

THE WOMEN'S FOOTBALL MAGAZINE

Issue 61—September 2022



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Welcome

Hello and welcome to Issue 61!

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Company number: 12839197



Football is back—not that it really feels like it ever went away.

The National League and Barclays Championship have started and it has been great seeing the rise in some of those attendance numbers.


The international teams have also been in action with Scotland and Wales both securing a WWC play-off place which is amazing news. It was particularly great seeing Wales' celebrations on Tuesday night as they made history in front of a record-breaking crowd.

Games are coming thick and fast now, the Barclays Women's Super League starts this weekend and we are greatly looking forward to our first WSL game of the season at Manchester City—follow our social media for updates on all the weekend's games.

Enjoy the issue!

Helen Rowe-Willcocks

Editor-in-Chief

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‘Always the bridesmaid’



Words: Peter Mann

Images: Clive Pearson, AFC Sudbury

An age-old adage, ‘always the bridesmaid, never the bride,’ can certainly be attributed to that of AFC Sudbury Women, be that under league, or cup auspices, well, until last season that is.

Prior to the conclusion of the 2021/22 season, AFC Sudbury had only lifted one, Suffolk FA Women’s Cup (a 5-0 win over Brandon Town, in 2014), whilst finishing as runners-up twice (2015 & 2018).

Add to that a League Cup runners-up position, in 2011, along with three, consecutive, Eastern Region Women’s Football League (ERWFL) Division One North runners-up spots (2013-15), and a third place, Premier Division finish (2016), that adage almost certainly rang true.

In 2022 however, that adage was snapped in two, and hard, by the current, AFC Sudbury Women’s manager, Luke Mallett, and the coaching team (which includes brother Stef) that he’s currently building in their corner of West Suffolk, his ‘Yellows’ walking away with the Suffolk FA Women’s Cup (3-1 against Needham Market), the ERWFL Division One South championship, as well as lifting the League Plate (defeating Hutton in the final).

They followed up that success with the announcement, during the summer of this year, that they were adding a wealth of experience to said coaching team, the erstwhile additions of Pedro Bruno (Performance Coach) and Dan Witzer (Sport Psychologist), a move that, at the level they’re at, is almost unheard of.

At AFC Sudbury however, and especially with their men’s team at the MEL Group (King’s

Marsh) Stadium, the educational/academy process is one which has been in-situ for some time now, and the credentials are pretty much, very well proven.

It’s not always been that way however, especially for the women’s set-up at the club, they having only come into existence following the amalgamation of Sudbury Wanderers and Sudbury Town in the late nineties, the Wanderers having a ladies team in Division Two South-East (1998) and Division Two North (1999).

Following the amalgamation, the club becoming AFC (amalgamated football club) Sudbury in 1999, the new ladies section would take over from the Wanderers side at the turn of the millennium, but would be seen to drop out of the ERWFL, and into the regional feeder leagues, between 2001 and 2010.

League Cup finalists in 2011 failed to ignite the blue-touch paper and, with Ipswich Town Women proving dominant in the Suffolk FA Women's Cup, Sudbury had to 'make do' with what was happening in their own corner of the county - and, for their part, they did.

Between 2013 and 2015, Sudbury could easily have achieved much more; consecutive Division One North runners-up over three seasons (they began the 2012-13 season with 25 scored, and zero conceded, in three games – Jade Sharp with six and Stacey Teager five, among numerous, other scorers).

The closest they came to lifting the title, was in 2015, when they finished a point behind Bar Hill (Cambridge) Sudbury having lost three out of the sides' four meetings; success though, would be found elsewhere during this time, reaching the Women's FA Cup First Round in 2013 (losing 5-0 to London Corinthians), Suffolk Women's Cup winners in 2014 (defeating Brandon Town 5-0), and runners-up in 2015, when losing to Ipswich Town.

