summer of 2022.

She has had spells with both Leeds United and Fylde and has featured heavily for Greece in recent years.

## Brighton & Hove Albion



Denise O'Sullivan and Kirsty Barton have left Brighton & Hove Albion.

O'Sullivan joined the club in September on loan from NWSL side North Carolina Courage but the loan deal has finished.

Barton, 28, remains a Brighton player but has moved to Crystal Palace on loan until the end of the season.

Barton remains Brighton's longest serving player.

# Transfer latest

## Chelsea



Swedish goalkeeper Zecira Musovic has signed a two-and-a-half year deal with Chelsea.

The 24-year-old joins from Swedish Damallsvenskan club FC Rosengard and will take the number one shirt.

Upon signing for Chelsea, Musovic said: 'It is a huge honour to be representing one of the biggest clubs in the world. The women's game is developing fast, especially in England.'

## Everton



Forward Claire Emslie has completed a permanent move from Orlando Pride.

The Scottish international has signed an 18-month deal after impressing during her loan spell.

"I'm so happy and excited to sign permanently at Everton," Emslie said.

"I believe in the Club's plans and ambitions and I want to be part of the team achieving those goals."

## Tottenham



Tottenham have confirmed the permanent signings of Alanna Kennedy and Shelina Zadorsky following successful loan spells.

Both players joined from Orlando Pride and have now signed deals until the end of the 2020/21 campaign.

Alanna said. "When I signed there was always the potential for me to stay longer, I didn't feel ready to end my time here."

Alex Morgan, who also joined on loan in the summer, has left following the conclusion of her loan deal.

## West Ham



Australian international Emily van Egmond has made her loan deal permanent from Orlando Pride.

After joining on loan in August, she has scored five times in 12 appearances.

Houston Dash's Rachel Daly has left the Hammers and gone back to her parent club.



# **The Best Fifa Women's winners**



## **The Best Fifa Women's player**

Lucy Bronze

## **The Best Fifa Women's coach**

Sarina Weigman

## **The best Fifa Women's goalkeeper**

Sarah Bouhaddi

## **Fifa Fifpro Women's World 11**

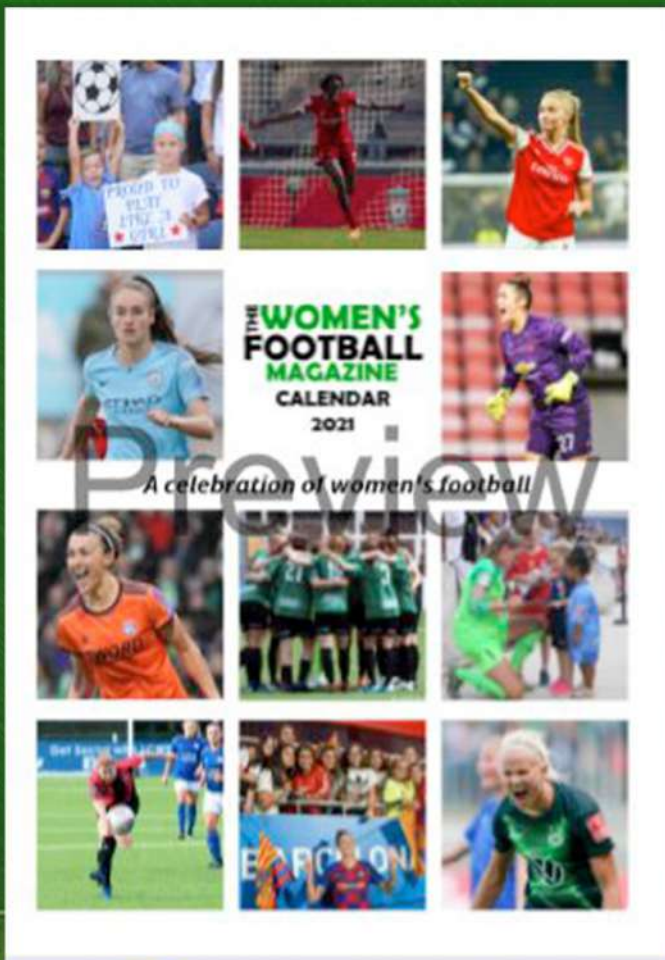
Christiane Endler

Lucy Bronze, Wendie Renard, Millie Bright, Delphine  
Cascarino

Barbara Bonansea, Veronica Boquete, Megan Rapinoe  
Pernille Harder, Vivianne Miedema, Tobin Heath

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# CHAMPIONSHIP



# New women's football merchandise site launched

FOUNDYS

we're on your team

Helen Hardy has launched the first ever women's football retail site [www.foundys.com](http://www.foundys.com).

The goal is to sell all major women's jerseys with correct fonts and player numbers on the back.

They will be the only company in the world putting FAWSL font, letters AND the official arm tag on some of these jerseys for consumer purchase (Manchester United, Manchester City and Chelsea).

Shirts available currently include Utah Royals, Lionesses, Manchester United and Arsenal.

They have also just launched an option to have writing put on shirts you already own.

New products are being launched all the time so check out the new site now.





# The FA Women's Championship

Table after Jan 10		P	W	D	L	GD	Pts
1	Leicester City	12	9	2	1	20	29
2	Durham	12	7	5	0	11	26
3	Liverpool	11	6	3	2	11	21
4	Sheffield United	12	5	4	3	11	19
5	Blackburn	11	4	3	4	0	15
6	Lewes	11	4	3	3	-3	15
7	London City Lionesses	11	3	3	3	-1	12
8	Crystal Palace	11	3	3	3	-6	12
9	Coventry United	11	2	1	3	-16	7
10	London Bees	11	2	1	1	-18	7
11	Charlton Athletic	9	1	2	1	-9	5

## January fixtures

### Sunday, January 10

Lewes 1-1 Durham

Charlton Athletic P-P Blackburn

Leicester City 2-1 Sheffield United

Liverpool P-P London Bees

London City Lionesses 0-0 Crystal Palace

### Sunday, January 17

Blackburn vs Lewes (12:00)

Crystal Palace vs Durham (14:00)

Liverpool vs Leicester City (14:00)

London Bees vs London City Lionesses (14:00)

Sheffield United vs Coventry United (14:00)

### Sunday, January 24

Durham vs London Bees (12:00)

Lewes vs Sheffield United (13:00)

Coventry United vs Charlton Athletic (14:00)

Leicester City vs Crystal Palace (14:00)

London City Lionesses vs Blackburn (14:00)

### Thursday, January 28

Charlton Athletic vs London City Lionesses  
(19:45)





# Leicester handed ownership of Belvoir Drive



Leicester City's women's side have a new training ground.

The Foxes' men's side have moved out of Belvoir Drive, the training ground they have occupied for over 56 years.

The historic training centre will be their new permanent base as of the beginning of the year.

Men's manager Brendan Rodgers told the Leicester Mercury: "There is obviously sadness when you leave your current training facility.

"The great legacy will be that the women's team will come so they have got a fantastic facility to come and work in."

In his statement, club chairman Aiyawatt Srivaddhanaprabha added: "Belvoir Drive has served the club wonderfully and been a spiritual home for Leicester City teams through several generations. For it to become the home of LCFC Women is a fine legacy for an historic location."

# Sheffield United lose Wilson and Paul for the rest of the season



Sheffield United will be without Alethea Paul and Ellie Wilson for the rest of the season after they both suffered ACL injuries.

Midfielder Paul, 22, pulled up in training in December and has already undergone an operation on the injury.

Manager Neil Redfearn told the official website: "It's a huge shame for Thea.

"She's worked really hard after missing the first couple of games and it was such an innocuous thing to happen during training.

"We'll support her in her rehabilitation and we wish her a successful recovery."

Wilson suffered the injury against Blackburn Rovers.

