

THE WOMEN'S FOOTBALL MAGAZINE

ISSUE 48 - April 2021

Katie Quinlan

Travelling to America and
working for County FAs

HEGE RIISE

Preparing for
Team GB and
the 2021
Olympics

Fran Kirby

On trophies, her new
deal and keeping
motivated during
lockdown

SUPER

SAM KERR

£3

THE WOMEN'S FOOTBALL MAGAZINE



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Hello and welcome to Issue 48!

I would like to start this issue off by wishing those who celebrate, a very happy Easter.

Usually Easter means even more games of football and whilst grassroots teams are able to be back on the pitch, it was deeply saddening to hear the news that Tiers 3-6 were to be classed as null and void once again.

In this month's issue Emily Cassidy looks at how lower league teams are preparing for the FA Cup games without league matches, Ali Rampling chats to Hege Riise about the Team GB appointment and Simon O'Neill speaks to Katie Quinlan of Blackburn Rovers.

We also have interviews with Kevin Morris, coach of the Tupsley Pumas who have been raising money for charity throughout lockdown and Marco Floreale of The Game of Two Halves.

Keep safe and enjoy the issue!

Helen Rowe-Willcocks

Editor-in-Chief



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WOMEN'S SUPER LEAGUE



FA launches dual career guides focused on women's and girls game



The Football Association (The FA) is pleased to announce the launch of its Dual Career guides that are designed to inform girls entering the player pathway, through to women in the professional game, of the career opportunities available to them away from the field.

The new guides provide a framework that can be used by players, parents, and education/football staff to highlight all opportunities that are available within education and football, while highlighting the support services available.

Whether it be players in the professional game deciding to study, like Chelsea's Bethany England (studying Law) and Arsenal's Leah Williamson (Accountancy), or those starting out on their football journey who want to know what opportunities exist outside of the game, the new guides launched by The FA are designed to answer those questions.

The FA has developed the guides with TASS (Talented Athlete Scholarship Scheme), a Sport England funded partnership between talented athletes, education institutions and national governing bodies of sport.

The guides are divided into three separate areas and focus on age-group: U14-16, 16-18, and 18+. They cover all football, education, and potential work activities that players may engage in, offering advice on balancing football aspirations alongside education and work. TASS conducted interviews and focus groups with key individuals throughout the women's football pathway, including players and their

parents, football staff at club and FA level, education providers, and other key support services. In total, 103 people were interviewed.

While highlighting the opportunities and support available to players, the outputs of the research identified some key areas of the women's game that need further exploration and insight:

- Why is there a drop out of dual career while playing football?
- How to address the challenges when facing retirement
- Ensure women's football is more closely aligned with higher education, supporting players that reach elite status, as well as those that don't.
- Put dual career at the forefront of the women's game. Having alternative options to football is important.
- Making sure that the players mental health and wellbeing is looked after and ensure they have balance in their career.

David Faulkner, The FA's Head of Performance – Women's Professional Game, said: "There are a number of career opportunities that exist away from the field and we have a responsibility to ensure players know about them, whether that's the 14-year-olds entering the pathway, or our players in the Barclays FA Women's Super League.

"Ensuring a player has a good life balance is really important for their well-being."

Sky Sports and the BBC w



The Football Association [The FA], Sky Sports and the BBC have announced a landmark rights deal that will see more access to live women's football than ever before, with a three-year agreement to broadcast the Barclays FA Women's Super League with effect from the 2021/2022 season.

The multimillion-pound agreement with Sky Sports will see the broadcaster show the top tier of women's football for the first time.

The organisation has the right to show up to 44 matches, with a minimum of 35 being screened across Sky Sports Main Event, Sky Sports Premier League and Sky Sports Football, with some matches also shown simultaneously on Sky Sports Mix and Sky One.

The BBC have made a commitment to showcase the

league to even more viewers by showcasing 22 live games per season, with a minimum of 18 matches on mainstream, free-to-air channels, BBC One and BBC Two.

Previously, games have been shown live on BBC iPlayer and Red Button.

The agreements with both broadcasters will run until the summer of 2024. This is the first time that the rights to the Barclays FA WSL have been sold separately from the men's game, with clubs in the league receiving a proportion of the revenue.

Part of the income will also be distributed to clubs in the FA Women's Championship to aid their development.

This partnership is a landmark moment for the Barclays FA Women's Super League, with more visibility than ever be-

fore, and the agreement beginning just a year before the 2022 UEFA Women's European Championships are due to be hosted in England.

Kelly Simmons, The FA's Director of the Women's Professional Game said: "We're delighted to welcome Sky Sports and to extend our relationship with the BBC as our domestic broadcast partners from the 2021/2022 season in what is a game-changing agreement that will transform the Barclays FA Women's Super League.

"Visibility and investment are such key factors in growing any women's sport, and we are delighted that Sky Sports and the BBC have made a commitment to broadcast more live women's football than we have ever seen before, while signifying its true value."

in three year broadcasting



Kathryn Swarbrick, The FA's Director of Commercial and Marketing, added: "We are absolutely thrilled to have secured this game-changing partnership with Sky Sports and the BBC that will support taking the women's game to another level."

"Both broadcasters have a vision for women's football that very much aligns with our own, and that was made clear during the tender process where they outlined some very exciting plans for showcasing the Barclays FA Women's Super League. We are really looking forward to working with them."

Dawn Airey, Chair of the FA Women's Super League and FA Women's Championship Board, said: "The board have set out an ambitious strategy to have the best professional women's sports leagues in the world. We believe that having

this new partnership with Sky Sports and the BBC will go a long way to helping us achieve that."

Rob Webster, Managing Director of Sky Sports, said: "We are delighted to add the Barclays FA Women's Super League to our expanding football portfolio. Our goal is to bring our customers more of what they love, and we are certain the league will be a success with our football-hungry viewers."

"We will be giving the Barclays FA Women's Super League the full Sky Sports treatment with lengthy build-ups and reaction to all live matches, plus a daily narrative of the league across Sky Sports News and our digital platforms. "We look forward to working with The FA and building a close partnership that helps grow the women's game now and for future generations. With the

addition of the Barclays FA Women's Super League, Sky Sports truly is the home of football."

Barbara Slater, Director of BBC Sport, said: "This is fantastic news for sports fans and for women's football. We are delighted to offer the FA Women's Super League a free-to-air platform to ensure the sport, and the players, connect with the widest possible audience. With UEFA Women's EURO 2022 on the horizon, giving fans more opportunities to watch the Barclays FA Women's Super League will build the excitement for a home tournament."

More details on the domestic agreement will be released ahead of the 2021/2022 regarding broadcast timings and where and when you will be able to watch England's top division.

Rowe signs new three year deal with Reading

Welsh international Rachel Rowe has signed a new contract with Reading which will see her stay with the club until June 2024.

Rowe is the Women's Super League side's joint-top goalscorer this season so far having made her 100th appearance back in November.

Rowe signed from Swansea City six years ago and will stay with the Royals for another three years.

As well as playing for Reading, the 28-year-old has won 15 caps for Wales.

Manager Kelly Chambers told the official website: "I am delighted that Rowey has committed her future to Reading.

"She is a player that has developed so much over the years, on and off the pitch.

"Even though she has had an up-and-down season with illness and injury, I believe 2020-21 has been some of her best football yet.

"What is exciting, is I know there is still more to come.

Rowey has grown a love for this club like many of the others and has become a big part of it.

"I'm excited to keep working with Rowey and to see what else there is to come."



Lexy Ilsley / Sports Press Photo

Houghton out for a couple more weeks

Manchester City skipper Steph Houghton will be out for a few more weeks, according to manager Gareth Taylor.

The 32-year-old has missed games due to an Achilles injury.

Taylor has confirmed that she will not be available for a minimum of two to three weeks.

It is believed the England captain will also miss the two Lionesses games in April against France and Canada.

Taylor said: "She's still having a big influence off the pitch even though she's incapable of being out there on the pitch.

"She's a huge figure for us and a big loss but the girls have coped and will continue to do that.

"Hopefully she will be back in the not-too-distant future and that's something we're really looking forward to."

Stoney disappointed in Old Trafford television decision

Manchester United manager Casey Stoney has admitted that she was disappointed after finding out that their game against West Ham would not be televised.

The Women's Super League historic fixture on Sunday, March 28 which saw Manchester United come out 2-0 winners, was played at Old Trafford for the first time.

Despite the initial excitement over the decision Stoney said the decision was "short-sighted"

She said: "I think the real shame is that we're not allowed to broadcast it.

"Again, we're so short-sighted in the women's game, because we've used our three games for MUTV and we can't broadcast it.

"I'm really disappointed that no-one's picked it up. Because the FA have been badgering and badgering about playing at Old Trafford, and now all of a sudden, we can't show it."

An FA spokesperson said: "As part of our current domestic rights agreements, clubs are permitted to show up to three Barclays FA Women's Super League matches per season that are not selected by host broadcasters.

"The broadcasters had made their picks for this coming weekend ahead of change of venue and as a result, the match will be shown live, for free, on The FA Player to audiences in the UK and abroad."

United have played their home games at Leigh Sports Village since the team was reformed in 2018.

Second half goals from Lauren James and Christen Press secured the victory in the historic event.

United now sit third in the WSL table.

Stoney added: "When we started playing collectively in the second half we were better."

Stokes signs new deal

England defender Demi Stokes has signed a two-year contract extension with Manchester City.

The 29-year-old joined City in January 2015 and has helped the side win six trophies, including one WSL title, three Women's FA Cups and two League Cups.

The deal will keep Stokes at the club until 2023.

Superstar Kirby signs



Cristiano Mazzi Sports Press Photo



Orlagh Gardner Sports Press Photo

By Joshua Bunting

Chelsea have announced that England International Fran Kirby has extended her contract at the club until 2023 with an option to extend by a further year.

Kirby has hit 11 goals in 13 Women's Super League matches this season and has netted on 15 occasions in all competitions.

The attacker has made her return this season after missing most of the 2019-20 campaign with injury and then was diagnosed with a viral illness.

Since signing from Reading in 2015, Kirby has helped the Blues win three league titles under Emma Hayes and has also won the FA Cup and Continental Cup.

Kirby was named the PFA Women's Players' Player of the

Year and FWA Women's Player of the Year for her efforts in the 2017-18 campaign and has won over 30 England caps.

On signing her new deal Kirby said "I've been a part of this club for a very long time, and it didn't take much thought I knew where I wanted to be, and I think you could see that in my performances.

"I was really trying to prove to myself, to the fans who haven't been able to watch me for a long time and to the club. It was a no-brainer for me that I wanted to stay in this environment.

"I really wanted to work and prove that I was worthy of a new contract. I've spent a lot of time out ill and I remember speaking to Emma Hayes at the start of the year and I said I didn't want anything given to me, I wanted to earn my spot

to play, I wanted to earn my spot to be involved with this team and stay in this team.

"That's been a massive goal of mine this season and I want to keep doing that. I've signed a new contract, but I want to make sure that I keep pushing myself every day and as long as I keep doing that, I know that I'll be in a good place.

"I've been able to take my game to another level this year. "Everyone sees the end product, but no one sees what goes on behind closed doors.

"You are out running every day, or you are in the gym and obviously for me it was a lot of isolation training because it was during lockdown and trying to motivate myself every day to go out.

"I still think I have more to give. I'm always critical of my own performance and I'm

new deal with Chelsea



always going to pick out things that I really want to improve on.

“At the moment I’m in a really good place and playing the best football I ever have done and I’m just glad I’m able to be a part of this team and able to show all the hard work that I’ve put in.”

Chelsea are in the Champions League quarter-final with Kirby netting three goals in Europe so far this season as they hope to become the second English team to win the UEFA Women’s Champions League.

On her hopes for the Champions League and going all the way to win it Kirby said “it’s something that we said at the beginning of the season that we wanted to achieve this year.

‘We’ve got to two semi-finals now and we’ve always fallen that little bit short. The way

that we have mentally prepared for this year, I don’t think I’ve ever seen it before.

“The hunger and the drive to win every single day, and the passion, that’s only going to help us.

‘You saw it in the game against Atletico Madrid, we went a player down after 10 minutes, and we worked extremely hard and we still had that mentality of “it’s fine, we can deal with it and still get this win”.

“That’s something really special to have and this team has crazy amounts of it, I think that the Champions League is the one we all want to win but we also know that we have to win every game.

‘We have to win every game to get to that final and you need to keep a good momentum.

‘We will take it each day at a time but that is something that every footballer wants to win so it’s always in the back of your mind”.

General manager Paul Green added: “We are delighted to extend Fran’s deal. She’s been an important player for us during her time at the club and has been integral in the club’s success.

“Fran is coming into the peak of her career and I think we’ve seen that this season, with her playing some of the best football of her career.

“She has seen the club grow over the last six years and is excited for what the club can achieve in the future. We look forward to seeing Fran help the club achieve more success in the upcoming years.”

Spurs vs Birmingham City will not be played

The Football Association has announced that the postponed Women's Super League game between Tottenham Hotspur and Birmingham City will not be re-scheduled.

The game was postponed on Sunday, January 10 due to a shortage of players available for Birmingham.

At the time Birmingham had asked the FA to postpone the game with their statement citing an "unprecedented shortage of player availability" after an "unfortunate and extraordinary run of injuries."

Birmingham added: "The club maintain the position that we would be putting our players at risk of further injury and jeopardise their wellbeing in pursuit of fixture fulfilment. This is not a concession we are willing to make.

As a result of the FA decision, Tottenham have been awarded the three points.

The FA statement released on Thursday, March 18 read: "The Football Association can confirm that an Independent Tribunal has determined that Birmingham City's unfulfilled fixture against Tottenham Hotspur in The FA WSL on 10 January 2021 will not be replayed and three points will be awarded to Tottenham Hotspur.

"The tribunal found that Birmingham breached competition rule 11.3.18, which outlines 'the failure to fulfil an engagement.' As a result, Tottenham Hotspur have been awarded the victory."

Leon out for the rest of the season

West Ham United's Adriana Leon has fractured a bone in her foot and will be out for the rest of the season.

The Lead First Team Physiotherapist for the Hammers, Elena Jobson, confirmed the news in a team update.

She told the official website: "We're going through a tough period on the injury front at the moment and a few WSL teams seem to be experiencing this too.