Promotion in 2015 would see Sudbury attain their highest-ever, ERWFL Premier Division finish, coming third (2016) behind champions Stevenage, and runners-up Billericay Town; this would be followed up with a fifth-place finish in 2017 before a downward slide over the ensuing, couple of seasons.

Finishing second bottom of the Premier Division in 2018 was quickly followed by relegation in 2019, then-manager Katie Burrows' side suffering just as much off the field of play, as

they were on it, so much so that, at times, less than a dozen players were available for match-day selection.

The arrivals, in 2019, of first Adrian Goodwin (Head of Women's Football), Luke, then Stef Mallett, they front the Firsts and Reserves respectively, has brought about a complete change at the football club and, but for the presence of the global pandemic between 2020 and 2021/22, Sudbury's rise could have happened much sooner.

"When we took over at Sudbury, we were starting from scratch, a complete rebuild if you will," began the women's First Team manager, Luke Mallett.

"The club had initially spoken to Adrian (Goodwin) about coaching, but it wasn't something he was interested in.

"He, and Katie (Burrows) then asked if I'd be interested in coming on-board, so I was involved in a few sessions towards the end of Katie's last season, and it just, well, fell into our laps really.

"Yes, it was a struggle at the start, only a handful of players being there each week; now though, it's completely different, and there's a complete pathway in place for the girls.

"But, in having gone on the two, combined seasons (covid-years), we just missed out on promotion, and that has always been the aim, to be promoted, to be the best in the league.

"There was a three-to-five year plan when I arrived, and we're there now to be honest, so,

maybe the next three years is promotion to the National League South."

Perhaps more beneficial to the club, a move from Division One North, to South, has certainly helped more than hindered them in their progressive goals.

"Being on the edge, geographically, that saw us moved across to the South," added Luke.

"It's been tougher, especially for the younger girls at the club, a harder path, and challenged us, but that's also set us up for the season ahead, now.

"Last season, we were always thereabouts, but had games in hand (due to the cup runs), so that felt like we were always chasing.

"We did drop some silly points, but results elsewhere really helped us out.

"The cups, we knew that, with Ipswich not in it, we'd have enough to see off Needham Market (Suffolk Cup), and the players, they showed us a lot of focus and ability in that final."

"They don't really know how good they have it here," added Stef, Luke's brother, he fronting the Reserves side at AFC Sudbury.

"The closeness of teams here, and the clear, development pathway they have, shows with those that have been here for a while, and that helps when we integrate new players.

"The pinnacle though, that's been the Suffolk Cup, and to play that, in front of more than 600 spectators, was something else.



“To have all of our girls in attendance, and their families, made it the best feeling I’ve had in football.

“When I arrived though (at Sudbury) I had to learn on the ground, and it was a baptism of fire really, but, at the end of last season say, when the Reserves campaign finished, I was jumping in and helping with the Firsts for the final, half dozen matches.”

The arrival of Luke and Stef Mallett, the pair often being labelled as ‘the Cowley brothers of women’s football’ (Danny and Nicky are at EFL League One side, Portsmouth), certainly brought about changes aplenty.

Although the presence of a global pandemic slowed things down, just a little, the juggernaut in which they’ve created went full steam ahead last season, both on, and off, the football field, something which has been voiced by that of their Club Captain, Amanda Short, and Team Captain’s, Ronni Harrison and Brogan McHale.

Baby-steps it may seem, from the outside looking in, but, with Head of Football, Adrian Goodwin, ably pulling strings behind the scenes, he’s a man of a thousand jobs it seems, and works alongside a small, tight-knit group of loyal volunteers, they would witness the club strengthen their ties with the University of Essex in the September of last year.

That partnership was tightened this past summer as Sudbury prepared for a return to the ERWFL Premier Division as Pedro Bruno joined the coaching staff at the MEL Group Stadium, alongside that of Sport Psychologist, Dan

Witzer, from Middlesex University.