The 23-year-old midfielder went down under a challenge in the 3-3 draw and received lengthy treatment on the pitch.

Redfearn added: "It's disappointing for Ellie. She'd done so well and waited to come back from concussion and she's come back in and it was such a freak incident really.

"She's been challenged and just landed funny and all her weight's gone through her knee.

"I feel sorry for her because she's done great for us and she did well coming on against Blackburn too."



# London City Lionesses appoint former Arsenal defender Daniels



London City Lionesses today announce that Cori Daniels will be joining the club as First Team Assistant Coach. Cori is a former Arsenal, Charlton Athletic and Watford player with a career that included winning the Women's Premier League, FA Cup and Champions League.

Cori most recently coached with the Kent Girls Elite Academy and is a UEFA B Licence holder. She has previously held coaching positions at Gillingham FC and Margate FC.

She joins up with the Lionesses squad immediately and has begun working with First Team Head Coach, Melissa Phillips, ahead of this weekend's fixture versus Crystal

Palace in the FA Women's Championship.

Daniels said: "I am delighted to join the club at what is a really exciting time.

"I have observed what London City Lionesses have been achieving on and off the pitch since their inception and I couldn't pass up on the opportunity to join.

"I'm looking forward to working with Melissa and the playing squad to make a positive contribution and continue to develop as a football coach."

First Team Head Coach Melissa Phillips said: "Cori will be an exceptional addition to our club, staff and team.

“Her energy and passion are infectious, and she brings a wealth of experiences that will add value to the culture we are building.

“It has been abundantly clear through the process, that developing people and getting the best out of players are her driving factors as a coach. I’m looking forward to having her on board and the impact she will make.”

Chairwoman Diane Culligan said: “We undertook a meticulous recruitment process to ensure we were making another strong addition to the first team coaching staff, and I’m delighted to say we are doing that with appointing Cori.

“She will be able to offer the players an understanding of what it is like to excel at the top level of this game and will help us to continue to push ourselves and progress in this division.”

The club also confirm the appointment of Sophie Bone as First Team Performance Analyst. Sophie joins the club having previously worked in the Analysis departments at Southampton FC, the England Amputee FA and the University of Chichester.

Melissa Phillips said: “Sophie is a bright, eager young analyst with fantastic experiences.

“She is passionate about the women’s game and incredibly thorough and detail oriented in her work.

“What separates her is confidence and desire to provide innovative implementation as she has already been able to add value with our team and individual analysis processes.”



Joe Hepper / Sports Press Photo



# Transfer latest

## Coventry United



Coventry United have made three signings since the transfer window opened at the beginning of January.

Georgia Stevens, Anna Wilcox and Olivia Clark have all joined the Championship side.

Stevens, who was part of BT's Ultimate Goal and is a former AFC Fylde and Sunderland striker joins after recently coming back from playing in Iceland.

Stevens said, "I'm delighted to sign for Coventry United, they're a really ambitious club with great plans for the future that I'm excited to be a part of".

Defender Wilcox has signed her first professional contract as she commits to the Championship side.

She said: "I am really pleased to be given this opportunity at a club I love being a part of and one that shares the same passion for the game that I do.

"The club is in an extremely positive position and I can't wait to push on for the remainder of the season and see what the club can achieve in the future.

Goalkeeper Olivia Clark has also confirmed her commitment to the club by signing a two-year contract.

The young Welsh shot-stopper said: "I am really pleased to sign a contract at Coventry United Ladies. I've loved my time here so far and the club have shown a lot of belief in me, which I am grateful for.

"The ambition that the club has is really exciting and I can't wait to be apart of it."

## Crystal Palace



Crystal Palace have announced the loan signing of Kirsty Barton from Brighton & Hove Albion.

The 28-year-old midfielder spent seven years at Chelsea as a youth player, making her first senior appearances before suffering an ACL injury which kept her out for over year.

She signed for Brighton in 2011 and played a crucial role in their rise from the third tier to the Women's Super League.

Barton will stay with the Eagles until the end of the season.

# Transfer latest

## Leicester City



Leicester City have signed goalkeeper Sophie Harris.

The 26-year-old joins the Foxes from Watford of the National League South.

Harris started her career at the Lincoln City Centre of Excellence before becoming a youth player at Arsenal.

Harris has also spent time at Nottingham Forest, London Bees, Brighton and Lewes and has represented England at U20 level.

## London Bees



London Bees have announced the signing of midfielder Sophie Quirk.

The 18-year-old joins from Reading and looks to gain first-team experience.

Quirk has featured for England at U17 and U19 level.

Manager Lee Burch said: "I am absolutely delighted to have Sophie on board with us and think she is a big addition to our side going into the

second half of the season. She is a really talented young player and will blend in well with the squad we already have in place here."

## Sheffield United



Sheffield United have re-signed midfielder Rebecca Raynor from Nottingham Forest and given Tamara

Wilcock her first contract.

Rayner spent the 2018/19 campaign with the Blades and has worked with head coach Neil Redfearn before at Doncaster Rovers.

He said: "I'm really looking forward to working with Bex again. When I had her at Belles, she was really young but probably one of the most talented players I've worked with. She was in the England youth teams and she had a really, really good season.

Wilcock has been a prominent member of the development team, scoring 11 goals in seven games before she signed her first contract.

Redfearn added: "She's a really talented young player, it gives us a chance to develop our own players."



# Transfer latest

Ellie Leek, Ellie Noble

**Out:** Sophie Harris (end of loan- Brighton), Faye Baker, Caitlin Hayes, Ella Powell, Annie Timoney, Jess King (Charlton)

## Liverpool

**In:** Missy Bo Kearns (end of loan – Blackburn Rovers), Rachel Laws (Reading), Taylor Hinds (Everton), Amalie Thestrup (AS Roma), Meikeyla Moore (MSV Duisburg)



**Extended contracts:** Rihannon Roberts, Niamh

Fahey, Rinsola Babajide, Leigh-Anne Robe, Kirsty Linnett, Amy Rodgers

**Out:** Courtney Sweetman-Kirk, Anke Preuss, Christie Murray, Fran Kitching, Niamh Charles (Chelsea), Jemma Purfield (Bristol City)

## London Bees

**In:** Sophie McLean (Tottenham), Charlie Estcourt (Reading), Marianne Taho (Arsenal)

**Extended contracts:** Sarah Quantrill, Megan Alexander, Hayley West, Georgia Roberts, Lauren Pickett, Billie Brooks, Bonnie Horwood, Brooke Nunn, Courtney Ward-Chambers, Georgina Giddings, Nicola Gibson, Mathilda Finburgh, Mollie Dench, Florence Gamby, Amelia Hazard, Merrick Will, Faye Hazelton, Evie Gane, Millie Constantine, Nikita

Whinnett

**Out:** Eloise Wilson (Sheffield United), Taylor O'Leary, Connie Forman, Mollie Dench (QPR—loan)

## London City Lionesses

**In:** Allison Murphy (UMF Selfoss), Shae Yanez (Santa Teresa), Lilly Pursey (Chelsea), Hailey Nolan, Atlanta Primus (California State Uni)



**Out:** Vyan Sampson (West Ham—end of loan), Vanessa Susanna, Char-

lotte Gurr

## Sheffield United

**In:** Mel Johnson (Aston Villa), Eloise Wilson (London Bees), Sophie Walton (Nottingham Forest), Nathalie Johnson (Leicester City), Fran Kitching (Liverpool), Hannah Coan (Everton—loan), Olivia Chance (Bristol City)

**Extended contracts:** Katie Wilkinson, Jade Pennock, Maddy Cusack, Kasia Lipka, Alethea Paul, Rhema Lord-Mears, Veatriki Sarri, Chloe Dixon, Rebecca Flaherty, Emily Batty, Naomi Hartley, Leandra Little, Keri Matthews, Lucy Watson, Charley Docherty, Ali Johnson

**Out:** Mollie Green (end of loan—Manchester United), Emily Ramsey (end of loan—Manchester United), Sophie Barker, Ali Johnson, Izzy Ford (South Alabama), Samantha Tierney, Olivia Fergusson (Leicester)







# WOMEN'S NATIONAL LEAGUE





# TYLER DODDS

By Emily Cassidy

***With the first half of the 20/21 season coming to an end, which most will be happy to see the back of due to COVID-19 circumstances, this month we will be looking back at the FA WNL Northern Premier and how it has and has not changed over the past couple of years. We will be looking back on this with Middlesbrough winger Tyler Dodds, who recently moved to Italy for 6 months on a professional contract.***

Sitting down with former Boro women super star Tyler Dodds, I asked her a few questions regarding the WNL Northern Premier, Boro and a few more personal questions.