"Adriana Leon has fractured a bone in her foot and has opted to have surgery.

"She had that surgery and will be out for the remainder of the season."

Mjelde ruled out for rest of the season

Chelsea defender Maren Mjelde has been ruled out for the rest of the season.

The 31-year-old Norway captain was carried off on a stretcher in the second half of the Blues Continental Tyres Cup win over Bristol City.

Taking to social media, Mjelde wrote: "Unfortunately my season has come to an end.

"The good news is that my knee injury isn't as bad as it might of seemed, I will have to undergo surgery, but if everything goes to plan I will be back with the team for the summer.

"Thank you to everyone for your messages, your support has been overwhelming.

"I know I have the best people (and dog), medical and team around me to get me back soon.

"Really happy to have won another trophy.

"Now I will be Chelsea FC Women's number one fan."



Ward impressing o



Orlagh Gardner Sports Press Photo

By Marissa Thomas

Carla Ward's first season at Birmingham City has been hugely impressive.

In August 2020, Carla Ward was appointed manager of Birmingham City on a two-year deal.

Ward parted company with Sheffield United after leading them to second in the Championship - their highest finish. Given her achievements at Sheffield United, it was only a matter of time before a Women's Super League side came in for Ward and Birmingham made a move first.

Ward walked into a side where eight players had left, including captain Kerys Harrop and key player Lucy Staniforth so this was by no means an easy task.

However, just two months into the job, Ward won The Barclays FA Women's Super League Manager of the Month in October after picking up back-to-back league wins against Reading and Bristol City.

One more victory has followed since, a 1-0 win over rivals Aston Villa in the inaugural WSL second-city derby.

While the bragging rights were well-earned, the Blues are without a league win since November but they are still in with a huge chance of remaining in the WSL.

Surviving relegation after joining a club in such disarray would be another impressive milestone in Ward's managerial career, especially given, that at the time of writing, Birmingham are still

without a WSL home win this season.

Despite being at Birmingham for less than a year, Ward's credentials have already alerted other clubs in the WSL.

When West Ham United manager Matt Beard departed, the London club targeted Ward as a priority to replace him.

The Hammers are now bottom of the league while Birmingham sit three places above them.

Ward was also linked to the Liverpool when Vicky Jepson departed due to her Championship experience and ability to cope with limited resources at Birmingham.

There is no doubting Ward's passion for the game and her desire to speak the truth even if it lands her in hot water.

at Birmingham City



After losing 3-0 against Arsenal at Borehamwood in December, Ward declared "we played against more than 11, for sure" which was considered to be a breach of FA rules for which she was duly fined.

An FA statement said the comments "constitute improper conduct".

Arsenal manager Joe Montemurro has announced his decision to leave at the end of the season. The Gunners would be missing a trick if they didn't at least try and tempt Ward away from Birmingham City.

It's highly likely they won't be the only ones looking to appoint Carla Ward as their next manager.

Birmingham City results 2020-21 so far:

Brighton & HA 2-0 Blues

Blues 2-5 Man Utd

Blues 0-1 Chelsea

Rovers 0-1 Blues (WSL Cup)

Reading 0-1 Blues

Bristol City 0-4 Blues

Blues 1-2 West Ham

Aston Villa 0-1 Blues

Arsenal 3-0 Blues

Blues 0-0 Leicester City
(Leicester won 6-5 on pens – WSL Cup)

Tottenham 0-0 Blues

Blues 0-0 Brighton & HA

Man Utd 2-0 Blues

Everton 1-1 Blues

Blues 0-4 Man City

Blues 0-4 Arsenal

Blues 0-4 Everton

West Ham 2-2 Blues

Blues 1-1 Bristol City

Carla Ward managerial stats

Sheffield Utd

P: 58

W: 34

D: 7

L: 17

Win %: 58.62

Birmingham City

P: 19

W: 4

D: 5

L: 9

Win %: 21.05%

Montemurro to depart as Arsenal head coach



Arsenal head coach Joe Montemurro is set to leave the Women's Super League club at the end of the season.

The 51-year-old plans to take a "professional break" in order to spend more time with his family.

He told the BBC: "This has been the hardest professional decision of my life.

"I absolutely love this job and this club."

Montemurro has been in charge since 2017.

He led them to a WSL title in 2019, their first in seven years.

During his three and a half years in charge, they have also reached four domestic cup finals, including back-to-back Continental League Cup wins, and a Champions League quarter-final.

"They've been absolutely amazing," he added.

"I can sit here and safely say that I will be forever part of the Arsenal family and I was one of the lucky ones that got to work here and give my all and meet some amazing people.

"It's been an amazing journey but I think now is the right time, it just seems like the right time and feels like the right time.

"I think I'm leaving the place in a better shape for it to go to the next level and they will find

someone fantastic who'll take it to the next level."

Montemurro will leave Arsenal on 31 May and the search for his successor is under way.

Honours

Melbourne City W-League

W-League Premiers : 2015–16

W-League Champions : 2015-16

W-League Champions : 2016-17

Arsenal Women

FA WSL Champions : 2018–19

FA Women's League Cup Champions : 2018

FA Cup Runner's up : 2017-18

FA Women's League Cup Runner's up : 2018-19, 2019-20

UEFA Women's Champions League Quarter Finals : 2019-20

Individual

LMA/WSL Manager of the Year: 2018–19

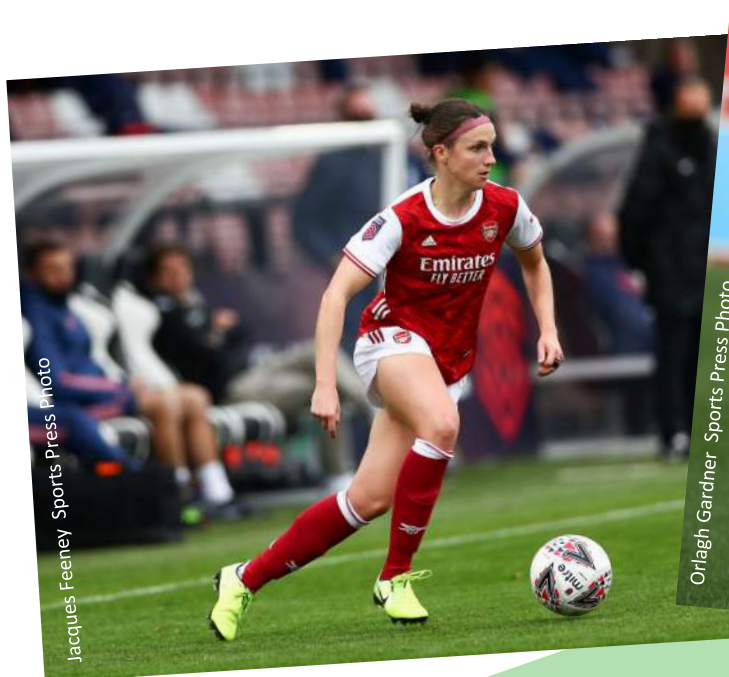
LMA/WSL Manager of the Month: October 2018, March 2019, December 2019

FIFA. The Best. World Women's Manager of the Year Nomination. 2018/19 Season

London Football Awards. Manager of the Year Nomination. 2019 & 2020



A whole Lotte



By Charlotte Stacey

The 2020/21 season has been disjointed for a number of reasons, yet as it has progressed, it has become clear that the irrefutable excellence of the Women's Super League continues its upward trajectory.

Many have stood out amongst the league's talent, including that of one returned home-grown talent.

Throughout the latter half of the season, one's ears have rather quickly pricked up to the noise that is being made by Arsenal defender, Lotte Wubben-Moy.

The centre back returned to her roots in the summer after a three-year spell across the pond. Lifelong Gooner, Wubben-Moy came through Arsenal's academy before

making her senior debut with the club in 2015 at the tender age of sixteen.

Two years later, after an impressive Spring Series, the eighteen-year-old had a choice to make. The opportunity to play collegiate football whilst studying abroad had arisen and a characteristically wise Wubben-Moy decided it was an opportunity that was not to be turned down.

Wubben-Moy joined esteemed US college side, North Carolina Tar Heels. In hindsight this should have served as a sign of things to come. Not just anybody plays for UNC.

The perceptively poised centre-back that has returned to Borehamwood is concrete proof that Wubben-Moy prudently squeezed every last ounce of physical, professional

and personal growth out of her time abroad.

Lotte Wubben-Moy is everything that you could ask for in a maturing centre-back.

Her commanding physicality paired with a readiness to put herself on the line serves to strengthen that essential staunch strength to hold down the fort that she absolutely exudes.

Attentive to an incoming ball, Wubben-Moy harbours the very fundamentals of a play breaking defender. She is positionally aware in making crucial ground interceptions and blocks, often using these opportunities to regain possession.

Typically making the most of lapses in the opposition's momentum, Wubben-Moy has

e Wubben-Moy



the prowess to swing the pendulum the other way.

Picking up these loose balls and targeting them as forward ground sweeping passes. Yet, she is just as impressive aerially as she is with her feet. Both defensively and offensively, Wubben-Moy presents a threat in the air, climbing high to produce bullet headers to her desired effect.

Yet, further than these impressive physical abilities is Wubben-Moy's clear growth mindset and an appetite to absorb as much as possible is rather quickly noted. Whether it is a clarifying word with a teammate or a tactical shift from the touchlines, Wubben-Moy soaks it up without complaint.

It is this hunger for both self-improvement and collective harmony that pegs

Wubben-Moy as an emergent leader within Arsenal's ranks.

Calm and composed both on and off the ball, the pressure of an occasion, nor the weight of carrying the defensive line does not impede Wubben-Moy's performances.

In fact, a principal fixture only seems to have the opposite effect. Her cool-headedness does much to settle Arsenal's occasional makeshift back four. Her assuredness in what is still achievable a propellant when confidence has dropped.

This leading mentality has been simmering since a young age. Aside from being widely regarded for her leadership and organisational skills during her time with UNC, Wubben-Moy captained Arsenal's highly successful development team during her youth career and led England's

Under-17's to the quarter-finals and semi-finals of the World Cup and Championship respectively.

But perhaps Wubben-Moy's most endearing quality is her absolute devotion to her club.

The grab of the badge after scoring; the scream of joy at a favoured scoreline; the sullen drop of the head upon defeat; all tell the story of a Gooner through and through. Simply, Wubben-Moy radiates The Arsenal from her very pores.

Safely rooted back in red and white, Wubben-Moy's increasing defensive sureness, developing influence, as well as her drive to succeed, set her firmly in one direction and one direction only. For both Arsenal and England supporters have plenty to look forward too, there's a Lotte more to come.



TheFA Women's Super League

Table after March 7		P	W	D	L	GD	Pts
1	Chelsea	19	16	2	1	52	50
2	Manchester City	19	15	3	1	47	48
3	Arsenal	18	12	2	4	43	38
4	Manchester United	19	12	2	5	18	38
5	Everton	19	9	4	6	12	31
6	Brighton & Hove Albion	19	7	3	9	-19	24
7	Reading	19	4	8	7	-12	20
8	Tottenham Hotspur	19	4	5	10	-19	17
9	Birmingham City	18	3	4	11	-24	13
10	West Ham United	17	3	3	11	-15	12
11	Bristol City	19	2	5	12	-51	11
12	Aston Villa	17	3	1	13	-32	10

March fixtures & results

Saturday, April 3

Reading 0-5 West Ham

Saturday, April 24

Aston Villa vs Bristol City (12:30)

Sunday, April 4

Chelsea 6-0 Birmingham City

Everton 3-1 Aston Villa

Brighton & HA 1-0 Manchester United

Bristol City 0-4 Arsenal

Tottenham Hotspur 0-3 Manchester City

Sunday, April 25

Manchester United vs Tottenham Hotspur (12:00)

Arsenal vs Brighton & HA (14:00)

Birmingham City vs Reading (14:00)

Manchester City vs Chelsea (14:00)

West Ham United vs Everton (15:00)

Tuesday, April 20

West Ham United vs Aston Villa (19:30)

CHAMPIONSHIP



KATIE QUINLAN

Katie Quinlan has been part of the RTC at Blackburn Rovers Ladies for over four years and is currently the head coach. Simon O'Neill sat down to talk with Quinlan about her career, her ambition and how she got into football.

How did you first get involved in football? Was it as a player and at what age?

I have four older brothers and so it was pretty hard to avoid competing and finding a ball to kick about when I was growing up.

However, football for me didn't become my main focus until I met my friend Yaz who now plays in Switzerland. On the way to secondary school one day and her dad was the local grassroots team coach. I started playing for the school, the local team and trialled for Reading FC Women Centre of Excellence at U15.

After leaving school, you attended university to do a degree in Sports Development. Did you have a career in mind when you chose this?

I am not sure what my intention was within sport however within months of starting university I gained a

placement at Everton FC and I knew instantly coaching was what I wanted to do. Despite my parents best efforts to try convince me into being a saleswoman! I was humbled by the experiences I had within the community and the honour to represent a world renowned football club.

During your degree you went over to the USA to help at a soccer camp. Did that make you more hungry for a career in football?

I think these experiences travelling abroad to coach I have greatly undervalued for a number of reasons. I learned how to lead early on in my coaching career, I got to experience new cultures as well as travel alone. I cannot recommend coaching abroad enough within your career and this has definitely

“I cannot recommend coaching abroad enough”

inspired me to both travel and progress a career within football. USA helped me realise the possibilities within this career, as long as you are willing to step out of your comfort zone and work hard.

Also, in your degree you combined roles as Head Coach for Everton in the Community and also a Centre of Excellence Coach at Everton. How did these roles come about and are you an Everton fan?

I am an Everton fan, having been engrossed in such a family club at the start of my career. I have always been taught if you don't ask you don't get and so following my playing experiences at Reading COE, I was desperate to get involved in Everton Ladies COE and help share my experiences to develop talented and potential players.

I contacted Andy Spence, Technical Director at the club to observe and soon became a proud employee coach. I wanted to keep busy and so at every opportunity whether it was a Friday evening or the school holidays, being so far from home I found focus in coaching for the club.

During the years after you left university you worked at clubs such as AFC

Wimbledon (Women and Girls Development Officer), Chelsea (Centre of Excellence) how did these help you grow as a coach and development officer?

I believe my experiences across the game are a real asset to understand the game, gain best practice, make my own mistakes and grow a network.