That education/academy pathway in which the club prides itself, it's never been stronger than it is right now, and is shown in the presence of the like of Phoebe Guiver, Evie Creaton, and Louisa Silva, among others, to have tread that road to success.

For Amanda, AFC Sudbury's Club Captain, and a former Academy player herself, she's already seen quite a lot happen with her hometown club.

"When I came back, it was under Natalie Golding, then Katie Burrows, before Luke took over," explained Amanda.

"We only live about ten minutes from the ground, after having had a few years away (starting a family), I was due to get married so I got in touch with a friend who was at the club at the time as wanted to improve my fitness, etc.

"When Katie took over though, there was very few players here, and still something of a struggle when Adrian (Goodwin) came in.

"The arrival of Luke et al, that has brought some much-needed stability and structure, but without getting anywhere (pandemic hampered)."

Although the pandemic benefitted in bringing people closer together, becoming more appreciative of the smaller things, when football, at grassroots level, returned, it was just that little bit harder and for Amanda, injury did hamper some of last season.

"Nobody expected us to do what we did last season though," beamed Amanda.

"When it all clicked, in the new year, we started to think that maybe we could do something, but, the Suffolk Cup, that's where we put the most pressure on ourselves, especially as it usually takes us a good 15-20 minutes to get into games.

"Everyone got through the season together, as a club, and, because of the success we've achieved, we've probably been accepted more, and that's something in which we've been striving to do."

What about the additions of Pedro Bruno and Dan Witzer, they adding extra ammunition to the Sudbury arsenal moving forward, moves that have Adrian Goodwin stamped all over them

Portuguese-born, Performance Coach, Pedro, is a graduate of the Anglia Ruskin University, claiming a First Class degree in Sports Coaching & Physical Education, 2016, (dissertation – The effects of media feedback on soccer players' motivational levels across gender), and a merit on the MSc Sport & Exercise Science, 2017; Dan meanwhile, studied a Bachelors Psychology at Coventry University, 2018, and a distinction on the MSc Sports & Exercise Psychology at University of Essex, 2020 (dissertation – The effectiveness of psychological interventions with elite athletes post-injury: 20 Years in Review).

"The girls themselves, they deserve an air professionalism, and this shows our ambition," explained Luke when discussing the new appointments.

"That, and they don't just have to put up with me and Stef

every session," he laughed, "it's a change of voice, differing opinions, for them to focus on, and affords some reassurances."

"We understand how to do things, and, with Amanda (Short) we do have an extra impetus, pair of eyes, and she's an unreal help," added Stef.

"Adding Pedro, and Dan, that's unbelievable, and will bring so much more to our game.

"Younger players (16-17-year-olds), they don't understand the mental toll in which it all takes, so, having those two as well, brings the qualifications, the experience, we don't have, and affords a completely different aspect for the players."

Pedro and Dan though, it was a no-brainer really, when Sudbury came calling for their services, Pedro's being an extension of the link-up between the club, and the University of Essex, whereas Dan, increasing conversation with Adrian eventually paid dividends.

"I spoke initially with Danny Laws (Head of Football) as the club has a cultural development there, so a no-brainer for me to strengthen toe partnership we had, especially when it comes to student athletes," explained Pedro, who's BUCS sides saw the women's team, not only make the play-offs, but succeed in promotion.

"This also helps to strengthen to university set-up as well, for both the male and female academies, so we're taking things further, with access to international students, scholars, all of which is vital for the recruitment process, of

both really; something which we'll continue to explore further."

Formerly with Hutton, Dan's arrival at the MEL Group Stadium was something which Adrian had up his sleeve for most of last season, at best.

With both Dan's coaching nous, and Sport Psychology background, it's a package in which Sudbury were very keen to add to their glorious ship, one which is itching to expand much more than it already is.

Dan though, with said background, knows of what he can both bring to the table, and what that means, to anybody, adding: "With Sport Psychology, it's still a stigmatised industry, not fully understood.

"Yes, it's accepted in the professional game, but, lower down, not so much, my aim is to help increase that.