How has the league changed since the format and name change from Women's Northern Premier League to Women's National League Northern Premier?

Tyler: "I don't think it has changed really, apart from the name of the league itself

obviously, but to be honest I focus more on my football and making sure I'm enjoying it over what the league is called or doing to improve."

What's it like playing for Middlesbrough?

Tyler: "It's great being a part of Middlesbrough, everyone at the club is there because they love it whether that's playing, coaching or running it.

"You know that for a fact because in our league no one gets paid, even with being the 3rd tier of women's football. Also, the fans are immense here, always roaring in the stands, it makes playing at Billingham so much better!"

“Everyone plays because they love it—because they don't get paid!”

What age did you start playing football?

Tyler: "I started playing football when I was 4 years old, apparently there was a footy in the back garden and I kept kicking it, so my mam took me to a local boys team where I started in goal believe it or not."

What is the favourite goal you have scored?

Tyler: "Against Loughborough. It was a 93rd minute winner away from home and a much needed 3 points for the club. Also, a 25-yard screamer and as soon as it went in, the full squad even our goalkeeper ran over to us all and we ended up falling on the floor."

Huddersfield Town finish the year in pole position, with Fylde close on their tails just 3 points behind. At the bottom of the table, it seems to be a fight between Loughborough Foxes, Sheffield FC, Hully City and Middlesbrough to avoid relegation. However, considering what 2020 has threw at us all, anything can happen in the 2nd half of the 20/21 season.





# Non-elite football suspended following latest Covid-19 restrictions



TheFA Women's  
National League

Following the news that the country would be put back into a national lockdown, the FA released a statement about the various leagues.

The statement said: We note the UK Government's announcement on Monday 4 January with regards to the new national COVID-19 restrictions and lockdown.

As a result, the impact on 'non-elite' football in England will include the suspension of fixtures and training across the following with immediate effect:

- Tiers three to seven of the Women's Football Pyramid
- Barclays FA WSL Academy League (unless under elite status)
- FA Girls Regional Talent Clubs (unless under elite status)
- All indoor and outdoor youth and adult grassroots football, including under-18s (except organised outdoor football for disabled people, which is allowed to

continue)

- Vitality Women's FA Cup (which is currently classified as 'non-elite' at this stage in the competition)

It is extremely important that clubs, players, coaches, match officials, league officials, volunteers, parents, carers and facility providers adhere to the Government's new national COVID-19 lockdown restrictions and we implore everyone to follow these.

Dialogue will continue with the Department for Digital, Culture, Media & Sport, leagues, competitions and County Football Associations and we will provide further updates for the 2020-21 Vitality Women's FA Cup, Buildbase FA Vase and 'non-elite' football when relevant.

We would like to thank the football community once again for its hard work, resilience and understanding during such an incredibly challenging period for both the game and wider society.



# Match of the Month:

## Crawley Wasps 4-0 Plymouth Argyle



Ben Davidson Photography – [www.bendavidsonphotography.com](http://www.bendavidsonphotography.com)

Charlotte Owen scored on her first appearance since February as Crawley Wasps returned to action with a 4-0 victory over Plymouth on Sunday (December 13).

Immy Lancaster, Naomi Cole and Nikita Whinnett also netted as Wasps shook off the rustiness of the enforced six-week break with a good performance in difficult weather conditions.

It took Wasps just two minutes to break the deadlock, as Tash Stephens' cross arrived at the feet of Lancaster and she buried it from 10 yards. Chances continued to flow, with Cole twice firing just over and Owen pulling a shot wide, before Wasps doubled the lead on 24 minutes.

A fine passing move, involving Holly Talbut-Smith, Lancaster and Whinnett led to Owen drilling the ball into the bottom corner from the edge of the box. It was a real boost for former Lewes midfielder Owen, who was

playing her first game after a lengthy injury.

However, a young Plymouth side – who had lost all six games this season – did not roll over. Wensday Wise forced Wasps keeper Megen Lynch into a fine save and Emily Mousley smashed a shot against the bar.

But Wasps continued to have the better of the match in the second half, with Whinnett having a shot saved, Lancaster firing over and Owen's header ruled out for offside.

They did go further ahead on 69 minutes, with Cole's corner going straight in at the near post, and Whinnett wrapped things up from a tight angle. Ellie Russell hit the bar late on.

Wasps continue their defence of the Sussex Women's Challenge Cup on Friday night when they travel to Lewes DS, before travelling to Keynsham Town in the league on Sunday.







# FANWNL 2020/21 Tables

(up to date as leagues were suspended)

## Northern Premier Division

		P	W	D	L	GD	Pts
1	Huddersfield Town	10	8	1	1	16	25
2	Fylde	8	6	1	1	18	19
3	West Bromwich Albion	9	5	1	3	10	16
4	Derby County	9	5	1	3	7	16
5	Sunderland	9	5	0	4	0	15
6	Nottingham Forest	9	4	2	3	10	14
7	Stoke City	8	3	2	3	-7	11
8	Burnley	7	3	1	3	0	10
9	Middlesbrough	9	2	1	6	-9	7
10	Sheffield FC	9	2	0	7	-18	6
11	Hull City	7	1	2	4	-8	5
12	Loughborough Foxes	8	0	2	6	-19	2

## Southern Premier Division

		P	W	D	L	GD	Pts
1	Watford	8	6	1	1	22	19
2	Oxford United	7	6	0	1	16	18
3	Portsmouth	8	5	1	2	13	116
4	Milton Keynes Dons	8	5	0	3	12	15
5	Crawley Wasps	7	5	0	2	9	15
6	Cardiff City	4	3	0	1	11	9
7	Chichester & Selsey	6	3	0	3	4	9
8	Yeovil United	5	2	2	1	1	8
9	Keynsham Town	7	2	0	5	-2	6
10	Gillingham	7	2	0	5	-4	6
11	Plymouth Argyle	7	0	0	7	-40	0
12	Hounslow	8	0	0	8	-42	0



TheFA Women's  
National League

# FANWNL 2020/21 Tables

(up to date as leagues were suspended)

## Division One North

	P	W	D	L	GD	Pts
1 Chester le Street Town	6	4	2	0	8	14
2 Brighouse Town	5	3	1	1	6	10
3 Norton & Stockton Ancients	6	2	2	2	1	8
4 Leeds United	6	2	2	2	0	8
5 Durham Cestria	5	2	1	2	2	7
6 Liverpool Feds	3	2	0	1	2	6
7 Stockport County	4	2	0	2	1	6
8 Newcastle United	3	1	1	1	0	4
9 Barnsley	6	1	1	4	-2	4
10 Chorley	3	1	1	1	-3	4
11 Bradford City	4	0	3	1	-1	3
12 Bolton	3	0	0	3	-14	0