At AFC Wimbledon I had the opportunity to come into a new role and build a real platform for the girls department to hold its own in the community. I had existing links from my work within elite sport and so enjoyed integrating different organisations to inspire females and show them that there was real potential for a career within football for girls.

My experience of working with different teams also allowed me to learn and fail often, working with different people, talented players and finding myself as a coach.

A role at the FA soon came around supporting the grassroots Charter Standard Clubs, what did this role entail?

I went for a part time role as FA Coach Mentor and a gentleman named Steve Smithies gave me the opportunity to work within a very experienced team of mentors and coaches to develop better players and coaches.

I valued the opportunity to work within grassroots clubs using insight from the FA as

well as my own experiences to develop club structures and processes as well as individuals at both training and match days. There are amazing people working within the game and it was a great role to support volunteers with big football ambitions.

Further experience was gained working at County FA's and Colleges. What work was involved with that?

Ultimately these experiences were again invaluable in pursuing my aspirations to become a full time football coach. At the County FA I learned about the governance of the game, important processes for developing football away from the pitch and I developed my own personal skills such as communication.

At University of Bedfordshire I got to manage recreational sport and thoroughly enjoyed getting stuck in to learn about tennis, wheelchair basketball, gymnastics, cricket... I could not learn enough. When the opportunity came as Football Academy Manager at Leeds City College, I was ready to lead a football programme for both men and women and put into place all I had learned about partnerships, elite performance, student experience and sport development.

For the last 4 years you have been heavily involved with Blackburn Rovers covering roles from

Academy coach, Technical Director, and coach of the Women's team helping turn the club into one of the best in the country. How does it feel to be an important part of pushing the club forward?

It is a privilege and an honour to hold my roles at Blackburn, creating an environment for so many people to strive, trust and develop. I am proud to have been a part of the clubs success but we have a long way to go. If there is anything I have learned from this club it is there is a process in the pursuit of excellence and you cannot do it alone. We are building a strong team to meet our high expectations for success.



Youth development programme launched with Durham and Kepier School

Durham Women have announced a new partnership with Kepier School which will see the launch of a Youth Development Programme at the Secondary School in Houghton-le-Spring.

Durham will team-up with Kepier to offer pupils a chance to train regularly alongside their studies.

The new Youth Development Programme will launch in time for the new academic year and will give both male and female pupils at the School a chance to pursue a career in football while ensuring their studies are not affected.

The programme is aimed at pupils who will be moving into Year 7 and Year 8 in September 2021 and wish to take up the opportunity to study at Kepier while forming part of the football programme.

Pathway and Development Manager Maddy Wood said: "Engaging with youth players in their educational setting and exposing them to the opportunities available to them both on and off the pitch is a key priority for the club, and we believe this partnership gives us a great opportunity to do that."

Bailey-Gayle out for the rest of the season

Jonathan Morgan has confirmed that Paige Bailey-Gayle will be unavailable for the rest of the season.

The Forward has ruptured her medial collateral ligament in training.

He explained: "Paige Bailey-Gayle picked up a ruptured MCL so she's out for the rest of the season now unfortunately. She should be back in pre-season if all goes to plan.

"Paige has been fantastic for us, especially in the first half of the season, so we will lose a lot of pace and directness without her, but again she's in the right place."

Leicester display artistic skills for charity

Leicester City players and staff have come together to paint canvases and help raise money for charity.

Ahead of a London to Paris cycling challenge, which they aim to undertake over the summer months, Holly Morgan and Ashleigh Plumptre have so far raised over £2,000 for two charities, as well as creating a raffle to win a signed Leicester City shirt, which totalled £1,000.

The charities are LUPUS UK, dedicated to funding medical research to help find a cure for lupus and Menphys UK, who support young people with disabilities and their families.

Players and staff were busy at work painting canvases following training as Belvoir Drive became a creative hub of artistic work, with Sophie Howard's art voted as the best piece within the group.

Morgan said: "We would like to thank you all for participating and purchasing tickets for our charity raffle."

Leicester City named Championship champions



Leicester City have won promotion to the Women's Super League for the first time in their history.

A 2-0 victory over London City Lionesses confirmed the Foxes as winners of the second-tier Championship with two games remaining.

Leicester have won 15 games, and lost just one of their 18 fixtures this season.

Four teams are currently separated by just three points at the bottom of the WSL, with Aston Villa - promoted last year - in the single relegation spot.

Birmingham City, West Ham United and Bristol City are the other three teams battling to remain in the top flight.

Founded in 2004 as an independent club, Leicester City Women were acquired in 2020 by King Power - the owners of Leicester City's men's team.

Fellow championship side Lewes took to social media to congratulate the Foxes saying: "Huge congrats to Leicester City, totally worthy champions."

Goalkeeper Kirstie Levell said: "One goal of promotion and winning this league and we've done it!"

Captain Ashleigh Plumptre told LCFCTV: "It's surreal.

"I joined 18 months ago and when I spoke to Jonathan our aim was to get promoted at the end of the season.

"To think that after everything we have gone through, we have done it with two games to spare.

"It's unbelievable. I was tearing up on the pitch with five minutes left.

"It just means because I am playing for something bigger than me. I've grown up here, had to go away to America and I have come back to the only team I wanted to come to.

"I have managed to get promoted with my home town teams. To think I am representing this club, is amazing.

"I cannot ask for anything better."

Remi Allen added: "Wow! A dream come true.

"Getting the opportunity to come home and be apart of this history making season for this club is just unbelievable

"This is for everyone past & present who has worked so hard to get the club to where it is today. Proud to say we are champions."

Government announces additional



The Sports Minister has announced that £680,000 in grant funding will be provided to six women's football clubs.

The announcement comes in the latest funding from the Government's Sport Winter Survival Package.

Birmingham City Women, Blackburn Rovers Ladies, Bristol City Women, Lewes FC Women, London Bees and London City Lionesses will receive a total of £680,000 in grant funding, bringing the total support provided to women's football to £2.9 million.

The funding will cover essential survival costs due to the lack of spectators, and will allow these clubs to complete their seasons. It will also help to support the continued visibility of women's football, as England prepares to host UEFA Women's Euro 2022.

It follows the Women's Super League and FA Women's

Championship receiving a combined £2.25 million of grant support for essential league costs in February, backed up by women's sport being prioritised for 250,000 free Covid-19 testing kits being made available to elite sports, worth £1.5 million.

Sports Minister Nigel Huddleston said: "Women's football continues to go from strength to strength.

"The last World Cup captured the hearts and minds of the nation.

"With more terrestrial broadcast coverage and Euro 2022 on the horizon, we must do all we can to give it the visibility it deserves.

"This funding will provide vital support to allow these six clubs to continue, to inspire our stars of the future."

Kelly Simmons, FA Director of the Women's Professional Game, said: "This new grant

funding will provide vital financial support to six more clubs, helping to cover losses as a result of COVID-19 and giving them the best possible opportunity to complete their campaigns.

"We welcome this funding, along with the previous grant from the Sport Winter Survival Package which has been crucial in keeping the game going with weekly COVID-19 testing across the top two divisions, ensuring players can continue to play safely."

Lewes FC Women is a not-for-profit club which is wholly owned by supporters and the local community.

In 2017 it became the first professional or semi-professional football club to pay its women's team the same as its men's team as part of their Equality FC initiative.

Charlie Dobres, Lewes FC Women director, said: "Lewes FC Women has made great

onal support for women's clubs



strides in boosting attendances and matchday revenues in recent years, and so the absence of crowds has hit us harder than most.

“Lewes FC is a 100% community-owned non-profit, and this funding is vitally important in enabling us to continue through this difficult period and not lose the substantial progress that we’ve made on many fronts.

“This is exactly the kind of intervention that the current situation requires and is essential for clubs to survive.”

Submissions for support come from individual sports Independent decision-making committee, Supported by Sport England.

The Sports Winter Survival Package is the most generous government in the world’s domestic sports sector.

It is offered as part of a sector that benefits from over £ 1.5

billion of business support provided by the government. This includes temporary severance schemes that have supported many sports clubs and leisure businesses, reduced business fees, and business interruption loan schemes.

Some of the country’s biggest sports stars have joined up with the Government to urge the country to get out and get active as outdoor sports, clubs and facilities reopen.

England men’s World Cup-winning cricket captain Eoin Morgan, British No1 women’s tennis player Johanna Konta and England Rugby Union prop Kyle Sinckler have joined Prime Minister Boris Johnson, Culture Secretary Oliver Dowden and Sports Minister Nigel Huddleston to support the Government’s rallying cry.

In line with the government’s roadmap, sports facilities including football and cricket pitches, tennis and basketball

courts, outdoor swimming pools, golf courses and sailing clubs can now reopen safely, setting the nation on a path of improved physical and mental health.

It comes as the ‘stay at home’ message ends and ‘rule of six’ is reintroduced, which means that outdoor gatherings of either six people or two households are allowed. Social contact rules will not apply to outdoor, organised team sport.

Huddleston added: “The reality is that activity levels have still dropped in lockdown.

“That’s why outdoor grassroots sport reopening today is so important. Many have waited patiently for this moment and cannot wait to get back to playing the sports they love.

“But we want to encourage everyone to get into sport. No matter what age or ability, there will be a sport out there for you.”

Durham sign Johnson

Ali Johnson has joined Durham Women and immediately goes into the squad for the remaining games of the season.

The 22-year-old joins after a spell at Blackburn Rovers having progressed through the Regional Talent Centre..

Speaking to the official website, she said: “I am absolutely delighted and buzzing to get this over the line.

“I cant wait for the rest of the season and building for the next.

“Everyone has been very welcoming and it’s a very friendly environment to be in.

“I just want to help us push and gt the results we need and want in the last three games.”

Charlton Athletic appoint Karen Hills

Charlton Athletic have announced the appointment of Karen Hills as their new head coach.

The club will also be going full-time from July.

Hills played for the Addicks between 2001 and 2007 and managed Tottenham Hotspur between 2009 and 2020.

The Current Charlton Athletic coaching staff led by Riteesh Mishra will remain in place with Hills adding an extra level of staff..

Speaking to the official website, Addicks owner Thomas Sandgaard said: “I am delighted we have been able to appoint someone of Karen’s experience and pedigree.

“She has a great history with our club from her playing days and managed the transition to full-time at Tottenham Hotspur excellently.

“Our ambition is for Charlton to be challenging in that top tier of the FA Women’s Super League and I am looking forward to watching the team grow.

“Charlton were one of the leading clubs in football in Karen’s playing days and that is where we want to get back to.

“Going full-time and the appointment of Karen are two real statements of intent as we look to move the team forwards.”

Hills said: “I am looking forward to adding my experience and knowledge to what is already a great staff and a fantastic group of players here are the group.

“We are looking to build something special with Charlton and I can’t wait to get started.”

Stewart leaves Rovers

Blackburn Rovers Ladies have confirmed that Ellie Stewart has left the club for personal reasons.

The 24-year-old defender made a total of 50 Rovers appearances across two spells, scoring 12 goals.

The club wrote: “[We] would like to thank Ellie for her services over the years and wish her all the best in the future.”

Stewart took to Twitter to share her decision: “If you were to tell the 16-year-old who had just signed a Pro deal at Liverpool that by the age of 24 she would be leaving the women’s game, she would have laughed in your face. However this post has been a long time coming.

“As I kid I fell in love with the game, as I got older and things were becoming ‘different’ in my life. I’ve always believed in if something doesn't make you happy then why do it?

“It will be a massive change, football has given many happy moments and fantastic opportunities. This was never an easy decision. This sport has brought me some of my darkest and unhappiest times, many of which nobody would understand.”



TheFA Women's Championship

Table after Jan 10		P	W	D	L	GD	Pts
1	Leicester City	18	15	2	1	35	47
2	Durham	18	11	6	1	14	39
3	Sheffield United	18	10	5	3	22	35
4	Liverpool	18	10	5	3	21	35
5	Lewes	18	7	4	7	-3	25
6	London City Lionesses	19	6	5	8	0	23
7	Blackburn Rovers	18	4	6	8	-9	18
8	Crystal Palace	18	4	5	9	-7	17
9	Charlton Athletic	18	3	7	8	-7	16
10	Coventry United	18	4	1	13	-27	13
11	London Bees	18	2	2	15	-39	8

March results & fixtures

Sunday, March 7

Blackburn Rovers 0-2 Durham
Charlton Athletic 1-1 Lewes
Coventry United 1-0 London City Lionesses
Crystal Palace 0-1 Liverpool
London Bees 0-7 Leicester City

Sunday, March 14

Blackburn Rovers vs Lewes (12:00)
Durham vs Leicester City (12:00)
Liverpool vs Coventry United (14:00)
Sheffield United vs Charlton Athletic
(14:00)

Thursday, March 25

Crystal Palace vs Charlton Athletic (20:00)

Sunday, March 28

Durham vs Sheffield United (12:00)
Leicester City vs Coventry United (14:00)
Lewes vs London Bees (14:00)
Liverpool vs Blackburn Rovers (14:00)
London City Lionesses vs Charlton Athletic
(14:00)

London City Lionesses announce formal academy partnership with Kent Girls Elite FC



London City Lionesses have announced a formal partnership with Kent Girls Elite FC, a recently founded academy football club, to build a pathway for young female footballers in Kent up to the professional women's game.

Kent Girls Elite currently operate from under-12 to under-16 level and the system will feed into London City Lionesses' Development squad with the addition of an under-18 side, which supports the first team currently playing in the FA Women's Championship.

From next season, the club's youth teams will play under the name of London City Lionesses Kent Girls.

The partnership aims to mutually benefit the two clubs, with London City Lionesses offering elite coaching support, football pathways and educational programmes to an expanded pool of youth players from the Kent area.

Diane Culligan, Chairwoman, London City Lionesses said: "This is an important moment for London City Lionesses.

"This marks a huge opportunity for the club to grow and to offer those from Kent Girls Elite's existing network a pathway into the professional game. We have been working hard to embed ourselves in the community from day one and this is a huge step.

"I hope that many of the young players in Kent will be able to look at our first team playing on

a professional level and realise that that could be them one day."

Paul Vennard, Kent Girls Elite FC, said: "This is a really exciting partnership for everyone involved with Kent Girls Elite FC, most of whom were affected by the closure of the Gillingham FC Girls RTC.