"When I was at Hutton, last season, we opposed Sudbury and, the more we did, the more I struck up conversation with Adrian, and the club, talking about both coaching, and psychology.

"Then, once the season had finished, he approached me, and is the reason in which I came here.

"Right now, although I won't be there every week, we'll be looking at things like goals and achievements, the outcome process, performance goals, at differing points of the season.

"It affords objectives of where they can improve (threat and challenge approach) and how that is responded to.

"Here, at Sudbury, it's a brilliant project, and one I can

see myself working with for a number of years – if you've got a keen interest in something, and that inspires you, although a constant learning process, like this, then it's worth going for."

On the playing side, even though something they've not seen, or even looked it, the addition of both Performance Coach, and Sport Psychologist, excites, with Amanda, alongside Ronni, and Brogan, welcoming the move with open arms.

"The new additions at the club, they aren't something I've experienced myself," said the veteran, captain, Amanda Short.

"It's great for the younger players here though, and affords a different outlook whether to squad, or group sessions, and shows as to where the women's team is headed.

"The pathway programme in which we have in place, it's a great thing; I didn't have anything, not a clue as to what to do, so for these players, now, it's massive."

"It's a different ballgame at the football club now, players taking things more seriously," admitted first team captain, Ronni Harrison, who returned to the club after a spell away, in which she played for both Stevenage, and Hashtag United.

"I was surprised when I returned though, at the level in which they're playing now – even though Luke and Adrian, tried many times to get me to return – yes, we had sports scientists (at Stevenage and Hashtag), but not that educational aspect.

"It's great, and affords so much more opportunity for people, I may even do more in regards Personal Training qualifications.

"It does mean players will get noticed, players like Holly Kennard and Alex Penny say, they're the ones to watch, but I'm staying at the club now, I'm enjoying it here."

Brogan on the other-hand, like Amanda, has been at the club for a few seasons now, joining when she was 19-years-old, so, in that, has seen both sides of the coin.

"It was certainly a struggle, when I first joined the club, even just to get a team out," continued Brogan.

"Great facilities, but not a good catchment area, and there was no choice but to play for the first team, as there was no reserves.

"It was difficult at times, doing much more than you wanted, or were able to, especially as it was a very young squad back then also.

"We only really started attracting players when Adrian and Luke came in, and, although people still weren't 'serious,' about playing, now, we want to be here, and we want to progress through the leagues, to play at the best level we can.

"The addition of the likes of Pedro, and Dan, it's great, and has brought so much to the club already.

"There's a whole new perspective, new ideas, and that's a great thing as training can also be position-focussed a lot more, instead of full, group sessions."

The new campaign, that began with a loss, and a win, for Sudbury, narrowly falling to Stevenage, at home, on the opening day, before defeating Bowers & Pitsea away, in their second outing.

The 3-2 loss against Stevenage, showed how far this Sudbury side have come, and, in most quarters, the general consensus was that Sudbury could just as easily have won the game, all five goals coming in a hectic, first half, Evie Creaton with a brace for the hosts.

Against Bowers & Pitsea, a 1-0 win was sufficient enough for the West Suffolk, Sophie Jeffery with the only goal of the game, but it's that opening game which showed that the club can, and quite possibly will, achieve something this time around as well.

"It was frustrating, but was never going to be an easy start," admitted Luke.

"Especially as it was a game where we've just been promoted, and they (Stevenage) relegated, the season before; it could have gone either way, and we really could have gone on and won it.

"For some people though, they'd say to just stay in this league, but finishing in the top four is more than accomplishable, and we're excited about the season ahead.

"The league is the main priority, but why not go out there and try and defend the Suffolk Cup at the same time?"

"Stevenage, that was a free hit for us," continued Stef.

"We've never experienced what we did that day, coming off after a loss, more as we should

have got something from that game.

"I can see a top half finish, depending on cup runs, whilst in the reserves, we're quietly confident and know what we can do.