## Division One Midlands

	P	W	D	L	GD	Pts
1 Wolverhampton Wanderers	6	6	0	0	34	18
2 Doncaster Rovers Belles	8	4	3	1	8	15
3 Lincoln City	6	4	1	1	19	13
4 Solihull Moors	6	3	2	1	9	11
5 Long Eaton United	7	3	2	2	6	11
6 Boldmere St Michaels	4	3	1	0	12	10
7 Sporing Khalsa	6	2	2	2	-2	8
8 Bedworth United	7	2	0	5	-10	6
9 Wem Town	4	1	1	2	-6	4
10 Holwell Sports	6	1	1	4	-9	4
11 Burton Albion	7	1	0	6	-41	3
12 Leafield Athletic	7	0	1	6	-20	1



TheFA Women's  
National League



# FANWNL 2020/21 Tables

(up to date as leagues were suspended)

## Division One South East

	P	W	D	L	GD	Pts
1 Ipswich Town	4	4	0	0	18	12
2 Hashtag United	5	4	0	1	9	12
3 Enfield Town	6	3	2	1	7	11
4 Actonians	4	3	1	0	7	10
5 Norwich City	4	3	0	1	3	9
6 AFC Wimbledon	5	2	1	2	4	7
7 Cambridge United	6	2	1	3	-10	7
8 Kent Football United	6	1	3	2	-1	6
9 Leyton Orient	3	1	1	1	1	4
10 Cambridge City	7	1	1	5	-14	4
11 Billericay Town	3	1	0	2	0	3
12 Stevenage	7	0	0	7	-24	0

## Division One South West

	P	W	D	L	GD	Pts
1 Southampton FC	4	4	0	0	17	12
2 Chesham United	5	4	0	1	15	12
3 Swindon Town	4	3	0	1	5	9
4 Busckland Athletic	5	3	0	2	-1	9
5 Exeter City	6	2	2	2	-2	8
6 Cheltenham Town	5	2	1	2	4	7
7 Larkhall Athletic	5	1	3	1	0	6
8 Maidenhead United	3	1	1	1	0	4
9 Southampton Women's	4	1	1	2	-1	4
10 Brislington	3	0	0	3	-13	0
11 Poole Town	6	0	0	6	-24	0



TheFA Women's  
National League



# GRASSROOTS





# Covid-19 could be killing off grassroots football



**By Helen Rowe-Willcocks**

As we once again find ourselves in a national lockdown it is greatly feared that the Covid-19 pandemic will have a long-lasting impact on grassroots football across the country.

Once again games are at a standstill, team practices are cancelled and we are told to stay at home but how long can clubs keep going like this?

Whilst the WSL and Championship are allowed to continue, the lower leagues, development sides and talent centres have been told they must close.

Young children with dreams of playing for the Lionesses are finding that they can only kick a football around in their back garden.

Those who loved going to training to be with their friends and once again at home alone and those who already struggle to combine school work, other activities and football are having to deal with home-schooling all over again.

We have already lost a year to the virus, kids are falling behind, parents are increasingly getting worried and if we are not careful this generation of children could become the lost generation. The generation who are shy, become too scared to talk up and won't try for what they want.

The longer children are away from interacting with people, the harder it will be to gain confidence once again. Many children play sport to be part of a team, because it helps them grow as a person and it's where they begin to shine.

The lack of support for grassroots football has been hard to watch and the way it has been run, whilst important to keep people safe, needs a new, long-term plan.

Kids need football as much as the adults, it's not just about our future footballing stars but about the whole generation of youngsters.

We can only hope for a better 2021.

Here's to hope.

# Simon Says

***This month, I took the time to speak to Tahli Lisowski. The former player is now a soft tissue therapist. Here is what I learnt.***

## **How did you first become interested in the role as a Soft Tissue specialist?**

My interest stems from school, I was always in to sports in general and supported my local football team. I played for a few different ladies' teams myself too so the background interest was always there. But I never knew exactly what I wanted to do and was offered an admin role which I took, but I knew it wasn't what I wanted long term.

My first step was a level 3 Swedish Massage Course in my early 20's with the view of then moving on to Sports Massage. Life happens and things get in the way and 10 years passed before I finally plucked up the courage to look into it, which is when I found the level 5 diploma in Soft Tissue Therapy. I loved what I was reading, I loved the different side to the profession in that it wasn't just about massage but also involved being able to assess and treat a range of injuries, common posture related tendencies and help with rehab etc. whilst using other techniques, not just massage. Best thing I ever did.

## **Was there an interest in the sport either from a playing perspective or treatment angle that you had**

## **during school or college?**

Yes both! I was a season ticket holder at my local club (Wycombe Wanderers FC) and I played football myself (school team, Holmer Green Ladies and Wycombe Wanderers Ladies) My first ever game was an England Under 21's match at Adams Park under the lights, it was incredible and I was hooked! Football has played a massive role in my life both working and recreational – I'm truly grateful that I get to combine both now.

## **Once you decided to begin your career in the industry, how did you go about choosing the best university for you to attend?**

I chose this path a little later than most I guess. I became fully qualified in 2017 through the Oxford School of Sports Massage. I did quite a bit of research in to various courses – most being 12 weeks and level 3 or 4 Sports Massage, but I decided on the Level 5 Diploma which was a year long - over 100 practise hours, 3 case studies, 4 assignments, 3 practical exams and 1 final written paper.

It was hard and there at times were tears as I was trying to juggle a full time admin role, a husband away on military duties and the course. It was worth it.

## **What does the training consist of in Sport Tissue injuries?**

Level 5 Diploma which was a year long – 12 weekends in a 'classroom', 100 practise hours (I did 172), three case studies, four



# Simon Says

assignments, three practical exams and one final written paper.

## **Did you start work in clinics or private practise and then move into the sports industry?**

I set up on my own straight away, running my own clinic from home. I was fortunate to know Gareth Ainsworth who still is the Manager of Wycombe Wanderers FC so contacted him to ask if I could volunteer at the training ground to help get my practice hours up during my training. I worked alongside the main Physio and tried to take in as much information as I could.

Once qualified I was offered a matchday role and any other hours that the Club could finance at the time. The following season I had to turn down a more full time role as I was pregnant with my little girl. She's now two, I still have a great working relationship with the club and work as and when they need me at the training ground but have a group of 7 first team players who come to see me weekly in my home clinic. It works well for me, with my 2 year old and we have a good working relationship between the physio team, the boys and myself to keep them fit.

## **Are you working for just one sports football team at the moment or does your work involve more than one team?**

Just one – Wycombe Wanderers FC. However, I do have a number of other rec-

reational athletes on my books - a Crossfit Masters Finalist (6th in Europe), a female rugby player, powerlifter, boxer and an ex professional skier. I love that my job can help everyone, not just in the sports field. I have so many desk bound professionals, new mums, hairdressers, PT's and many others from all walks of life.

## **Career development for many is the aim. Do you have any ambitions to work with the national team?**

I would absolutely love to – you cannot beat the team environment. For now I juggle my career around my family and where I am suits me but it's absolutely something I would love to progress to when the time is right.

## **Finally, do you have any advice for anyone looking to make a career in soft tissue injuries?**

It's the best thing I ever did for myself, so if you think you want in, then just take the plunge! Do your research on the course – I highly recommend a course governed by The ISRM (Institute of Sports and Remedial Massage) Be careful of the 'intense 6 week courses' that claim to have you up and running in no time, slow and steady wins the race.. Volunteer at a local team/club and take in everything the physio's throw at you..

Never stop learning...





# NEW PROUDCT LAUNCH: CALLING ALL FOOTBALL TEAMS!



Now in its fourth year, our monthly digital magazine has grown to 90 pages dedicated to women's football from grassroots to the home nations. With great writing and amazing pictures it's no wonder that our readership has been growing steadily from year to year.

We're really passionate about promoting women's football in this country and so this season we're introducing something new – designed especially for football teams. The Women's Football Magazine season ticket is here to help you promote your team and inspire your players.