"More importantly, this is a huge opportunity for all of the talented footballing girls in Kent.

"There is now a pathway from under-12 right through to the FA Women's Championship, the only such pathway in Kent. It is the next step in an exciting journey for the club, it's players and coaches, and we hope to develop first-team players for London City Lionesses in the not-too-distant future."

The Gillingham FC Girls RTC was closed in June due to financial effects of the pandemic.

Speaking at the time, Gillingham chairman Paul Scally "I have seen comments in reference to ladies football and the team not being continued but frankly I have had to disregard those things. Those people don't realise what is involved in running a football club.

"My main objective is to make sure the club survives. I will make whatever decisions I have to make.



WOMEN'S NATIONAL LEAGUE





Tiers 3-6 made



The Women's Football Board has made the decision that the 2020-21 season for tiers 3-6 of the women's football pyramid was curtailed with immediate effect and declared null and void.

The FA statement read: "The FA Women's Football Board has now considered the feedback submitted by Leagues and Clubs as part of the Tiers 3-6 Club Survey, the Grassroots Survey and recommendations of the Women's Football Conference, in addition to the information set out in the Government's recent roadmap.

"We would like to thank Clubs and Leagues for submitting their views and the time taken in providing responses during what we appreciate is an incredibly challenging period for everyone.

"The Women's Football Board has made the following decisions, which are subject to approval by the FA Board and/or FA Council as appropriate:

- The 2020/21 Season for tiers 3-6 of the Women's Football Pyramid will be curtailed with immediate effect and declared incomplete, with no further league fixtures taking place this season. There will also be no promotion and relegation between these tiers for the 2020/21 season, including no promotion from tier 3 into tier 2 and no relegation from tier 6 into tier 7. A recommendation for an alternative club movement process is included below.
- At tier 7, County Leagues will follow the guidance given to grassroots leagues, allowing them to make their own decision on the conclusion of the season, following FA Board approval to extend the season into June 2021.

- The Promotion Pool, allowing club movement from tier 7 to tier 6, will remain active, with the deadline for application extended to 1 May 2021. All clubs seeking promotion will need to apply, with champion clubs no longer receiving automatic consideration. In addition, the deadline for clubs throughout the Pyramid to apply for Voluntary Relegation will also be extended to 1 May 2021.

"The Women's Football Board, taking into account the views of Clubs and Leagues, decided that extending the 2020/21 league season beyond the end of May 2021 would not be a viable option due to the operational issues faced by many Clubs and Leagues. Clubs and Leagues will however be encouraged to provide playing opportunities over the coming months by organising alternative fixtures

e null and void



in some format, where they are able and feel comfortable to do so following the return of grassroots football from 29 March and in line with the appropriate guidelines.

“In addition, and in light of feedback from Clubs and Leagues, the Women’s Football Board made the following recommendation to accompany the above decisions:

- A process of upward club movement, via application and based on set criteria, should take place.

Further feedback on this will be sought from Clubs at tier 3-6 before details of the process are confirmed, but it is hoped that facilitating club movement will support the stability and integrity of the Women’s Football Pyramid following the disruption to the last two seasons. This is likely to result in expanded divisions at tiers 3-6 for the 2021/22 season, something which Leagues have

indicated they could accommodate.

Clubs should note the proposed extension to the deadlines for application to the Promotion Pool (at tier 7) and for Voluntary Relegation (throughout the Pyramid), to 1 May 2021.

“The Women’s Football Board will now present their recommendation to The FA Board for ratification on the decision to curtail the season, and to The FA Council on the recommendation for upward club movement via application, with consideration of further club feedback.

“Further detail on these decisions will be communicated to leagues and clubs directly in due course.”

After the decision was announced Grimsby Town manager Dale Houlston told their official website: ““The Covid 19 situation has now played havoc with our fixtures for two seasons, and it is very

unfortunate but we have to accept the decision.

“All in all our very first season at Tier 6 has been a bit of a none event.

“That is upsetting for players and staff, and also for the support that we’ve built up too.

“But, when you consider the reasons behind the need to lockdown, we aren’t going to grumble, as a priority had to be placed on getting the world back to some sort of safe normality in the fight against Covid-19, and so sacrificing our football is perfectly understandable and was the right thing to do.

“That said, we started our first season at Tier 6 extremely well, and we was nicely poised in the table to mount a challenge.

“The league may be organising some sort of a small competition to see the season out with, and so we will consider if we want to participate in that”.

Dulwich Hamlet Women announce signings

Dulwich Hamlet are pleased to announce the signings of Daniella Tyson and Liz Berkeley.

Tyson, a midfielder, joins from Exeter City and brings experience from the National League. At Exeter she helped the team to a league title in 2019 and was named Player's Player of the Season in 2019/20.

She said, "I'm excited to get to know the team and play with them. I've heard a lot about how good the fans are here and the amount of people that you get, so that will be incredible when all the fans are here eventually."

"I usually play as a CAM, an attacking midfielder. I'd like to think I can bring a bit of creativity to the team."

Full back Berkeley signs from AFC Wimbledon and will join up with former teammate Sophie Manzi at Dulwich. Previously, she has played for Crystal Palace and Whyteleafe. At Palace, she was part of the team who won the 2015/16 FA Women's Premier League Division One in an unbeaten season.

"[Sophie Manzi] was in my ear quite a lot, saying it was a good club". she said. "Obviously I've seen a lot about the club and since you've come over to Dulwich, I've been really impressed with the set-up. That's helped me make the decision."

"I'm really excited to make my debut here at the club. Manzi's told me how exciting it is to play in front of all these people!"

With the return of organised sport, Tyson and Berkeley were able to meet their new teammates for the first time and join in with a full training session at Champion Hill.



Dench joins QPR

Defender Mollie Dench has joined National League side Queens Park Rangers on a permanent deal.

The youngster leaves London Bees which she joined in the summer of 2018 and has made eight appearances for the club.

In the previous two disrupted campaigns, the young defender has found her chances limited and joined the R's on loan at the beginning of the 2020-21 season.

London Bees said: "The defender leaves The Hive with all of our best wishes and we wish her well for her new chapter at QPR."

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

Simon Says

This month I spoke to match official Mirela Cemerli. The PE teacher became a referee whilst at University after falling in love with the game as a child.

When did you first become involved in football?

As a fan I cannot remember. I was a kid and always watched matches on TV and every week went to the stadium with my father to see my local football team. I grew up with this sport as part of my life and football was my life as a kid.

Did you play football before becoming a Match Official (Referee)?

Yes, I played football before becoming a match official. When I started studying at Sport University. It became a little difficult to continue playing professional football and to reach the highest result even as a student. I decided to stop playing and continue as a referee. This allowed me more time for studying and individual training for being a match official. It was a personal decision.

How old were you when first became a Match Official?

I was 19-years-old when I first became a match official. As an interesting fact. When I was a player for five years I was only once cautioned with a yellow card for a handball offence inside the penalty area.

In which league did you first appear as a Match Official?

I began in regional leagues and soon started in the Women's Championship.

Did you have to pass an exam or training session to become a Match Official?

Yes, I had to attend the Match Officials

Academy. After applying I started lessons and had to attend seminars about being a match official. After the course finished had to pass a fitness test, video test and the laws of the game test.

Has being a female match official been a problem?

For myself, no. being a match official has given me satisfaction. It is not an easy job. On the field we have to make decisions which are the right ones and not take the 'popular choice' which people cannot understand. But we have a job to do.

Have you been in an International match as a match official?

Yes, I have been a match official for international matches, but it was as a fourth official. I have my own career goals and I am working to reach those, but importantly I am enjoying my matches and try to take satisfaction from each match. This is because each match is a good opportunity to improve professional. The matches can be similar, but they are not the same as each match is unique.

Do you find it hard to combine home life and travelling with your work?

On the contrary. I always wanted a job to give me an opportunity to travel, meet new people, visit new places, to learn about other cultures and share experienced with other colleagues and learn from them. It is the best thing for me.

Are you an official in the men's and women's game?

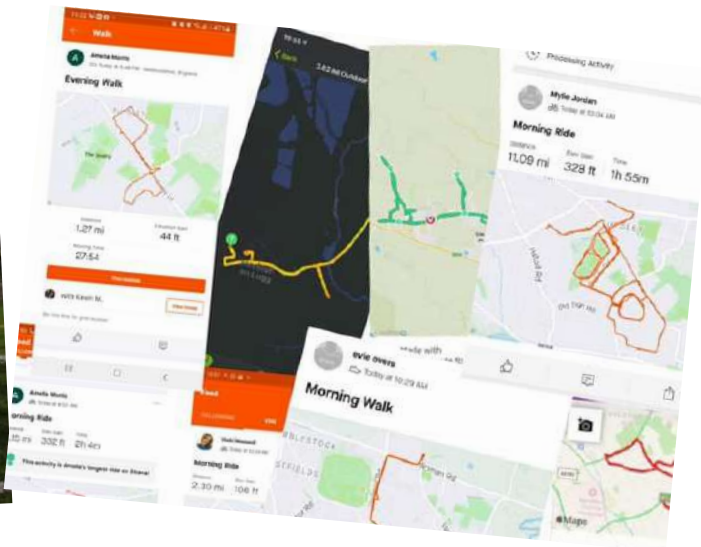
Yes, I am a match official in both the men's and women's game. It is in my view important to just judge the match official on their performance and is good enough to officiate a football match.



GRASSROOTS



Tupsley Girls U12 Pumas smash lockdown fundraiser



Like many teams across the UK, Tupsley Girls U12 Pumas have been trying to find ways to relieve some of the boredom brought on by lockdowns over the last year.

In January, coach Kevin Morris came up with the idea to collectively complete a virtual tour of all the grounds in the Women's Super League in four weeks by walking, running, cycling or even rollerblading.

The challenge was set to raise money for 'Cardiac Risk in the Young'. Kieran Joyce, a 15-year-old local boy who loved football went to bed one night and never woke again.

The girls jumped on the chance and completed it in two but instead of hanging up their trainers they decided to extend it to the Women's Championship clubs as well.

In total the girls travelled a 1434 miles.

Morris, he said: "During the lockdowns we have been trying to keep the girls entertained by doing zoom quizzes and we came up with this idea to raise money for charity.

"We knew we wanted to raise some money so we selected eight or nine charities and gave the parents the option and they chose 'Cardiac Arrests in the Young'.

"A 15-year-old boy in our area sadly went to sleep one night and never woke up so it was a charity close to our hearts.

"The girls were all really keen to the challenge, they were spurring themselves on

even in the rain and snow, we had some horrible weather during the challenge but they all supported each other.

"We completed the WSL teams challenge in 15 days so we had a discussion whether to stop and everyone wanted to keep going.

"We also added Middlesbrough in as we had some parents who had links up there!"

Grassroots teams are now allowed to meet again after the Governments latest restriction lifts on March 29, but Morris admits it has been a difficult year.

"It's been hard not seeing the girls week in, week out and they have missed seeing each other.

"Some of the girls are very committed to training and it's a massive part of their fitness and after school activities.

"When that stops there was a massive gap.

"The challenge was great because all the family got involved. It got them all out and away from the house they were locked in, away from home schooling and home working and they had chance to be a family for that time.

"We are now training again. We have a cup semi-final to go straight back into as well in 10 days-time.

Congratulations to the U12s Pumas on your fantastic achievement.

Making women's footb



A new project is aiming to break the last taboos in women's football from periods to pregnancy.

Staffordshire University is calling on women's football clubs across the UK to help identify best practices which can be shared across Europe.

Dr Jacky Forsyth, Associate Professor of Exercise Physiology, explained: "We know that there are huge gender inequalities in sport but we want to focus on the positives and highlight what is actually being done well.

"Women's football has made huge progress in recent years and by sharing best practice from grass roots to elite level we can help to continue that momentum."

Forsyth is a prominent researcher in women's exercise and her work covers a range of topics including ovarian hormones and bone health.

This latest research is part of the European Women in Sport (E-WinS) project which is funded by the Erasmus+ Sport programme and brings together experts from nine universities and sports organisations.

Staffordshire University is kicking off the three-year venture by gathering information from football players themselves but also coaches, leaders, managers and governors. UK-based clubs are being asked to take part in an initial online survey followed by a series of focus groups.

The research will address issues specific to women in sport including the impact of menstruation and hormone-based contraception on performance.

Chelsea Women recently became the football first club in the world to tailor training to players' menstrual cycles – something which Jacky believes more teams should follow.

She said: "We spend so much time talking about the science of sport and what we can do to improve performance, but relatively little time talking about the menstrual cycle, which can have important physiological, biomechanical, nutritional as well as psychological consequences.

all a level playing field



“A recent study found that performance was marginally better in the second part of the menstrual cycle when oestrogen and progesterone are elevated.

This is something that coaches should be aware of and factor into players’ training.”

The survey will also address pregnancy, maternity leave and the family responsibilities of players. In 2018, when Serena Williams dropped off Forbes’ list of the top 100 best-paid athletes it sparked much debate about maternity leave policies and the pressure women feel.

There is also a strong move to ban illegal pregnancy testing on athletes and to

get rid of anti-pregnancy clauses used by football clubs.

Jacky said: “We are interested to know what support is currently available for athletes.

“Some football clubs hire nannies to look after the players’ children during training and travel, and they also receive a specific training programme to help them get back in shape after pregnancy.

“We also know that women are paid less and that only a fraction of the total commercial investment in sport supports women’s sport.

“Pay, sponsorship, and media coverage are current and relevant topics that we want to explore as well.”

The E-WinS project partners will also collect feedback from women’s football teams across Europe with the ultimate goal of creating a freely accessible database of good practice tools and tips.

Jacky added: “We want to celebrate the great work happening in women’s football and so want to hear from as many people in the industry as possible.

“The more feedback we get, the more we can enhance the sport in future.”

UK football clubs are invited to complete the online survey or can contact Dr Jacky Forsyth on J.J.Forsyth@staffs.ac.uk for further information about the project.

The TWFM Awards are back!



The TWFM awards are back and they are bigger and better than ever! This year we are asking you to nominate the people you think should win:

- **Grassroots Player of the Year** *in association with The Coaching Manual*
- **Grassroots Coach of the Year** *in association with The Coaching Manual*
- **Fan of the Year**

What are the prizes?