"Top four, it's not an impossible ask, for both sides really."

Ronni meanwhile, that season opener, albeit at home, was against one of her former clubs in Stevenage, she perhaps being, understandably, more apprehensive going into such a big game – perhaps with a point to prove as well.

"I guess you could say I was scared in a way, going into the opening game with Stevenage," admitted Ronni.

"Especially as I knew most of the players on the pitch, even if there's a few new ones there from when I was.

"But I've never felt so happy after a defeat than I was after that, we worked so hard in that game; even just on that outing, that performance, alone, I'm thinking a top four finish, but I guess we'll just have to see what happens."

As for the two newcomers, Pedro Bruno and Dan Witzer, the future, from their perspective, is a bright, industrious one.

"We've got all the ingredients here to produce a great, educational programme, whilst also progressing on the field," stated Pedro.

"Look at Phoebe (Guiver) for example, she had a great start to last season and, although missed a chunk through injury, was also influential when she came back.



"She's someone I've got to know and is a silent leader, and one I'm looking forward to seeing progress.

"The partnership though, it works because we have a shared philosophy, and that excites; things don't happen overnight but you reap the rewards and I can see this club at a much higher level."

"Of course, this is a brilliant project, we can all see that," continued Dan.

"I can see myself here for a good few years yet; it's massive to be able to help create a culture, like what is at this club.

"It's a community culture as well, and something like that will help to give the women's game more of a push in the area.

"Yes, it may take a few years, and differing tactics, but it'll go mad, I'm sure of it, over the next 6-10 years, if not sooner."

As passionate as anyone is about the beautiful game, the reason behind the revolution at Sudbury, is Adrian Goodwin, he coming in not long before Luke's arrival at the club, and has overseen some worthwhile transitions.

Initially becoming involved with the club because of his daughter, Maisie, Adrian's passion shines through and he wants nothing but the best, and of course, for the club as whole, but primarily the women's teams.

"We can't afford to be seen to standing still with the women's set-up," concluded Adrian.

"We have to keep pushing things forward, whether that's

on, or off, the football field, media, sponsorship, all of it.

"The academy helps make the women's section sustainable, but we're the best place in which to play football in Suffolk, and light years ahead of most clubs in the facilities we have available.

"I've seen the difference already, with Dan and Pedro), Dan, he was making a difference for Hutton and that's why I brought him here; I knew something was happening there, and he was the one who making the difference.

"That, and the fact that he's a sport psychologist, something I'm interested in myself, it's what we wanted to have to push us forward another level."

His aim, like the club as a whole, is to see the club competing at National League level, whether that be in the next couple of seasons, or in five years' time.

The staff that he's helped to bring into the club, they'll go a long way to help them achieve that goal.

"I know that, when/if we do get promotion, then we can attract players of the quality/calibre for that level, a higher level, to come here," added Adrian.

"We will be, and know we'll be, successful on the pitch; as for those that's been brought in, they are good people, and it's not a means to an end their being here.

"The girls also respond to them as well, whether that's Luke of Stef, Pedro or Dan, or our new goalkeeping coach, Stefan Robson.

"We've got the right people here, right through the

women's section, and that's important because it's all about creating a platform, and protecting that in which we do have.

"We've definitely got a good thing going here."

This season, in the ERWFL Premier Division, AFC Sudbury Women find themselves challenging the likes of Bowers & Pitsea and Luton Town, Needham Market and Stevenage, to name a few, for promotion into the FA Women's National League Division One South-East.

As for the Vitality Women's FA Cup journey, they'd love to replicate that run to the First Round Proper from back in 2013, this season, they begin on Sunday 2 October, when Sudbury make the trip to The Maltings Meadow, and Bungay Town Ladies (Norfolk Women & Girls League) in the Second Qualifying Round.

The main thing in which to take from the club, from AFC Sudbury as a whole, can be summed up in one sentence, but more in regards the women's set-up, Luke saying: "It is not two teams here, it is one football club."