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You can add up to 25 members to your season ticket with each receiving a copy of the monthly digital magazine direct to them. Season ticket owners can update their members continuously throughout the season to make sure your players and coaches are getting the best out of the magazine.

- **A team article in The Women's Football Magazine.**

Once signed up, we will arrange an interview with your team which will be published in a future issue of the magazine. The interview can be with the manager, players or maybe an unsung hero without whom your team simply couldn't exist? If you have other ideas, then let us know- we'd love to hear from you! It's all about helping you promote your team!

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# CUPS





# Women's FA Cup: Could it really be decided by a coin toss?



The Football Association are considering their options after the national lockdown forced the competition to be suspended.

At this stage, the competition does not count as 'elite' forcing the second round games to be postponed.

Now the FA is currently discussing a number of options on how to proceed with the competition which include coin tosses to decide the outcome of the second and third round.

Alternatively the second and third round clubs could find themselves withdrawn completely from this season's competition.

Whilst no decision has been made yet, it is thought the FA do not want to delay the competition further because of tight scheduling restraints.

Team GB pre-Olympics training is set for June whilst the FA Cup final is currently scheduled for May 22.

Times journalist Molly Hudson summed up the rumours perfectly: "Most teams are still entirely in the dark about what might happen.

"If it is decided by a coin toss then I am very sick of saying 'this wouldn't happen in the men's game', but it wouldn't."

# First round proper fixtures

FC United of Manchester	1-2	Liverpool Feds	AFC Bournemouth	0-5	Southampton Women
Chester-le-Street	0-3	Brighouse Town	Exeter City	1-1	Cheltenham Town
				(3-4)	
Nettleham	3-1	Solihull Moors	Newcastle United	3-1	Barnsley
Harlow Town	2-9	Ipswich Town	Wem Town	4-3	Boldmere St Michaels
Billericay Town	4-0	Maidenhead United	Wolverhampton Wanderers	3-0	Stourbridge
Leyton Orient	2-1	Actonians	Kent Football United	P-P	Enfield Town

## Second round results/fixtures

### Results

Liverpool Feds 2-3 Huddersfield Town

\* AET (1-1 at the end of normal time)

### Postponed fixtures

Watford	vs	MK Dons	Middlesbrough	vs	Hull City
Sunderland	vs	Sheffield	Burnley	vs	Fylde
Brighouse Town	vs	Newcastle United	West Bromwich Albion	vs	Lincoln City
Stoke City	vs	Wem Town	Crawley Wasps	vs	Gillingham
Billericay Town	vs	Ipswich Town	Keynsham Town	vs	Yeovil United
Wolverhampton Wanderers	vs	Nottingham Forest	Loughborough Foxes	vs	Derby County
Hounslow	vs	Leyton Orient	Portsmouth	vs	Cheltenham Town
Southampton	vs	Plymouth Argyle	Cardiff City	vs	Oxford United







## **THE WOMEN'S FA CUP ROUND DATES 2020/21**

**(\*pre covid restriction  
dates, subject to change)**

### **Extra Preliminary**

**Round:** Sunday 6  
September 2020

### **Preliminary Round:**

Sunday 20 September 2020

### **First Round Qualifying:**

Sunday 4 October 2020

### **Second Round**

#### **Qualifying:**

Sunday 18 October 2020

### **Third Round Qualifying:**

Sunday 1 November 2020

### **First Round Proper:**

Sunday 15 November 2020

### **Second Round Proper:**

Sunday 29 November 2020

### **Third Round Proper:**

Sunday 10 January 2021

### **Fourth Round Proper:**

Sunday 31 January 2021

### **Fifth Round Proper:**

Sunday 28 February 2021

### **Quarter Final:**

Sunday 21 March 2021

### **Semi Final:**

Sunday 18 April 2021

### **Final:**

Saturday 22 May 2021



# Conti Cup quarter final draw

## Wednesday, January 13

Manchester City      P-P      Chelsea

\*Postponed due to positive Covid-19 tests

Bristol City                  vs      Aston Villa

19:30

## Thursday, January 14

Crystal Palace              vs      Leicester City

20:00

## Thursday, January 21

West Ham United          vs      Durham

17:30





# How can Leopolz help Chelsea win the UWCL?



© Joerdeli Photography | Daniela Porcelli

**By Charlotte Stacey.**

It's been almost nine months since Melanie Leupolz signed for Chelsea from Frauen-Bundesliga side Bayern Munich, and to say she has slotted in nicely would serve as a gross understatement to her impact upon the solidity of the Blues' midfield.

Since joining Chelsea in March, the German international has not only won the newly reinstated Community Shield, but has played a significant part in Chelsea's continued unbeaten domestic reign.

The Blues currently lay third in the table, with five wins and two draws, a run only rivalled by league leaders, Manchester United, yet Chelsea still have a game in hand.

Although Chelsea's fine form may have been set to continue, the arrival of Leupolz and Chelsea's continued dominance is no

coincidence. Emma Hayes' side is brimming with talent and is one that is certainly capable of challenging for a Champions League title, yet it is a side that looks to cause just that little bit more damage with Leupolz on the pitch.

No stranger to the main stage, the 26-year-old is already an established victor. Leupolz has reached the semi-final of the Champions League, twice won the Frauen-Bundesliga, and has taken home a gold medal with Germany in the 2016 Olympics.

Confidence will be a key aspect of Chelsea's Champions League campaign, and with such practice in international and European fixtures, Leupolz's experience, alongside that of fellow well-versed teammate, Pernille Harder, will no doubt calm any unease that may present itself.

Indeed, Leupolz brings with her a leadership and a “winning German mentality”, as described by Hayes, acquired and developed during her captaincy at Bayern Munich. Her astute and informed decision-making moulds well with the cool head of Wales captain, Sophie Ingle, in stabilising the middle third.

Securing this stability in Chelsea’s core demonstrates her skill as a complete box-to-box midfielder. With an ability to drop back and dig into defensive duties, Leupolz leaves breathing space for Chelsea’s attacking outlets, Ji So-Yun, Fran Kirby and Erin Cuthbert. With Leupolz neatly tidying up, these creative assistants are able to remain higher up the field, and a Chelsea team in which Ji and Kirby are free to roam, is a Chelsea team that is dangerous.

Yet, Leupolz herself demonstrates a great capability in pressing high. Forcefully driving forward with possession, before

releasing with precision on the outskirts of the final third, has served as a Chelsea special thus far. Her graft in gathering the ball from the back line with a dribbling finesse sees her gravitational runs pull others into gear. Pairing this with her adept passing accuracy, one very quickly finds that Chelsea take the upper hand.

With a stellar skillset that is cementing a cohesion within the Chelsea midfield, Leupolz has been one of their most important and instrumental signings of the year. As the Blues broaden their ambitions and set their sights beyond the domestic league, one may ponder the question; can Leupolz aid Chelsea to Champions League victory?

Absolutely.







# HOME NATIONS





# Former Lionesses Coulthard recognised in New Year's Honours list


## LIONESSE 100 CLUB


GILL COULTARD  
JOINED 23 AUGUST 1997  
+ AGAINST SCOTLAND 


RACHEL YANKEY  
JOINED 29 JULY 2010  
+ AGAINST TURKEY 


KELLY SMITH  
JOINED 2 MARCH 2011  
+ AGAINST ITALY 


FARA WILLIAMS  
JOINED 1 MARCH 2012  
+ AGAINST SWITZERLAND 


CASEY STONEY  
JOINED 4 MARCH 2012  
+ AGAINST FRANCE 

RACHEL UNITT  
JOINED 31 MARCH 2012  
+ AGAINST CROATIA 

ALEX SCOTT  
JOINED 15 JULY 2013  
+ AGAINST RUSSIA 

KAREN CARNEY  
JOINED 23 NOVEMBER 2014  
+ AGAINST GERMANY 

JILL SCOTT  
JOINED 27 OCTOBER 2015  
+ AGAINST AUSTRALIA 

ENIOLA ALUKO  
JOINED 9 MARCH 2016  
+ AGAINST FRANCE 

TOGETHER FOR  
ENGLAND 

PRIDE OF  
LIONESSES

Former Lioness Gillian Coulthard has been made an MBE in the New Year's Honours list.