- The Grassroots Player of the Year will win their team an annual TWFM season ticket and a Top Tekkers subscription
- The Grassroots Coach of the Year will win an annual TWFM season ticket and a premium Coaching Manual licence
- Fan of the Year will win an annual TWFM subscription and a women's football bundle

Nominations close on April 15, 2021.

To nominate go to: thewomensfootballmagazine.com/awards

GOOD LUCK!



AMMO'S ANTICS

Hi Ammo here,

Well it's been a little while since I wrote a blog.

To be honest lockdown has been pretty tough as I'm sure it has been for lots of people.

Homeschooling through online lessons and RTC training delivered through zoom calls as well as online training sessions with the Wales U15 squad and I feel like I've spent the last six months just staring at a computer screen.

Having said that, I have done some really good sessions online and both the Birmingham and Wales coaches have invested a lot of time and energy keeping the players fit, engaged and ready to return to pitch based training. I can't thank them enough for their efforts.

Highlights of lockdown include:

- A Commando chef session where we all cooked up a healthy meal. Mine tasted far better than it looked to be honest.

- Q&As with Birmingham first team players and Welsh international players.
- And some great stuff around mental health in particular a really inspirational story from Amber Keegan-Hobbs who plays for Crystal Palace about her football career.

I've kept myself in shape, riding my bike and going on plenty of runs and the good news is Birmingham city RTC has now returned to training due to Elite protocols. We have a couple of months left until the end of the season to hopefully get a few games in.

At this point of the season having played only Leicester, Stoke, London Bees, Man Utd and Wolves we remain unbeaten. We've got a great team and I think we'd give any U14s girls team in the country a run for their money.

This is my second year at under 14's and it

seems to have flown by. Next season I'm hopeful I'll be offered a contract with the U16s at Birmingham.

I'm also hoping to continue to be part of the Wales set up. I am now at the beginning of my three year plan to get into the first team squad. I'm 14 next month so when I'm 17 I would hope I'm on the verge of WSL first team squad at Blues.

In other news you will probably have seen that the WSL will be shown on Sky Sports. This is really exciting and will support the growth of women's football. So if you are a girl and interested in playing football. Now's the time to get started.

Don't worry if the boys won't play with you during lunchtime at school, that used to happen to me. Until I nicked the ball and dribbled past five of them to score. Find yourself a local girls or boys team, work hard at training every single session, listen to the coaches and play with a huge smile on your face. That's all I did when I got started.

You never know where it may lead you.

So I'm gearing up for a big year at Club, County and International level and I'll be sharing every step of my journey only in the Women's Footie Mag every month.

Stay safe

Ammo



NEW! Introducing the first TWFM Player development programme



With the return of group sport across the UK, are you looking for something new for you and your team to get involved in over the summer which will improve your footballing skills and your love of the game?

As part of an exciting new collaboration between The Women's Football Magazine and The Coaching Manual (an extensive online resource for football coaches) we are launching our first ever football education course for girls aged 5-14.

The course, which will start on May 17, will use the proven TopTekkers Player One programme, developed here in the UK and already delivering excellent results at home and overseas.

For a single course fee of just £20, all course participants will receive:

- a six week football training education course
- twelve months access to the TopTekkers website
- a twelve month complimentary

subscription to The Women's Football Magazine

So what is TopTekkers Player One?

TopTekkers Player One is a six-week digital football education course for children aged 5-14.

As well as improving their ability and technique with live sessions from UK Premier League academy coach Steven Crane, participants will be given exciting off-field workshop tasks to improve their nutrition knowledge, creativity, and have fun - all while boosting their confidence and presentation skills.

Crane said: "I've been working on ways to keep my own players fresh and engaged, and that's why we've come up with TopTekkers Player One - from top to bottom it teaches them everything they need to become a well rounded player, while having a lot of fun."

Each week, players get:

- **An online on-field session**

The course includes one on-field session to complete in your own time. These include fun technical activities delivered by Coach Crane

- **Off-field workshop task**

Fun tasks to complete away from the training field designed to improve a fully-rounded knowledge of soccer as well as develop the child as an individual, including analysis, scouting, nutrition, mindset, presentation skills, and confidence

- **TopTekkers weekly learning plan**

Three fun challenges every week to complete on the TopTekkers app, with progressed tracked personally by Coach Crane

- **Physical challenges**

Three fun physical challenges each week designed to help get players back in shape

Players are also welcome to share their training videos on social media.

TopTekkers Player One may be completed away from the training pitch, but that doesn't mean it doesn't encourage a shared love of learning the sport together - tag your posts with #TTPlayerOne and see how other participants are getting on!

So how do I apply?

The structure and delivery method means this course is ideal for individuals, groups of friends, teams or whole clubs to sign up to together.

All the exercises can be completed in a venue of your choice so there's no difficult travelling to do as we all come out of lock-down.

If you would like to sign your club up to this course, please contact Mike Cross, lead for girls football development at The Coaching Manual on:

Email: mikec@thecoachingmanual.com

Phone: 07815 053161

For more information about the course or the TopTekkers app, visit www.toptekkers.com.





CUPS



Impressive Chelsea see off Wolfsburg but Man City falter against Barcelona



Chelsea have secured their place in the Champions League semi-finals after two impressive displays against two-time winners Wolfsburg.

The Blues win 5-1 on aggregate and will face Bayern Munich in the semi-final.

Goals from Pernille Harder, Sam Kerr and Fran Kirby secured a handsome 'away' leg win in Budapest.

This came after a strong 2-1 win in the first leg where Kerr and Harder also bagged the goals.

Victory also saw the Women's Super League champions avenge three consecutive Champions League defeats by Wolfsburg, including in the 2018 semi-final, as they overcame the German side for the first time in Hayes' tenure.

Hayes told the BBC: "I've faced that opponent so many times and have felt humiliated and lost.

"I always thought they were the benchmark for women's football alongside Lyon."

In the other English quarter-final, Manchester City could not overcome the deficit in the second leg against Barcelona.

A poor performance led to a 3-0 defeat in the

first leg and Gareth Taylor's side could not find a way back despite a 2-1 win on home soil.

Janine Beckie opened the scoring at the Academy Stadium to give City hope but that was dented shortly after half time when Asisat Oshoala evened up the scores shortly after half time.

Sam Mewis grabbed a second for Man City but it was not enough to keep them in the competition.

Speaking to the official website, Taylor said: "It was a valiant effort and we're proud to come away winning this game.

"Barcelona have been doing this for a long time. They have more experience than we have, which gives us good experience.

"We knew we were on the tough side of the draw but it was a great experience and we look forward to meeting this challenge again.

The semi-final first leg will be played on either 24 or 25 April with the return leg a week later on 1 or 2 May.

This year's final takes place in Gothenburg, Sweden on 16 May.

Champions League quarter-finals

Leg One

Barcelona 3-0 Manchester City

Chelsea 2-1 Wolfsburg

Paris St. Germain 0-1 Lyon

Bayern Munich 3-0 Rosengard

Leg Two

Wolfsburg 0-3 Chelsea (1-5)

Manchester City 2-1 (2-4)

Rosengard 0-1 Bayern
Munich (0-4)

Lyon vs PSG (April 18—
postponed due to Lyon
Covid-19 outbreak)



When is the final?

The Champions League final is
set to be held on Sunday, May
16.

It will be played at Gamla Ullevi,
Gothenburg.

European Club Association plan second-tier European club competition



EUROPEAN CLUB ASSOCIATION

Plans to introduce a second-tier European club competition are among the latest proposals in the European Club Association's first women's football strategy.

The Women's Champions League is currently the only European club competition in women's football.

The ECA says the plans explore "playing more relevant games in Europe".

Claire Bloomfield, ECA head of women's football, added: "We want the clubs to realise these ambitions [of growing women's football] in Europe and part of that is tabling very detailed proposals for a possible second-tier competition in Europe.."

A new Women's Champions League format will be introduced in 2021-22 and will feature a group stage in the last 16 for the first time.

The ECA's plans are broken down into six strategic goals with the ambition to drive "full-scale gender equality in football".

- Enhance club player pathways
- Accelerate professionalisation
- Advance the economic development of women's football and identify new commercial opportunities
- Boost European ambitions through the development of the competition landscape
- Facilitate the successful creation of new women's clubs across Europe
- Produce research studies for the women's game

It is believed that Fifa plans to introduce a women's Club World Cup is also under discussion.

Despair for Fans, Players involved as the 20/21 Season

20/21 Season null and void, however, still all to play for in



By Emily Cassidy

On the 15th of March, the FA released a statement that tiers 3-6 of the Women's Football Pyramid would become null and void with immediate effect.

This decision was made with assistance from feedback submitted by leagues and clubs that took part in the Tiers 3-6 Club Survey, the Grassroots Survey, and recommendations from the Women's Football Conference.

I assume that most will be upset and disheartened to hear the decision of the Football Association to not allow the 20/21 season be completed.

Fylde forward, and long-time servant of the Women's National League, Faye McCoy, had some very strong words and opinions that mirror the feelings of most players, coaches, fans and other members of staff involved in tiers 3-6 of women's football.

She spoke about when she first heard the news that the 20/21 season would be 'null and void': "I'm disappointed more than anything, I was hoping after the effect and impact of last season that the FA would have been more prepared for disruptions this season and come up with a better all-round outcome for us to continue this season safely.

"It's a lot of frustration for teams in tier 3 and below, especially for the clubs that have been so close to promotion for 2 seasons running.

"To have that taken away for a second season will have a big impact on the players and coaches.

"I feel the gap between your 'elite' and tiers 3 and below teams is getting wider; and those tiers are being left behind in the women's game.

"You want stronger clubs that have pretty much earned promotion to get the reward of playing at the higher level, however this has been affected again.

s, Coaches and Everyone on Officially Null and Void

the FA Cup for National League Northern Premier Teams



She went on to speak about the FA cup fixtures being released and being back playing: “Realistically we would like a lot more time together as a team together to train after such a big break away, however we are all just happy and excited to have an opportunity to play competitive football again. We have put a lot of effort into our individual training over the break and hopefully we are as ready as we can be for the FA Cup game against Burnley.

“Even though I am happy to be back playing, I don’t understand the decision how the FA Cup can go ahead safely yet the league is unable to do this.

“There will be guidelines we will have to follow for the FA Cup games, so I’m sure this would be able to be put in place for league games also.

“I know a lot of clubs feel this decision is to benefit again the elite teams and enable them to progress in the FA Cup, however all that aside, we are grateful as players to have the opportunity to compete on the pitch again and will give it everything we have got, regardless of the situation.”

Even though female clubs in tiers 3-6 will not be completing their season, all is still to play for in the FA Cup.

Below are the fixtures that involve teams from the

Women’s National League Norther Premier:

- West Bromwich Albion vs Nettleham
- Sunderland vs Sheffield
- Middlesbrough vs Hull City LFC
- Burnley vs Fylde
- Loughborough Foxes vs Derby County
- Wolverhampton vs Nottingham Forest

Huddersfield Town are already awaiting their next opponent in the 3rd round, having defeated Liverpool Feds in a 2nd round tie that ended 3-2.

All fixtures to take place on April 4.

2020/21 Vitality Women's FA Cup fixtures, key dates & information

Vitality Women's FA Cup third round proper

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



Third round proper

- All ties must be played on Sunday April 11, kick-off 2pm
Unless arrangements made before
- Deadline for player registration for the third round is 12 noon on Saturday April 10
 - Prize fund payments:
 - Winners £1,250
 - Losers £315

Fourth round proper



- All ties must be played on Sunday
April 18, kick-off 2pm
*Unless arrangements made
before*
- Deadline for layer registration for the
for round is 12 noon on Saturday April
14
 - Prize fund payments
 - Winners £2000
 - Losers £500

Vitality Women's FA Cup fourth round proper

Leicester City	vs	Liverpool
Middlesbrough or Hull City or Stoke City or Wem Town	vs	Sheffield United
Birmingham City	vs	Coventry United
Burnley or Fylde or Sunderland or Sheffield	vs	Manchester United
Everton	vs	Durham
Manchester City	vs	Aston Villa
Watford or MK Dons or Wolverhampton Wanderers or Nottingham Forest	vs	Blackburn Rovers
Huddersfield Town or Brighouse Town or Newcastle United	vs	West Bromwich Albion or Lincoln City or Loughborough Foxes or Derby County
Reading	vs	Tottenham Hotspur
Cardiff City or Oxford United or Billericay Town or Ipswich Town	vs	Charlton Athletic
Arsenal	vs	Portsmouth or Cheltenham Town or Crawley Wasps or Gillingham
Chelsea	vs	London City Lionesses
Lewes	vs	Southampton or Plymouth Argyle or Keynsham Town or Yeovil United
Brighton & Hove Albion	vs	Bristol City
West Ham United	vs	Hounslow or Leyton Orient or Chichester & Selsey or Kent Football United or Enfield Town
Crystal Palace	vs	London Bees

Chelsea and Bristol out in Continental



Orlagh Gardner / Sports Press Photo

Chelsea secured back-to-back wins after a dominant victory in the Continental Tyres Cup final against Bristol City.

The Robins were no match for Emma Hayes side at Watford's Vicarage Road.

Fran Kirby and Sam Kerr were the stars with Guro Reiten adding the final goal.

The game was marred slightly by a horrible injury to Maren Mjelde.

The Norwegian defender was carried off on a stretcher and taken straight to hospital.

Mjelde has now been ruled out for the rest of the season.

Following the result, Kirby, Mjelde's housemate, and the rest of the players were clearly shaken and emotional about the injury.

Kirby carried Mjelde's shirt to the trophy presentation in honour of her teammate.

The game seemed very David and Goliath for most of the 90 minutes with Kirby setting up four goals and scoring the other two.

Throughout the day, Kirby looked emotional, pointing to the sky in honour of her mother on Mothers' Day and celebrating the result after missing last years final as she balled with the heart disease pericarditis.

Goals after 90 seconds and 10 minutes for Kerr put Chelsea at ease from the start and she completed her hat-trick three minutes after the break.

Kirby's strikes (29 and 35) had the Blues four goals to the good before Kerr's third and Guro Reiten added a sixth (55) shortly after to round off a satisfying day.

Despite the scoreline Sophie Baggaley had a good afternoon, keeping out a number of Chelsea shots.