The Differences in Officiating Women's Football



By Frankie Scott

I can't remember in which game he said it, but it was definitely one of the latter games of the Euros. A player threw themselves to the floor, and the male commentator said something along the lines of, "That is unusual, you don't normally get diving in the women's game."

Cue the obligatory outrage on Twitter.

Pundits, players and fans all derided him for making a comment that appeared to be laden with misogyny, ridiculing him for speaking under the pretence that women must be too 'kind' or 'honest' to dive. Usually, I'd be the first to agree with them, and publicly slam such assertions – except, this time, it wasn't a false statement based on sexist presumptions. It is, in fact, a very true observation.

I have officiated hundreds of men's games, and hundreds of women's games, and there are differences between officiating the two. Not just in approach, but in how we are able to execute our job, and in the reaction of those we officiate. The culture of men's football is dripping with aggression, with the fans turning up to games to heckle and boo the opponents – whereas women's football has a family-friendly culture of enjoyment and positivity; one where the fans sportingly applaud their opponents. This culture has a huge impact on how one can referee the game, and what is expected of us as officials, such as the type of pressure we work in.

There is always pressure. I officiated in a Women's National League game recently – a game that, last

season, would have had a few people half-heartedly watching, but easily had over 200 spectators. In a small stadium, these spectators can generate a great atmosphere, and with that brings pressure. But the pressure comes from wanting to do a good job in this situation, rather than worrying about what will happen to the temperature of the match if I don't get a decision right.

When officiating men, I need to make decisions quickly. If I see a foul, I have limited time to give it. If I don't give it straight away, accusations that I'm "listening to the shouts" can follow, or the fouled player can get up and retaliate. There aren't many 'shouts' in the women's game, and it is rare that a player will get up and retaliate (Jill Scott's famous outburst in the Euros not

included). Therefore, this means you have an extra second or two to make the decision. You do not need to give a quick free kick to prevent such issues, as they are so unlikely to happen, meaning you actually have more time to get the decision right.

Player reaction is another huge difference. In men's football, player reaction will often tell you what the expected decision is.

The claims for a penalty, the reaction to a yellow or red card challenge, the claims for a foul when the physicality becomes too much – it is constant in the men's game, but almost non-existent in the women's game. This can be confusing at first. Player reaction allows you to sense the temperature of the game, but when there is no player reaction, you have to think for yourself. This is, again, a far better experience to work under – you can make honest decisions without players trying to put pressure on you. This is because the player's aren't channelling their desire to win into aggression, but into focussing on their job.

I've never had a mass confrontation in women's football. I've never sinbinned or booked anyone for dissent.

When I walk off the pitch after a tough game, I don't have angry blokes waiting by the pitch exit to hurtle threats and abuse at me. I've

never had to be escorted to my car after a match by a club chairman or secretary over fears for my safety – some which has happened far too often at a men's game.

This is because, not only are the player's attitudes more constructive, the crowd are also different.

Don't get me wrong, you always get an old man lecturing you from behind when you're running the line. For some reason, that guy is always there. I don't know where he comes from, but he seems to enjoy providing a running dialogue of the game at the back of my head, with comments that show a complete lack of understanding for what I'm doing. But, generally, the spectators are there to support their team, not to shout abuse at you.

Yes, you get the occasional boos when they don't like a decision, and groans of frustration when things aren't going their way, but you are never made to feel unsafe.

The crowd moves on quickly. Whereas in a men's game I might have a spectator after the game wishing to moan at me about a throw in I gave in the sixth minute, spectators in the women's game focus on providing positivity to the players they are hoping will do well, rather than projecting negativity at the officials for clearly correct

decisions just because those decisions went against them.

And, with the growing popularity of the women's game, I hope this doesn't change.

I don't think it will. There are still men who wish to put down the women's game, and I used to argue with them – now I leave them be.