Coulthard is celebrated for becoming the first woman to make 100 appearances for England, en route to winning 119 caps between 1984 and 2000.

### Who is Gillian Coulthard MBE?

Coulthard trained with England at the age of just 13 and made her international debut only a few hours later, in a 3-1 win over the Republic of Ireland in May 1981.

Whilst she started as a winger, Coulthard soon moved to the midfielder.

She was part of the England squad for the inaugural Uefa Women's European Championship in 1984 where she helped the Lionesses to a second-place finish.

Coulthard was later part of the team for England's first-ever game at the FIFA Women's World Cup finals, scoring twice in a 3-2 win over Canada in Helsingborg, Sweden.

Between 1991 and 1995, Coulthard held the captaincy and regained the armband in 1997, shortly before her 100th appearance.

Now 57, she was inducted into the National Football Museum's hall of fame in 2006 and has been a guest at a number of England's games in recent years, including the clash with Germany at a sold-out Wembley Stadium last November.



# England's 2021 fixtures:

## What do we know so far?



After a slow 2020 due to the Covid-19 pandemic, the Lionesses will be hoping for more fixtures in 2021.

Phil Neville's side have not played since March 2020 after a number of friendly games were cancelled at the end of the year.

With the European Championships being moved to 2022, England Women's team will be aiming to continue their preparation for the competition next summer.

It has already been confirmed that England will not travel to the USA for the SheBelieves Cup this year, but it had been hoped to set a similar tournament up in the UK in March.

At the moment, no fixtures or opponents have been confirmed for the Lionesses in 2022 but we do know when the international breaks should be.

Phil Neville's final games/training camps in charge will be between June 7 and 15 with Sarina Wiegman taking charge for the first time in September.

### When are the international breaks?

- February 15–24
- April 5–13
- June 7–15
- September 13–25
- October 18–26
- November 22–December 1

# Kerr steps down as Scotland head coach



Scotland head coach Shelley Kerr has stepped down from the role.

Kerr was appointed in 2017 and guided the side to their first World Cup appearance in 2019 however the Scots missed out on a place in the Euros in 2022.

The outgoing head coach said she was "deeply disappointed" to miss out on qualification for Euro 2022, adding: "There were huge expectations surrounding the whole team, based on our recent successes, but I couldn't be prouder than to have led the team - as well as the team behind the team - to the Women's World Cup.

"I thank the Scottish FA and all who supported me in fulfilling my dream of leading our country to the World Cup finals for the first time. I am privileged to have played a part in such an historical moment in Scottish football. That is something that will live with me forever.

"I have lived and breathed the sport for as long as I can remember, so I know in my heart that the time is right for a new head coach to take the team forward to the next campaign.

"I dedicated almost four years to the role as national coach. Having spent my life in football and worked at every level of the pathway, it has been the pinnacle to date to get the opportunity to work with such a fantastic squad of players.

"At the start, we set out to inspire the nation by implementing a style of football that was both exciting and entertaining - and I believe we achieved that."

SFA chief executive Ian Maxwell added: "She has been a proud ambassador of women's football throughout her career. She will remain an advocate for the women's game in Scotland and we wish her the best for the future."



# What has Shelley Kerr achieved as Scotland manager?

## Managerial record:

Team	From	To	Record				
			Games	W	D	L	Win %
Scotland	June 1, 2017	December 24, 2020	21	13	2	6	61.90%



**Appointed MBE in  
2019 birthday  
honours for services  
to football**



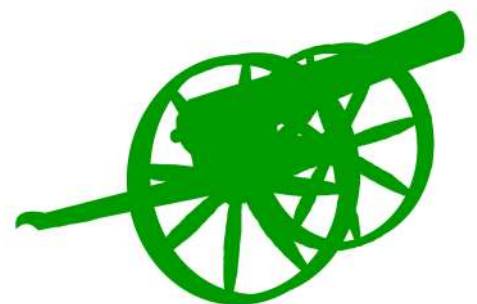
**Honorary degree  
from the University  
of Stirling**



**She guided Scotland  
to their first  
appearance in a  
Women's World Cup  
finals**



**As a player she  
won every  
domestic  
honour in  
Scotland**



**Won the FA Women's  
Cup in 2013 and 2014  
and 2013 WSL Cup  
as manager of  
Arsenal**

# Glasgow City bring in new talent



Glasgow City have had a busy few weeks bringing in a number of players to the Scottish side.

The current SWPL 1 champions announced defender Niamh Farrelly as their first signing of the window.

The defender joins from Irish double winning champion side Peamount United and becomes the club's second signing of the winter transfer window after the arrival of full back Cailin Michie from Pitea in Sweden.

Farrelly said: "I am delighted to sign my first professional contract at Glasgow City, a very successful team over the years. I can't wait to learn from Scott and all the girls and help the team as much as I can."

Secondly, Costa Rica international forward Priscila Chinchilla has joined until the end of 2023.

The 19-year-old has already scored 18 goals for the senior national team.

City Head Coach, Scott Booth said: "Priscilla is a brilliant signing for our club. She is such an exciting player and will offer us something completely different.

"To be established in your national team so young is already a huge indication of her ability."

Next is Arna Sif Ásgrimsdóttir, who is on loan for the rest of the season.

The current Captain of Thór/KA in the Icelandic top division, the 28 year old central defender comes with great experience, having made her international debut for Iceland in 2014.



The current Captain of Thór/KA in the Icelandic top division, the 28 year old central defender comes with great experience, having made her international debut for Iceland in 2014.

Booth said: “Arna is a player I'm really looking forward to seeing at City.

“She is a top class defender who brings fantastic experience to our back line.

“She is a leader and her ability in the air will be welcomed in defence as well as in the opposition box.”

Penultimately, Julia Molin has been announced as a Glasgow City player.

The full-back has joined from Norwegian side Avaldsnes.

Speaking about her signing, she said: “I’m happy to be joining a successful team like Glasgow and looking forward to working with the girls and the club. I hope that I can help out with my experience from playing abroad.”

South African international striker Ode Folutudilu is the final player who has put pen to paper with the SWPL 1 reigning champions.

The 30 year old joins from Finnish side Aland United where last month she helped her side lift the League and Cup domestic double becoming Champions for the first time in seven years.

Commenting on the signing, Booth said: “Ode is a player who has an incredible ability to stretch the opposition. Her pace will cause teams a huge headache and she is hungry to score goals. Ultimately, she brings experience, a fantastic work ethic, modesty and a huge cutting edge.”

As a number of players come in, it has also been announced that Lauren Wade has left the club.

The Northern Ireland international has left the club after the expiry of her contract.

Booth added: “She is an outstanding professional and we wish her the best of luck going forward. Amongst many things, we will all remember her great penalty against Peamount and the fantastic goal against Wolfsburg in the UWCL Quarter Final.”



# Scottish Women's football league fixtures announced



The 2021 Scottish Women's Football League (SWFL) season kicks-off on Sunday 7th March. Each Regional League will see teams face each other three times throughout the year to decide the Champion.

As announced previously, the three SWFL leagues sit as part of the new 'Regional Pathway' which is separate from the 'Performance Pathway'. This means there is no promotion or relegation from these leagues and there is the opportunity for more flexible rules and formats to be used.