City nearly pulled a goal back when Ebony Salmon moved her way past Mille Bright and found herself one-on-one, but a strong hand from Ann-Kathrin

Bristol City to battle it out in Conti Tyres Cup final



Berger denied Salmon from finding the top corner.

With Kerr and Kirby off, Bristol City had a number of chances.

Substitute Abi Harrison and Salmon continued to look for a consolation goal as the match went on, however it wasn't meant to be for the Robins as the full-time whistle went, with Chelsea coming out victorious in the Conti Cup final.

Chelsea boss Emma Hayes: "Today was a performance from a team that is very confident at the moment.

"Qualifying for the quarters of the Champions

League has given us so much confidence.

"I thought we were unbelievable for the first 60 minutes.

"The pace, the intensity, the cohesiveness of the team. Sam Kerr and Fran Kirby were unbelievable today."

On Maren Mjelde's injury: "It is a bittersweet moment for me.

"Maren is a huge presence in our dressing room, she is the mother hen.

"I am devastated for her, I know it's a bad one. That win is for her today."

Hat-trick scorer Sam Kerr said: "We are not stopping here - we will enjoy it

tonight, but tomorrow we turn back to the league.

"We are going to keep going until we win as many (trophies) as we can."

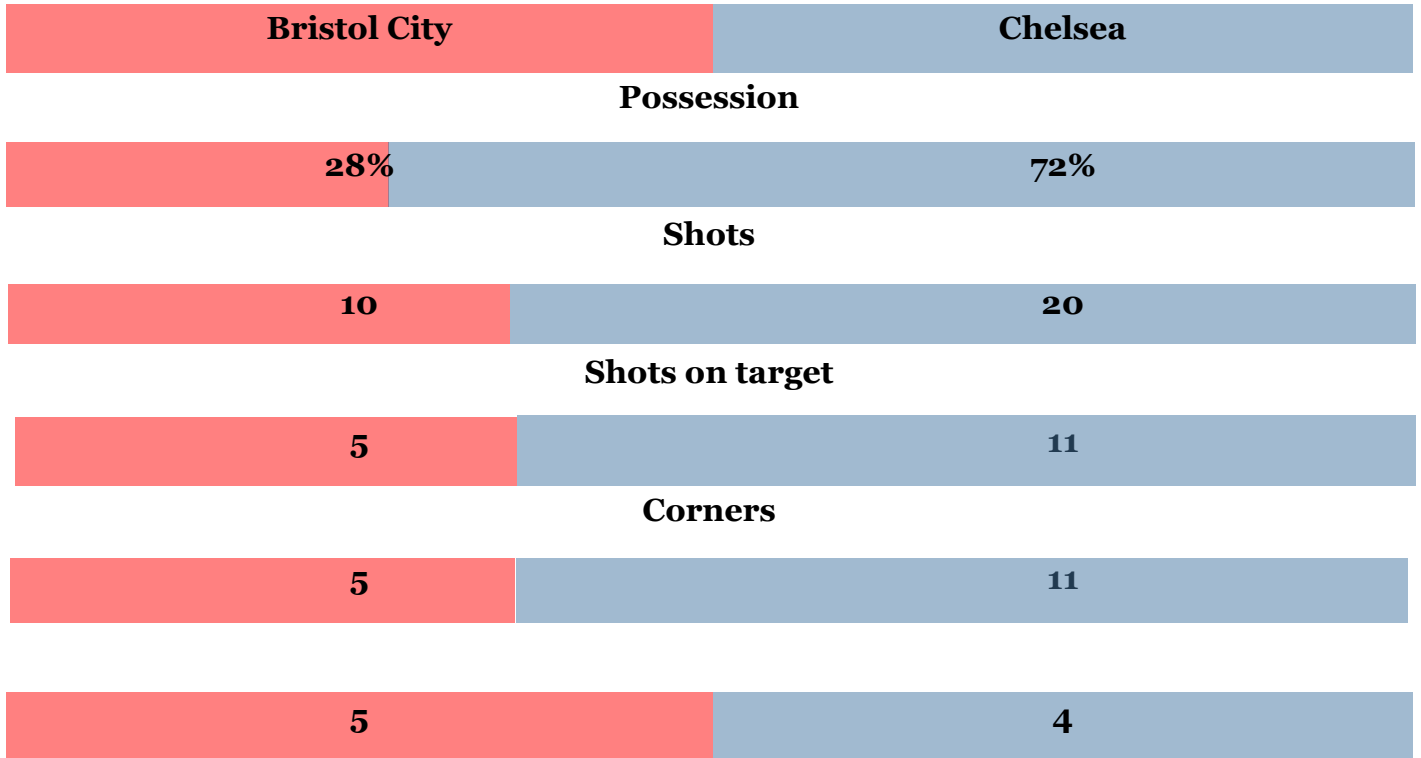
Bristol City interim manager Matt Beard said: "The occasion got the better of us, no matter how much we tried to play it down in the week.

"Earlier this week I asked the team how many of them have been in a cup final, and only one of them put their hand up."

Stat Attack: Bristol

Bristol City	Chelsea
Sophie Baggaley	Ann Katrin Berger
Faye Bryson	Millie Bright
Gemma Evans (Laura Rafferty, 80)	Sophie Ingle (Drew Spence, 46)
Carla Humphrey (Aimee Palmer, 66)	Melanie Leupolz (Erin Cuthbert, 46)
Ebony Salmon	Guro Reiten
Yana Daniels	Fran Kirby (Jess Carter, 60)
Charlie Wellings	Magdalena Eriksson
Emma Bissell (Abi Harrison, 46)	Jessie Fleming
Jemma Purfield	Maren Mjelde
Mastrantonio	Sam Kerr (Niamh Charles, 60)
Kiera Skeels (Naomi Layzell, 85)	Jonna Andersson (Blundell, 46)
Substitutes	
Flo Allen	Zecira Musovic
Mia Smith	Drew Spence
Maisy Collis	Hannah Blundell
Aimee Palmer	Erin Cuthbert
Abi Harrison	Niamh Charles
Laura Rafferty	Carly Telford
Ellen Jones	Pernille Harder
Naomi Layzell	Ji So-yun
	Jessica Carter

Bristol City 0-6 Chelsea



HOME NATIONS



Riise names England squad for April friendlies



England Women's interim head coach Hege Riise has named a 24-player squad for the forthcoming April international camp which sees the Lionesses test themselves against France and Canada.

The squad will meet up at the team's St. George's Park training base on Sunday, April 4 before heading to Caen's Stade Michel d'Ornano to face France on Friday, April 9 [kick-off: 8.10pm BST].

The Lionesses then return to St. George's Park and prepare to meet Canada at Stoke City's stadium on Tuesday 13 April [kick-off: 7.15pm].

Having been confirmed as head coach of GB Football, Riise will use April's international camp to challenge the players against two tier-one opponents and give individuals the opportunity to impress ahead of the final decision on the Olympics shortlist which takes place in May.

Riise has opted for a blend of youth and experience, with the rationale for selection remaining focused on players in form for their clubs, their versatility, physical robustness and ability to deliver under pres-

sure.

Experienced internationals including Lucy Bronze, Ellen White, Millie Bright and Jill Scott are joined by a strong contingent of younger players who have impressed for club and country over the past 12 months.

Amongst the youngsters, Riise has called up Everton goalkeeper Sandy MacIver, Arsenal defender Lotte Wubben-Moy, Chelsea winger Niamh Charles and Manchester United forward Ella Toone, together with Manchester City duo Lauren Hemp and Chloe Kelly.

The France and Canada fixtures could present opportunities for Niamh Charles and Millie Turner to make their senior England debuts. April's squad sees a return to international action for goalkeepers Carly Telford and Karen Bardsley.

Manchester City's Steph Houghton was not available for selection due to injury.

Lyon's Nikita Parris is currently unable to join the squad as a result of a number of positive covid-19 cases reported within the club, but the situation is being regularly assessed.

HEGE RIISE

As England continue their preparations ahead of the European Championships next year, interim manager Hege Riise has named her squad for the April friendly games against France and Canada. After the squad was announced, Riise spoke to Helen Rowe-Willcocks about her choices for the squad, who has missed out and who will be captain with Steph Houghton unavailable through injury.

Why have you brought back Karen Bardsley and Carly Telford?

In February, it was important to see the talent of the young goalkeepers coming up. Now in this camp we have two games, I want to see the experienced players as well. In the Olympics, it will be tight and there experience is important. This is for them to show their experience coming into camp.

This is a first call up for Niamh Charles, what struck you about her?

I see the talent and physicality that she has shown in the Women's Super League games.

She has been playing more and more minutes and I am excited to see her growing in the game. It was important for me to bring her into this environment and see how she is.

Looking ahead to the game against France, what are you looking for from these players?

We are aiming to have a good performance. To win both games against Tier Two and Tier One opponents. Meeting France is probably the best team we can face right now. After the game we can go back and see what we need to go further with. Delivering under pressure will be key because many players know they are also playing for an Olympic spot.

“*France is the best team we could play right now*”

We want to be performing well as a team but you cannot hide the fact that the Olympic [decision is coming up.]

France are going to be a good opponent.

Do you sense that the players are feeling that pressure to impress you?

The pressure will always be there when you are getting closer to choosing a squad.

What they do everyday is important. It's more important for us to see who is coming into the camp and performing well.

You're missing Steph Houghton through injury and Nikkita Parris is unavailable due to the Covid-19 outbreak at Lyon, can you explain how hard it is to be missing those key players?

There will always be players that are missing due to injury or things which we cannot control. I feel like that is an opportunity for others to come in and step up and show that they want to be a part of this.

Steph has been captain for a number of years and a major player for a long time. We

cannot replace her but players will want to step up and that is what we are looking for.

Nikkita didn't come in for February but hopefully we can get her to join later in the camp and join us but we don't know.

It's the world we are living in right now. There are things out of our control. It's challenging.

You're playing France in France, she is in France, surely she could come to that game?

We do not know all the reasons at the moment.

You said last time that Beth Mead's player report was not good, she's back in the squad now so are you happy with her improvements?

[Her player report] is better but also we have seen her in the camp. She came in late for the last camp when we had some injuries and she was good. That's why we are giving her another opportunity.

She has also played a number of league games between the camps.

Another player I wanted to ask you about was Lauren James at Manchester United. She has been winning good reviews this season, is she close to being in the squad?

Due injury, playing time and internal discussions that I cannot discuss at the minute.

She is a player that we are following.

What sort of challenges will there be playing in France?

It will be a good experience for us to travel. It's almost like we will be doing in the Olympics, there is a short time in between so it will be a good practice for us how we respond to that.

With a number of the Lyon players testing positive for Covid-19, is there a concern over whether the match will take place?

That will be a concern. We still don't know. Our plan is that hopefully we want that came but we obviously don't want to risk anything. Our plan is to go to France to play

The Lionesses have not travelled abroad since March 2020, do you feel you need to have an extra level of preparation?

I don't think so. We are travelling to St. George's Park and practising there for a few days and then we fly out for the game. I feel like we do not want to do anything different. We don't want to pay too much attention to the changes, this is how it's going to be.

Fran Kirby has played deeper for England in the past than she does for Chelsea, where do you see her in the England side?

She has the versatility to play different positions. Her



Performances have really helped Chelsea be that the place they are now.

20 of the 24 players you have called up for this squad play for Arsenal, Manchester City or Chelsea, how much of a compliment is that to the clubs about how they perform?

I would say they are doing a great job. They are playing in the Champions League as well and getting great experience.

They are used to the level of play and can easily adapt to the international play.

Do you think the friendlies against France and Canada will teach you more than playing against Northern Ireland?

Of course. These are the level of teams that we are going to meet in the Olympics, so they will be two great games. We are excited to be finally playing a tier one team. Northern Ireland gave us a competition and it was a good place to start but now leading into the Olympics, it's important being able to play teams like this.

When looking at picking your squad, would you prioritise versatility over their player report?

It's a good question. There are a few key points that we look into. It's not that all players should have all three of them

but it's for me to be able to build a good team.

We look the players report, we look at the behaviour and we look delivering under pressure. It's different criteria and some might come in for 20 minutes and be a success. It's the ongoing discussions we have when we are picking all the players.

When you are in the position where you have to pick between two players, how do you decide that?

It will depend what the squad looks like, it changes each time. It's not an easy time.

Georgia Stanway plays a number of different positions, do you intend to use her in different spots or do you have one position in mind for her?

We are planning different ways on how we will look against France and Canada. When Keira Walsh had to step out, Georgia stepped in well. It might be different for each game.

Finally, just revisiting the new call-up... Lots of fans will be excited to see Niamh Charles in the squad, what have you liked seeing her so far?

Now I have seen her in a couple of positions, she is very good. What has impressed me is the physicality she has. She can go up and down the field. She is still young, she is not mature in

some of her play but she is growing into those games. The Wolfsburg game, I saw her raise her level. She is in a good spot with her club and is delivering well.

Squad

Goalkeepers: Karen Bardsley (OL Reign, loan from Man City), Sandy MacIver (Everton), Ellie Roebuck (Manchester City), Carly Telford (Chelsea),

Defenders: Millie Bright (Chelsea), Lucy Bronze (Manchester City), Niamh Charles (Chelsea), Rachel Daly (Houston Dash), Alex Greenwood (Manchester City), Demi Stokes (Manchester City), Millie Turner (Manchester United), Leah Williamson (Arsenal), Lotte Wubben-Moy (Arsenal)

Midfielders: Fran Kirby (Chelsea), Jordan Nobbs (Arsenal), Jill Scott (Everton, loan from Manchester City), Georgia Stanway (Manchester City), Keira Walsh (Manchester City)

Forwards: Bethany England (Chelsea), Lauren Hemp (Manchester City), Chloe Kelly (Manchester City), Beth Mead (Arsenal), Ella Toone (Manchester United), Ellen White (Manchester City).

Welch becomes first female referee in EFL



Rebecca Welch has become the highest-ranked female referee in English football.

Referee chiefs Mike Riley and Mike Jones approved the appointment on March 30 for the men's English Football League Two fixture between Harrogate Town and Port Vale.

Welch has been selected after an ongoing review of her performances this season.

In 2010, Amy Fearn became the first woman to referee an EFL game as a second-half replacement for injured referee Tony Bates in Coventry's game against Nottingham Forest in the Championship.

Welch told Sky Sports News: "I'm still trying to let it sink in.