Because we don't need them.

They are the ones full of aggression and hostility – let's leave them to their opinions, as the women's game doesn't need their approval to thrive.

In fact, it does so much better without it.

The women's game is a place where a match official can improve and develop without being constantly abused.

It is a place where a match official can learn their craft without feeling unsafe. It is a place where we can thrive on the positivity, and have a dialogue with the players that allows us to educate each other.

For this reason, the referees in the women's game will only get better.

It is the perfect breeding ground for growth, and I believe we will see the positive impact of that in the years to come.



BARCLAYS WOMEN'S SUPER LEAGUE

Upfront: The definitive women's football podcast



The go-to women's football podcast, Upfront, presented by former Tottenham and Crystal Palace goalkeeper Chloe Morgan and co-founder of the esteemed GirlsOnTheBall platform Rachel O'Sullivan returns on 6th September - now available on its own podcast feed dedicated to women's football.

Upfront was born out of the UK's most popular independent football podcast, Football Ramble. Now, with the huge success of the recent UEFA Women's Euros where the show accumulated over half a million downloads and the start of the Women's Super League season, the Ramble team have expanded their women's football offering with Upfront becoming podcasting's definitive home for the women's game.

From the best of the WSL and international fixtures, to its cultural heartbeat and

grassroots beginnings, each week Chloe and Rachel are joined by special guests from across the women's game to take a deep dive into the latest headlines.

All delivered in their irreverent but informed style, the team never shy away from big opinions - or having loads of fun while giving them.

They will also take listeners to some of the game's biggest matches as part of the hugely celebrated Upfront x At The Match collaboration series.

Whether you're a seasoned women's football veteran or a curious newcomer, Upfront has got you covered.

Upfront is available every Tuesday from 6th September on Apple, Spotify, Acast and all podcast providers. This is a Stak production.

A-Z of the WSL 2022/23



By Charlotte Stacey

With the opening games of the Women's Super League fast approaching, what better time to get acquainted with the top division. From Arsenal to Villa, Ashleigh Plumptre to Zecira Musovic, here is an A-Z of the WSL.

A is for Arsenal

North London giants Arsenal have long been a staple at the top of the women's football pyramid. The Gunners remain one of the most successful sides in England and are still the only team to win the infamous treble.

The Arsenal have had a relatively quiet off-season having signed just two players so far in comparison to their twelve outgoings. With that being said, Jonas

Eidevall's side are a tight-knit unit largely made up of international players, including Euro's player of the tournament Beth Mead, Austria's number one Manuela Zinsberger, as well as England captain and Arsenal thoroughbred Leah Williamson.

The Gunners narrowly missed out on a sought league victory last time out when it came down to the wire and they fell one short of Chelsea's 56 points on the final day of the season. The goal this year is clear, go one better. Whether it be the league, FA Cup, League Cup or even a stab at the Champions League, a trophy is certainly sought at Borehamwood.

A is for Aston Villa

Aston Villa have pulled off more than one smart piece of business over the summer. Villa are generally a defensively astute side yet have severely lacked goals since their induction into the WSL two years ago. However, boss Carla Ward's influence is evidently as enticing as ever and the Villans managed to secure the surprising signing of Houston Dash captain, and newly-crowned European Champion, Rachel Daly.

Along with Daly, the Villans have also brought in France international and reputable playmaker Kenza Dali from Everton. Daly and Dali will be employed to extinguish Villa's deficiency in front of goal and improve upon their ninth-place finish last

season. The Villans have also recruited well at the back and have brought seasoned professionals Natasha Harding and Danielle Turner in lieu of the retirement of steadfast centre back Anita Asante. Maz Pacheco, Anna Patten and Rachel Corsie also bolster Villa's backline.

B is for Brighton and Hove Albion

Brighton placed seventh last season, one place below their mid-table conclusion the year before. At least a mid-table finish is sure to be what manager Hope Powell will be aiming for this time round. Similarly to Arsenal, the Seagulls have had a fair few outgoings over the summer, yet Powell has done well to bring in signings that amplify the cultivation of a well-balanced, albeit somewhat small, squad of experience and youth.