## Opening weekend fixtures

### SWFL Central/South East

- Blackburn United vs Border
- Lothian vs West Park United
- Motherwell vs Rutherglen
- Murrayfield vs Musslburch Windsor

### SWFL North/East

- Dryburgh Athletic vs Bayside
- Dunfermline Athletic vs Buchan
- East Fife Dev vs Raith Rovers
- Westdyke Dee Vale vs Jeanfield Swifts

### SWFL West/South West

- Ayr United academy vs Queen of the South
  - Giffnock vs Gleniffer Thistle
- Kilwinning vs Nithsdale Wanderers
- Mid Annandale vs Harmony Row
  - Millenium vs Annan Athletic
- Stewarton United vs Clark Drive







# Fishlock named Stonewall Sport Champion

Wales' most capped player Jess Fishlock has been named as a Stonewall Sport Champion.

Stonewall Sport Champions are leading LGBT+ people in sport who are determined to make sport everyone's game who work together and with Stonewall to bring the experiences of LGBT+ people in a wide range of sports to life and show how we can all play our part when it comes to LGBT+ inclusion.

On being announced as Stonewall Sport Champion, Jess Fishlock told Stonewall UK her hopes for LGBT equality in sport, "I am passionate about increasing the visibility of LGBT+ role models in football and using my position to inspire others. It's important for everyone to be ok with who they are, and that they feel safe within themselves.

"Since I've got to that point I've been the best version of myself and I want others to feel the same.

"Sport is a powerful vehicle for change and my hope is that whether you're a fan or a player - from grassroots clubs to the top leagues in the world - we can create an open, accessible and safe environment for us all to thrive."









# **Northern Ireland Already looking ahead to Euro 2022 play-offs**

Northern Ireland manager Kenny Shiels is already looking ahead to the Women's Euro 2022 play-offs in April.

The boss has already started preparing for the home and away matches, even though they do not know their opponents—and won't until early March.

Speaking to the Irish FA, he said: "It's vital that we get the proper preparation.

"My squad, as elite players, are fortunate to be able to train during the latest Covid lockdown. They are training three days a week in preparation for the play-offs and are grateful they can do that.

"During the camp in February I would hope to play matches against strong opposition. We know we have to take things to another level and the play-off will be a massive challenge for us but the players are fully committed.

"We played stronger opposition at the Pinatar Cup in Spain in the early part of 2020 and we learned so much despite suffering narrow defeats in all three of our matches. In fact I would say our participation in that competition was pivotal to where we find ourselves now."

Northern Ireland's four wins in a row in qualifiers in the latter part of 2020 booked their place in the Women's Euro 2022 play-offs, the draw for which will be made on March 5

Several qualifiers were postponed in the autumn due to the Covid crisis and are due to be played next month, with the group winners in the qualifiers plus three runners-up with the best record against the sides first, third, fourth and fifth in their sections will automatically join hosts England in the final tournament.

The other six runners-up (including Northern Ireland, Russia and Ukraine to date) will be playing off in April for the remaining three berths in the 16-team finals.

Apart from the Russians and Ukrainians, other potential play-off opponents for Shiels' side include Switzerland, Czech Republic, Portugal, Italy and Switzerland.



# INTERNATIONAL TOURNAMENTS





# Uefa Women's European Championships 2021 (2022) update



At the end of 2022, The FA's Head of Tournament Delivery, Chris Bryant spoke to the media with an update for the Uefa Women's European Championships.

The tournament, originally to be held in 2021, is set to be held in England in the summer of 2022.

Here is what Bryant had to say:

## Qualified teams

So far, eight teams have qualified to join England in the finals from 6-31 July 2022, with another seven spots remaining.

Current holders the Netherlands go through as group winners with ten wins from ten, with Women's EURO 2017 runners up Denmark and former tournament winners Norway, Sweden and Germany all also securing qualification by topping their groups.

Belgium and Iceland booked their spots in the tournament last week to join France in the finals, and Northern Ireland joined Russia and Ukraine in the play-offs.

The draw for the play-offs will take place on 5 March 2021, with the games due to take place next April. You can find out more about the qualified teams and current standings [here](#).



## Tournament planning

We are delighted that all venues and host cities have now reconfirmed for 2022, which was a key objective as part of our roadmap following the postponement. This confirmation allows us to continue with tournament planning, and to capitalise on the additional time we now have as a result of the postponement.

Of course, COVID-19 remains a very significant consideration at this stage, but we remain hopeful that come 2022 we will be able to deliver the tournament in line with our objectives and aspirations of full stadia. It is this assumption that continues to drive our planning approach, budgeting and wider project plan – both from a venue perspective but also, and equally as importantly, from a marketing and ticketing timeline.

Moving into 2021 with a plan that is both adaptable and flexible is key, and with cities and venues confirmed, we have solid foundations for the tournament in place. We now want to ensure we are able to capitalise on every opportunity to promote the tournament and engage with our audiences, whilst of course being mindful of COVID recovery.

## Key milestones

Looking to the new year, February 2021 will see us celebrate 500 days to go (again!).

Our focus this time will be on the tournament legacy along with a refreshed tournament brand, and we look forward to being in touch with you next month around the milestone. As always, if you have any questions about the tournament before then, please contact Amy Hart and we will be very happy to help.

Finally, I think it's fair to say that 2020 has been a difficult year for us all. From a tournament perspective, we remain thankful and grateful for all our stakeholders and partners as we continue our work on the delivery of WEURO2022.

The tournament promises to be not only the biggest UEFA Women's EURO, but also the biggest women's sporting event held in the UK to date – so it will definitely be worth the wait! We look forward to keeping you informed on its progress over the coming months.



# Will Neville lead Team GB at the Tokyo Olympics?



There has been a lot of speculation as to who will be the Team GB coach at the Tokyo Olympics.

After it was announced Phil Neville will be stepping down as the England coach in the summer, many have wondered whether he would lead Team GB in Tokyo as originally planned.

Baroness Sue Campbell, the FA's director of women's football, has said it was agreed in November that he would lead Team GB.

However, it has now been confirmed that he has been approached for the vacant manager's position at Inter Miami.

Earlier in the month, Diego Alonso left the club through mutual consent and with former team-mate and friend David Beckham owning the club, it is thought he is now in contention.

Speaking to BBC Sport, Campbell said: "We did make a decision that Phil [Neville] would lead Team GB in

November and we were moving towards an announcement when he started to have these discussions.

"Until those discussions are concluded, I can't really say any more. If Phil remains, he will be Team GB coach. If he goes, we obviously have something to think about and work through. That is where we are."

"It is his long-term future and it is up to him to make his decision. I'm certainly not privy to any detailed conversations he is having with Inter Miami but I know he is having conversations.

"We have some time on our hands but we all want to know and particularly the players, who are our priority. Once we know the decision about Phil, we will move quickly to find the right solution."



# Around the World



# Fifa women's rankings update



**On December 18 2020, Fifa announced the new rankings.**

**Here are the updated top 20 teams:**

<b>Rank</b>	<b>Team</b>	<b>Points</b>	<b>Previous points (August 2020)</b>	<b>+/- places</b>
<b>1</b>	USA	2192	2181	0
<b>2</b>	Germany	2091	2090	0
<b>3</b>	France	2032	2036	0
<b>4</b>	Netherlands	2023	2032	0
<b>5</b>	Sweden	2009	2007	0
<b>6</b>	England	1999	1999	0
<b>7</b>	Australia	1963	1963	0
<b>8</b>	Brazil	1958	1958	0
<b>9</b>	Canada	1958	1958	0
<b>10</b>	Japan	1937	1937	+1
<b>11</b>	Norway	1932	1930	+1
<b>12</b>	Spain	1919	1915	+1
<b>13</b>	Italy	1877	1889	+1
<b>14</b>	Denmark	1868	1851	+2
<b>15</b>	China PR	1867	1867	0
<b>16</b>	Iceland	1826	1817	+3
<b>17</b>	Belgium	1825	1819	0
<b>18</b>	Korea Republic	1818	1818	0
<b>19</b>	Switzerland	1808	1815	+1
<b>20</b>	Austria	1796	1792	+2



# USA training squad announced

The USA Women's National team have named their squad for January's training camp and friendly matches.