"I got the news and haven't come back down to earth yet.

"I'm very fortunate to have been given this opportunity and I'm really

excited about it.

"My dad is probably my biggest fan, so he's over the moon.

"My mum doesn't know a lot about football.

"She's excited, but I don't think she knows why!"

The news came with the usual mixed opinions on social media.

One wrote: "No no, go and referee your own game. You are not wanted." However, there were many who were very positive about it.

Another put: "Looking forward to the days where things like this aren't a massive story and headlined "History made" and are just the accepted norm. But until then many congrats Rebecca."

Scottish Women's Premier League to resume

The Scottish Women's Premier League will restart on April 4.

Clubs are committed to a full 21-game season with the final games scheduled to be June 6.

All levels of Scottish football, bar the men's top two tiers, were suspended in January amid a rise in Covid cases.

All eight clubs will have resumed training this week as they prepare to continue a league campaign in which seven rounds of matches have been played, with a revised fixture list to be announced on Friday.

The SWPL 2's shutdown remains in place.

Vivienne MacLaren, chair of Scottish Women's Football, said: "We are delighted for all involved and those who support the game that there is an imminent return for SWPL 1 football.

"I would like to thank all the SWPL 1 clubs and our partners for their support. Our priority now is seeking a return for the whole of the girls' and women's game as soon as safely possible."

Games on April 4

Hearts vs Rangers (13:00)

Spartans vs Hibernian (14:00)

Motherwell vs Forfar Farmington (14:00)

Celtic vs Glasgow City (16:10)



SCOTTISH WOMEN'S
PREMIER LEAGUE

Glasgow City U12s to be sponsored by Kerr Baxter Associates

Glasgow City Academy have announced that Kerr Baxter Associates as sponsor for both the under-12 teams.

The sponsorship will see the company logo on the Glasgow City U12s strips.

Jim Kerr and Stuart Baxter commented, "Kerr Baxter Associates are delighted to be sponsoring both of the Glasgow City U12's Academy Teams.

"As the most successful independent women's team in Scotland Glasgow City FC have also championed women and girls since 1998 and as such, we are proud to be associated with Glasgow City FC and support the academy development."

Head of Academy Jamie Beattie added "I am delighted to announce Kerr Baxter Associates as the new home kit sponsor for both our U12 teams.

"It's a very exciting time for Glasgow City and I would like to thank Jim & Stuart for their generosity and support for the upcoming seasons."



Grainger named new Wales boss



The Football Association of Wales (FAW) have announced the new manager of the women's national team.

Former England coach Gemma Grainger has been named on a four-year contract.

Grainger, 38, has spent 11 years working with the England age group set-up.

Grainger will now take charge of her first matches when Wales face Canada and Denmark in April.

That will mark the start of preparations for the 2023 World Cup qualification campaign beginning in September, ahead of the tournament taking place in Australia and New Zealand.

Recently-retired Wales centurion Loren Dykes will be part of the coaching staff for the upcoming April camp, with Grainger's backroom staff

plans yet to be announced.

Grainger replaces Jayne Ludlow who left the role in January.

Unlike Ludlow, Grainger will work full-time with the senior team and will not, as Ludlow was, have to also manage the age-group sides.

Grainger said: "I'm proud to become Cymru's national team manager and I can't wait for the challenge ahead.

"Every part of my career has been deliberate and thought out to build towards taking a senior team to a major tournament.

"It's an exciting time for everyone and I'm looking forward to working with staff and players to fulfil everyone's potential to go to the next level.

"It's an opportunity for me and the players to write a new chapter and build on the story of women's football in Wales."

Wales squad announced for friendlies



Gemma Grainger has named the 26 player squad which will face Canada and Denmark friendlies.

The new manager has added two new names to the squad who were part of the training camp at the Vale Resort in February.

Reading defender Bethan Roberts has received her first call-up.

Liverpool's Ceri Holland has also been included for the first time after spending a couple of days with the squad last month.

Holland has also just been named Championship Player of the Month.

The squad will take on Canada on April 9 and Denmark on April 13.

Grainger told Sky Sports: "With the squad needing submitting only two days into the job, it was important for me to utilize the existing staff from the February camp to select the squad.

"We want to play the higher-ranked

nations and there's no better test as we look to prepare for the World Cup qualifying campaign and the next four years."

Squad

Goalkeepers: Laura O'Sullivan, Olivia Clark, Poppy Soper

Defenders: Rhiannon Roberts, Gemma Roberts, Lily Woodham, Ffion Morgan, Esther Morgan, Bethan Roberts

Midfielders: Charlie Estcourt, Hayley Ladd, Josie Green, Anna Filbey, Sophie Ingle, Angharad James, Jess Fishlock, Carrie Jones, Natasha Harding, Georgia Walters, Ceri Holland, Kylie Nolan

Forwards: Maria Francis-Jones, Elise Hughes, Kayleigh Green, Rachel Rowe, Helen Ward

Northern Ireland squad an



Northern Ireland manager Kenny Shiels has named his 23-player squad for the Euro 2022 play-off matches against Ukraine.

Northern Ireland have made it through to the play-offs after finishing second in their group games and will play Ukraine in a two-leg play-off.

The first game will be played on Friday, April 9 at the Kolos Stadium, home of Ukraine Premier League side Kolos Kovalivka.

Seaview, Belfast will host the second leg on Tuesday, April 13.

There are a number of key players missing from the squad due to work commitments or injuries but two players are back after a long time away.

Laura Rafferty, who plays for Women's Super League side Bristol City, has been named in the squad for first time since August 2018.

Glentoran Women defender/midfielder Emma McMaster (below), who has six senior caps and was a star for Northern Ireland at underage level, sat out the bulk of the 2020 season after suffering a knee ligament

injury but has now fully recovered following surgery last September.

McMaster, 22, made her last appearance at the Pinatar Cup tournament in Spain in March 2020.

Sion Swifts Ladies striker Kirsty McGuinness, and Glentoran forwards Kerry Beattie and Danielle Maxwell return to the squad.

They missed the friendly defeat against England at St. Georges' Park.

Defender Rebecca Holloway, who made her debut against the Lionesses, has retained her place in the squad.

Missing from the squad is Glentoran striker Lauren Wade, who earlier this week picked up an ankle injury in training that could keep her sidelined for a couple of months.

Rangers pair Demi Vance and Megan Bell, plus Glentoran forward Caragh Milligan, have long term injuries.

Abbie Magee and Caitlin McGuinness are both unavailable.

nounced for Euro play-offs



Since the squad was announced, Northern Ireland have suffered another blow.

Midfielder Lauren Wade has been ruled out.

She told the BBC: "'It's not a nice feeling at all to get the news that you are out of play-offs.

"They are the two biggest games in Northern Ireland women's history - It's not a nice time.

"It happened in training and was just very unfortunate - I went to press the keeper, the ball hit my ankle and it was whatever way I landed.

"I didn't think it was that bad and I was quite hopeful so it has been hard to accept.

"Unfortunately I got the bad news that had torn/ruptured two of the three ankle ligaments and I'm looking at six-eight weeks out."

Squad list

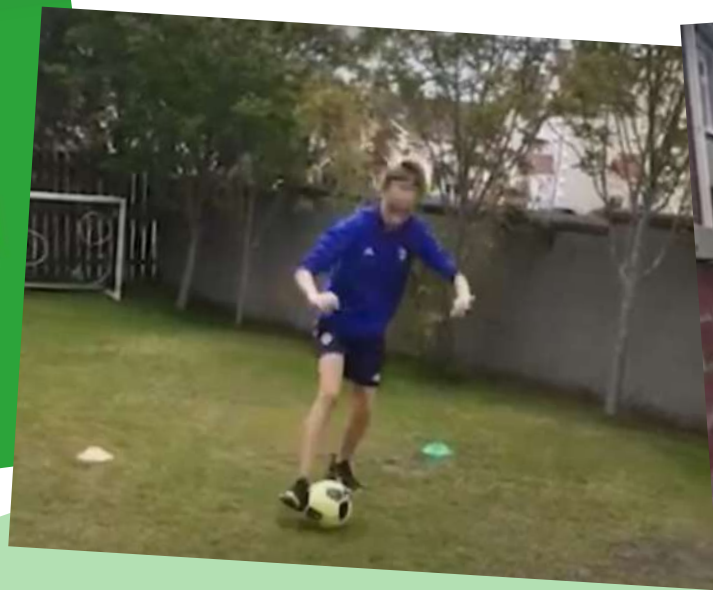
Goalkeepers: Jackie Burns (Glentoran Women), Becky Flaherty (Sheffield United Women)

Defenders: Ashley Hutton and Kelsie Burrows (both Linfield Ladies), Toni-Leigh Finnegan (Cliftonville Ladies), Julie Nelson (Crusaders Strikers), Rebecca Holloway (Birmingham City Women), Laura Rafferty (Bristol City Women), Emma McMaster (Glentoran Women)

Midfielders: Nadene Caldwell, Samantha Kelly (both Glentoran Women), Marissa Callaghan (Cliftonville Ladies), Rachel Furness (Liverpool Ladies), Chloe McCarron (Birmingham City Women), Sarah McFadden (Durham Ladies), Ciara Watling (Charlton Athletic Women), Rebecca McKenna (Linfield Ladies), Louise McDaniel (Unattached)

Forwards: Kerry Beattie and Danielle Maxwell (both Glentoran Women), Simone Magill (Everton Women), Emily Wilson (Crusaders Strikers), Kirsty McGuinness (Sion Swifts Ladies)

IFA uses Top Tekkers to develop



By Richard Redman

When the pandemic forced everyone off the training pitch last year, the Irish Football Association needed a way to safeguard the development of their girls' academy.

They provided a mobile app called TopTekkers to remotely train 1,000 girls in their development programmes, including the Elite Pathways programme and players at the residential JD Irish Football Association Academy at Ulster University's Jordanstown campus.

TopTekkers aims to help children become better footballers and is used by coaches to ensure that their players are putting in the practice away from organised training sessions.

It was developed in 2019 by the team behind The Coaching Manual, a team of UEFA-qualified coaches, former professional players and technology experts based in Manchester and is headed up by its founders, and brothers, Terry and Chris Barton.

The TopTekkers app features a library of age-appropriate video tutorials of fundamental football techniques, setting players challenges based on each technique. Players are then rewarded for completing these challenges and improving their technical proficiency.

The concept is simple: master the basics, and you have the building blocks to become the best you can be.

Chris Barton said: "We designed TopTekkers to

empower young players so that they can reach their true potential by spending their off-field practice time wisely.

"TopTekkers helps coaches connect with their players like never before, encouraging those vital hours of practice that need to be put in away from organised training sessions, while the players themselves are really going to enjoy seeing their development happen in real time.

"Not only are we immensely proud of our partnership with the Irish Football Association, we are also really excited to see what the organisation, and country as a whole, is going to achieve with TopTekkers."

Alfie Wylie, Head of Elite Performance at the Irish Football Association, said: "TopTekkers is a great

TopTekkers academies during lockdown



programme for all young players to have.

“It not only gives you a skill to practice but you also get a demonstration and an opportunity to keep your scores and monitor your progress with fun competitions.

“The Electric Ireland Girls’ Regional Excellence players have had great fun with all the various skills that are on the programme and by doing so have greatly improved.

“This programme will help any young player develop in their own home and in their own time.”

Last year, TopTekkers launched a unique online player development course to bring remote learning to another level: TopTekkers Player One.

Designed and delivered by Premier League Academy coach Steven Crane, who is also Head of Player Development at TopTekkers and The Coaching Manual, the course covers the whole sport: from individual technical challenges that players can complete within a small space at home, to exciting take-home tasks that cover topics such as tactical awareness, creativity, and even nutrition.

Crane said: “It keeps players active, healthy, and engaged, all while making sure there is no interruption to their development.

“But most importantly, the course is fun - the feedback has been fantastic, and the players are really enjoying it.”

TopTekkers Player One also proved a hit with the Irish Football Association.

Wylie added: “The players on the course have really enjoyed it. With training sessions being interrupted by the current restrictions and uncertainty surrounding future restrictions, TopTekkers Player One has given the girls structure to their off-field training, while helping their development to continue away from the pitch.

“They’ve really got stuck in and they’re reaping the rewards.”

If you are interested in trying TopTekkers at your club, see the article on page 51 which introduces an exciting new collaboration between the Women’s Football Magazine and The Coaching Manual on page 51.

INTERNATIONAL TOURNAMENTS



2023 WWC host cities announced



Australia and New Zealand have announced the nine cities and 10 stadiums which will host the Fifa Women's World Cup 2023.

With just over two years to go until the tournament, preparations are well underway.

The tournament will be the first ever co-hosted Fifa Women's World Cup and will be the first to feature 32 teams after it was agreed by members of Fifa to up the amount of teams in the tournament.

The Host Cities and stadiums for the FIFA Women's World Cup 2023 are:

- Adelaide – Hindmarsh Stadium
- Auckland / Tāmaki Makaurau – Eden Park
- Brisbane – Brisbane Stadium
- Dunedin / Ōtepoti – Dunedin Stadium
- Hamilton / Kirikiriroa – Waikato Stadium
- Melbourne – Melbourne Rectangular Stadium
- Perth – Perth Rectangular Stadium
- Sydney – Stadium Australia and Sydney Football Stadium
- Wellington / Te Whanganui-a-Tara – Wellington Stadium

Hege Riise named as Team C



Hege Riise has been confirmed as Team GB's women's football coach ahead of this summer's Olympic Games, and will be tasked with assembling an 18 player squad and leading the side in Tokyo.

The former Norwegian international had initially applied to be Phil Neville's number two following the departure of Rehanne Skinner.

However, when Neville left for Inter Miami in January, Riise was offered the Lionesses' top job until Sarina Wiegman takes the reins in September.

She impressed so much during England's February camp alongside assistant coach Rhian Wilkinson that she was offered the Team GB role.

"It was really important for me to see the February camp and to look at how Hege and Rhian worked with the players, and that was excellent," explained the FA's Director of Women's Football Baroness Sue Campbell.

"For somebody coming in with the amount of time she had, it was really both an excellent demonstration of how you come in and set a tone and set values and a way of working.

"We asked Hege to step up and I think what was impressive was the style in which she did that.