The national side announced on January 6 that they will hold a training camp between January 9 and 22 and compete two games against Colombia on January 18 and 22 in Orlando.

U.S. Women's National Team head coach Vlatko Andonovski has named a 27-player training camp roster that will train in Orlando before he names 18-player rosters for each of the two matches.

## Squad

**GOALKEEPERS (4):** Aubrey Bledsoe (Washington Spirit), Jane Campbell (Houston Dash), Ashlyn Harris (Orlando Pride), Alyssa Naeher (Chicago Red Stars)

**DEFENDERS (10):** Alana Cook (Paris Saint-Germain, FRA), Abby Dahlkemper (North Carolina Courage), Tierna Davidson (Chicago Red Stars), Crystal Dunn (Portland Thorns FC), Emily Fox (UNC), Ali Krieger (Orlando Pride), Kelley O'Hara (Washington Spirit), Margaret Purce (Sky Blue FC), Becky Sauerbrunn (Portland Thorns FC), Emily Sonnett (Washington Spirit)

**MIDFIELDERS (8):** Julie Ertz (Chicago Red Stars), Lindsey Horan (Portland Thorns FC), Jaelin Howell (Florida State), Rose Lavelle (Manchester City, ENG), Catarina Macario (Stanford), Kristie Mewis (Houston Dash), Samantha Mewis (Manchester City, ENG), Andi Sullivan (Washington Spirit)

**FORWARDS (5):** Carli Lloyd (Sky Blue FC), Mallory Pugh (Chicago Red Stars), Megan Rapinoe (OL Reign), Sophia Smith (Portland Thorns FC), Lynn Williams (North Carolina Courage)



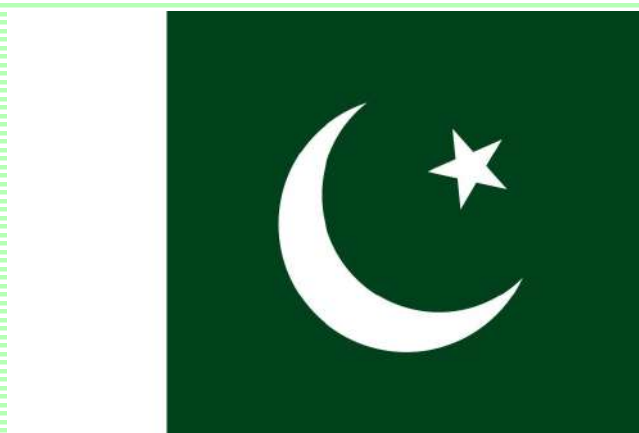
# News from around the world

## Pakistan announces first women's league

Pakistan have announced they are preparing the first women's football league in the country.

Named the Women's Premier League, it is unknown when they are aiming to start the first season and how many teams will be involved.

The 2019 Women's World Cup success across the world has been named the reason behind the decision.



## Sam Mewis named US Soccer's player of the year

Samantha Mewis has been named the US Soccer Female Player of the Year for 2020.

This is the first U.S. Soccer Female Player of the Year award for Mewis.

She becomes the 17th different WNT player to win the award.

Speaking about the award, she said: "It's obviously a huge honour to be a part of the list of players that have won this

award in the past.

"It should go without saying that it's the team that does the work on the field and I just have so much respect for the other nominees this year and all my teammates.

"I've just loved playing with them on the U.S. Team, and with my teammates for the Courage and Man City.

"It's still such an honour to even get called into a U.S. camp, to get playing time and to be able to score goals for my country.

"All that continues to be surreal to me. I owe so much to so many people who have





# News from around the world



## **Bouhaddi named IFFHS's goalkeeper of the year**

Olympique Lyonnais goalkeeper Sarah Bouhaddi has been named the best goalkeeper of 2020 by IFFHS.

She beat the likes of Christine Endler, Ann-Katrin Berger, Alyssa Naether and Sari van Veenendaal to win the accolade.

## **Atletico Madrid make two signings**

Spanish and Champions League side Atletico Madrid have made two signings during the winter transfer window.

Aminata Diallo has joined the club on loan from Paris Saint Germain.

Ajara Njoya also comes to Atletico from Norwegian champions VIF Damer.



## **Girma voted young player of the year**

USA U20 Women's National Team captain Naomi Girm has been voted the 2020 U.S. Soccer Young Female Player of the Year.

Girma, who played a major part in helping Stanford win the NCAA Championship in 2019 as the Pac-12 Defensive Player of the Year, was the leader of the USA defence during the 2020 Concacaf U-20 Women's Championship.

As captain, Girma started six games during the World Cup qualifying tournament to help the USA earn a place at the since-cancelled 2020 FIFA U-20 Women's World Cup and win the regional title, defeating Mexico, 4-1 in the championship game.

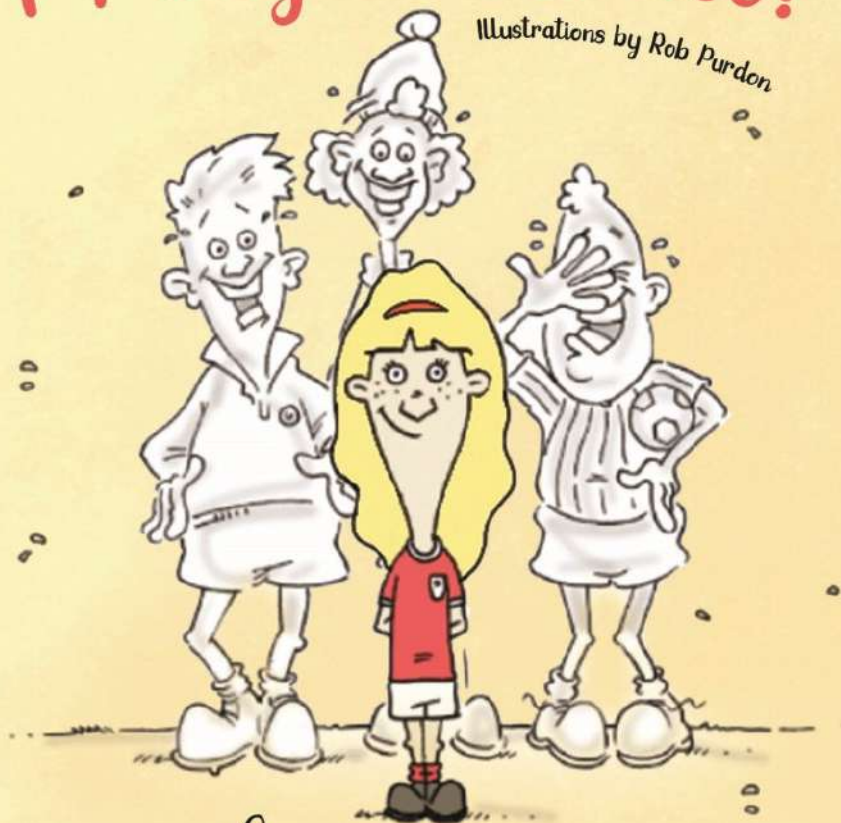
Speaking about the accolade, she said: "It's been such a crazy year, but it's always an honour to represent the USA and I'm proud of what our team was able to accomplish at the beginning of the year in Concacaf qualifying.

"While the year didn't go as planned, I'm especially thankful for the coaches and the medical staff who helped keep us playing some soccer.

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