"This was all unfamiliar; the environment at St George's Park, the enormity of the support staff. I think the manner in which she conducted herself, the

humility which she demonstrates constantly but that steely winning internal engine she's got really impressed everyone.

"It was her willingness to adapt to a challenging new environment, but doing it with complete smooth transition into leading the players and I think that was really impressive."

England beat Northern Ireland 6-0 during Riise's maiden match in charge, but the interim boss emphasised the importance of the conversations she had with players away from the pitch as key to her approach during the camp, and this will be the style that she continues to adopt as Team GB coach.

"We spent a lot of time getting to know the players

GB coach for Tokyo Olympics



individually,” Riise said.

“We will continue to do that when we go into Team GB.

“We will get to know the players not only as a player, but as a personality and a person.

“That was a priority for the February camp; to spend hours talking to each player to get to know them, not only as a player in what position, but also how do they react to different situations, and the family and a general get to know them a bit more.

“So when we get into hard times, we will know each other more and we can be spot on in how we react.”

Campbell and Riise both confirmed that English players will make up the majority of the Team GB

squad. However, they insisted that while players from Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales will have the same equal chance of being selected, there will also be no pressure or obligation to select a certain number of other home nations players for the sake of representation and diversity.

“The number one priority for us is the players,” Campbell added.

“This is a unique and amazing opportunity for those people to go and experience something that is probably the greatest sporting show on earth.

“We want any player from anywhere who has the desire and aspiration to be a part of this team, to get a fair opportunity to be part of it.

“I think we’ve got some excellent players from the home nations and they will earn that right to be in that squad because they are good players, not because we feel we ought to have them there.

“It must be based on their ability to help us win this tournament. The home nations understand that.

“They are absolutely committed to the fact that they want their players who want to be part of this, to get that opportunity.”

An extensive list of players has been narrowed down to a long list of 35 names prior to the squad’s final announcement in May.

The final squad will consist of 18 players, and an additional four players will travel as

reserves.

Birmingham boss Carla Ward revealed that Hannah Hampton has not made the cut, with the young goalkeeper informed in the build up to her side's WSL clash with Everton in March.

Riise's most recent England squad offers a hint at who has and has not been included in the long list.

The Team GB coach has cited physicality, mentality and versatility as the attributes that she values ahead of the unique nature of the Olympic football tournament, with the small squad facing up to six games in the space of just 17 days.

Riise has extensive experience of dealing with the Olympic environment, having won

gold as a player with Norway in 2000 and as assistant coach for the USA in 2012.

"Keep focused is one major thing," the 51-year-old said on her top tips for Olympic success.

"Because if we stay in the village there will be a lot of athletes you can meet and talk to. Keeping the balance of being focused, of being relaxed and also enjoying the tournament.

"Not running out of gas, having the energy going into every game to have the days in between light and fun. In between it has to be some way of relaxing because you need to enjoy the ride as well."

Team GB have only sent a women's football team to the Olympics once previously, at

London 2012, and this proved to be a watershed moment for women's football. Both the Olympics and Commonwealth Games have provided a platform for women's team sports in recent years, with Team GB's hockey gold at Rio 2016 and England netball's similarly dramatic Commonwealth gold in 2018 going down as all-time iconic moments of their respective years, regardless of gender.

Women's sport has since been hit particularly hard by the coronavirus pandemic, and Campbell is targeting success in Tokyo to have a wider impact on women's sport.

"An Olympic gold medal is something so special," Campbell said.

"There are athletes who spend 16 years of their life trying to



get to that gold medal, so to win a gold medal at an Olympic Games is for me a really iconic moment in sport.

"I think it would help re-energise women's football but also women's sport generally. We need some really good high profile great moments to reignite after this Covid year, the whole interest in women's games across all team sport."

The FA has since confirmed that Hege Riise was not involved in timing issue regarding telling players they had not made the shortlist.

Riise offered further comment on that incident during the press conference for the England squad announcement ahead of the April international friendlies.

She said: "'The timing was not my call, but it was not how I want to work.

"That was a big mistake of us and as soon as we found out I call both the [club] coaches and Hannah, of course, just to apologise for the process of that. That was a mistake that we don't want to happen again."

When is the Tokyo Olympics?

The Tokyo Olympics was supposed to be held in 2020 but due to the Covid-19 pandemic it was postponed.

The opening ceremony will be on July 23.

Schedule

Wed 21 July 16:30 - 22:30
First Round (6 matches)

Sat 24 July 16:30 - 22:30
First Round (6 matches)

Tue 27 July 17:00 - 22:00
First Round (6 matches)

Fri 30 July 17:00 - 20:00
Quarterfinal

Fri 30 July 18:00 - 21:00
Quarterfinal

Fri 30 July 19:00 - 22:00
Quarterfinal

Fri 30 July 20:00 - 23:00
Quarterfinal

Mon 2 Aug. 17:00 - 20:00
Semifinal

Mon 2 Aug. 20:00 - 23:00
Semifinal

Thu 5 Aug. 17:00 - 20:00

Bronze Medal Match

Fri 6 Aug. 11:00 - 14:00
Women's Gold Medal Match

Women's Victory Ceremony



Around the World





News from around the world



Brescia women's soccer bound for Australia

In the summer of 2023, the Brescia women's soccer team is partnering with WorldStrides Sports to take a trip of a lifetime to Sydney for the Fifa Women's World Cup.

Aside from training sessions, playing games against local sides, and sight seeing around Sydney, the Brescia Women's Soccer team will also be earning coaching licenses while working with members of the Australian National Blind Soccer Team.

The Lady Bearcats will be spending time over the next two years with various fundraisers to help lower the costs of their travel. The Brescia University GiveCampus donation page will be available until their departure in the summer of 2023.

Pakistan football HQ attacked and women's event scrapped

On March 28, Pakistan football's headquarters was attacked.

Chairman of the Fifa-appointed Pakistan Football Federation (PFF) Normalisation Committee (NC) said he was forced to hand over the organisation's accounts and cheque books.

Haroon Malik, the PFF NC chair, said Saturday's attack was led by former PFF President Syed Ashfaq Hussain Shah who was accompanied by other officials.

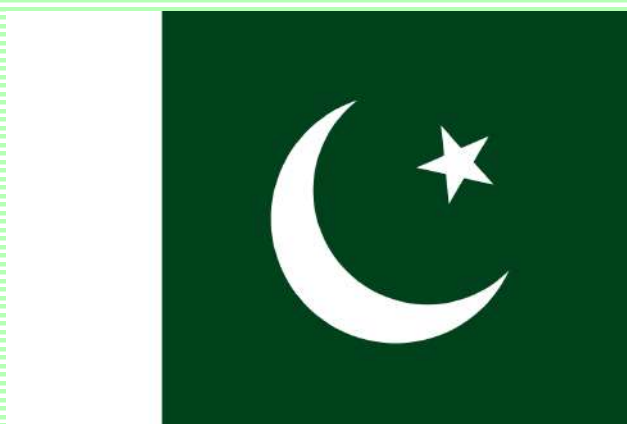
"I was working at the office when a mob, organised by Shah, barged into my office and asked me to hand over charge of the PFF and all bank accounts," Malik told Al Jazeera on Sunday.

"They restrained me and locked the doors, shouting and telling me to hand over the PFF to them. They were furious about not conducting the elections. I told them I will provide a roadmap and we should discuss it in a civilised manner."

A PFF spokesperson added that "staff was physically harassed and held hostage".

The incident also forced the cancellation of the ongoing women's football championship that kicked off earlier this month in the southern coastal city of Karachi.

With 19 teams comprising young female footballers coming from all over the country to take part in the event, the cancellation left participants shocked and disappointed.





News from around the world

“Today we stand our ground and we stand together”

Hajra Khan, captain of the Pakistan National Football team released a press release alongside Khadija Kazmi, Sarah Ali, Mashal Hussain, Maria Khan and Zarah Shah.

It read: “In lieu of the recent events pertinent to the transition of football governing bodies in Pakistan, players are in a position to question their continued participation in the National Women’s Football Championship.

“The transition indicates that the governing body has not considered the impacts its actions will have on the future of football in Pakistan.

“As players representing various teams, we too are responsible for upholding the integrity of the game which is being challenged as a result of politicized governance.

“Historically in the game of women’s football within Pakistan, there has not been a unified stance that challenges governing bodies to prioritize players’ well-being/

“Our aspiration as a unified group of players is to utilize positive player power to encourage our fellow players.

“To all of our teammates and the Pakistani football community, please recognize that your individual and collective choices matter.”



Rapinoe testifies to Congress

Megan Rapinoe has taken her fight for equal pay to Congress as she testified in front of a committee examining “the economic harm caused by longstanding gender inequalities, particularly for women of colour”.

In her opening statement, the soccer star told the committee that: “I am here today because I know firsthand that this is true. We are told in this country that if you just work hard and continue to achieve - you will be rewarded, fairly. It’s the promise of the American dream. But that promise has not been for everyone.

“The United States women’s national team has won four World Cup championships and four Olympic gold medals on behalf of our country. We have filled stadiums, broken viewing records, and sold out jerseys, all popular metrics by which we are judged.

“Yet despite all of this, we are still paid less than men – for each trophy, of which there are many, each win, each tie, each time we play. Less.”



News from around the world

Gladbach coach punishment met with criticism

Borussia Monchengladbach's under-23 Heiko Vogel was ordered to train the women's team as punishment for "unsporting behaviour" towards a referee during a match.

The 44-year-old was also fined €1,500 and ordered to coach a women's or girls' team for six sessions, with the FA allowing Vogel until June 30 to fulfil that part of the verdict.

The decision was met with criticism, with Nicole Selmer of the Frauen im Fussball (Women in football) network telling ESPN that it was "sending a fatal message."

"It shows that at whatever level women and girls play football, they are not taken as serious as men and boys," Selmer said.



Rhali Dobson retires

Melbourne City's Rhali Dobson has retired with a fairytale ending.

The former Matilda, 28, scored a goal in the 2-1 win over Perth Glory in the W-League match before celebrating her retirement on the pitch.

Dobson had told City teammates on the eve of the match that she was going to retire to spend time supporting partner Matt Stonham, who has brain cancer.



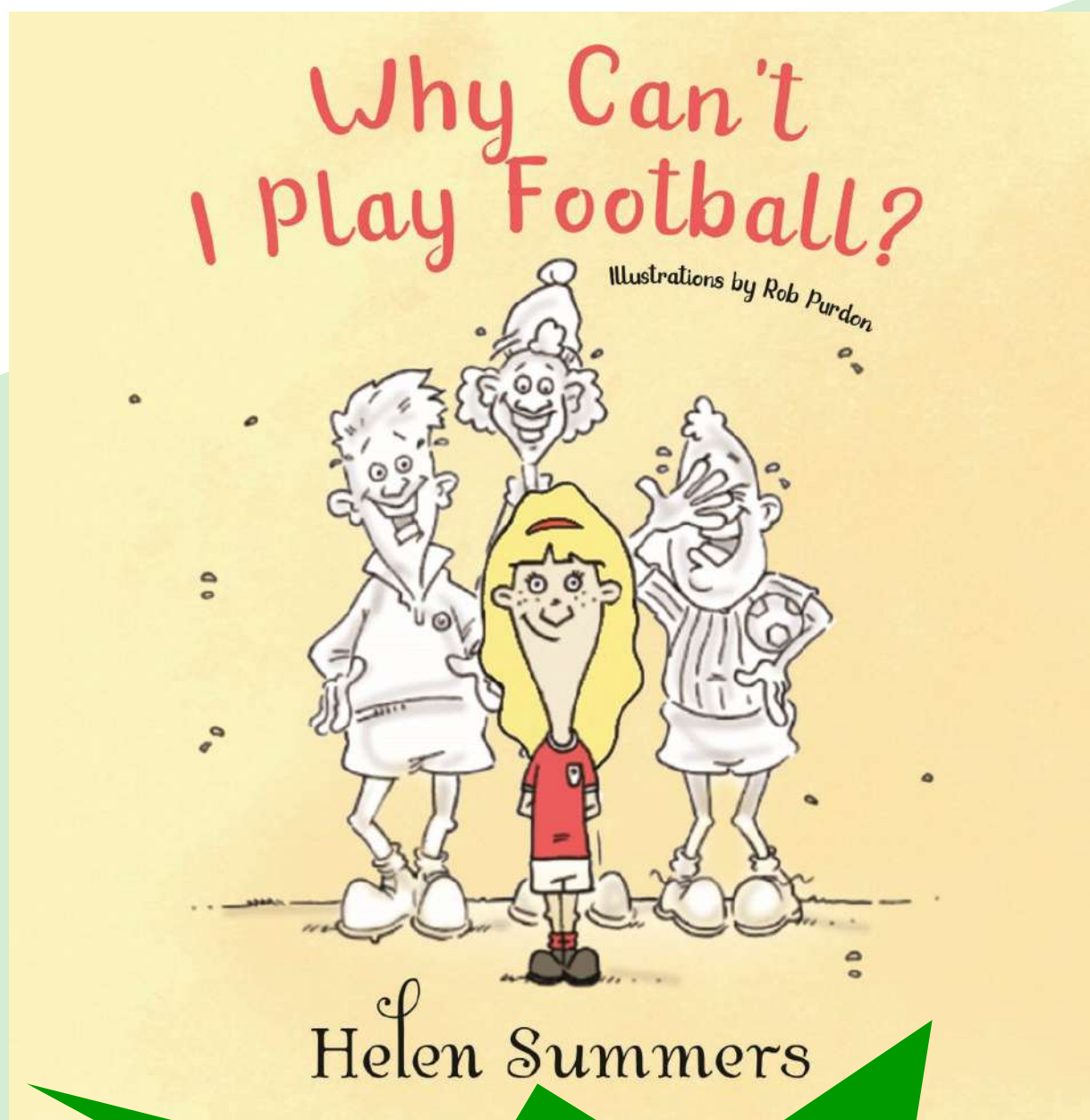
As Dobson ran to celebrate with her family by the side of the pitch at the end of the match, Stonham got down on one knee and proposed.

She had proposed to him twice in recent weeks, only for him to laugh off the idea.

Dobson said: "This is bigger than the sport. He is my absolute world."

Stonham was diagnosed with cancer six years ago, after having a seizure while playing football. He had surgery for a second time earlier this month and will have aggressive radiotherapy, before 12 months of chemotherapy.

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