Defenders Poppy Pattinson and Jorja Fox have arrived to counter the departures of Maya Le Tissier, Fliss Gibbons and Brighton also welcome the return of New Zealand international Rebekah Stott. Further up field, midfielders Kayleigh Green, Maisie Symonds and new signing Yeeun Park will be looking to link up with the forward line. This will include centre forward Danielle Carter who must become more clinical in front of goal and improve upon her two-goal tally of last season if the Seagulls are to climb the ladder.

C is for Chelsea

Title holders Chelsea show no signs of slowing down and are once again seriously looking to contest in England and in Europe. Manager Emma Hayes has had an exceptionally busy transfer window, not only bringing in several international talents, but working to retain the majority of her laden squad. Among their incomings are Canadian centre-back Kadisha Buchanan, French fullback Ève Périsset who have both made an impressive start to their time in blue during pre-season.

Hayes now boasts a side that could easily field two quality starting elevens, which is likely her plan. A squad with such depth will allow a level rotation to avoid player exhaustion given the amount of domestic and international football the outfit will play over the coming months. Compared to rivals Arsenal and Manchester City, Hayes' side is notably the largest. There are certainly pros and cons to housing a squad of such size, however, only time will tell whether this will play into Hayes' hands or become a thorn in her side.

D is for Dagný Brynjarsdóttir

Newly appointed West Ham captain Dagný Brynjarsdóttir might not be the most 'high-profile' name in the league, but the midfielder is nevertheless one to keep an eye on. The

Iceland international was an involved facet for much of the Irons' success last season having registered four goals and an assist.

Further to her goal scoring involvement, Brynjarsdóttir crucially brings a certain leading quality to the field in the absence of former captain Gilly Flaherty. The experienced Iceland international conducts the midfield with a professionalism that rarely falters and her steady presence allows for increasingly creative movements of those around her. Using her height as an advantage, Brynjarsdóttir is also one of the top aerial performers in the league giving the Irons both an added defensive and offensive asset.

E is for Everton

Let's not sugar-coat, Everton's campaign was disappointing last season. Having brought in a large number of high-profile players in the off-season, expectations, both for the club and within the club, the ambitions of the club were clear. However, the reality of a such high volume of movement in a short period meant the squad did not gel particularly well and subsequently the club recycled two managers within six months.

Obviously, the Toffees will be looking to improve upon their standings last season by a significant margin and certainly have the means to



do so. Despite the exodus of several players including Kenza Dali Anna Anvegård and Claire Emslie, Everton arguably look in better stead coming into this season than they did the one previous. Boss Brian Sorensen has targeted fresh legs in young forwards Jess Park and Aggie Beever-Jones and has negotiated the retention of key players Megan Finnegan and Rikke Sevecke.

F is for Frida Maanum

Since joining The Arsenal last season midfielder Frida Maanum has more than played her part. The Norway international came in with a bang, showcasing a mixture of strength and physicality with a deft touch and a knack for progression. The Norway international does the dirty work, but does it with finesse, navigating the middle to drag opponents out of position whilst also playing an active role in attacking play for her team. As WSL icon Jill Scott has announced her retirement, Maanum should be looked at as a developing example of an authentic box-to-box midfielder.

G is for Grace Moloney

The WSL harbours a great deal of talent between the sticks; however, one urges

a trip to Reading to witness the no-nonsense goalkeeping of Grace Moloney. The Rep. of Ireland international is ballsy and bold, unafraid to quite literally take things into her own hands. Moloney's save percentage has continuously improved year upon year as is the number of clean sheets kept which can only aid the Royals' ambition to climb the table. Having been part of the Reading squad for many years, Moloney is part of the furniture not just at the Select Car Leasing Stadium, but within the league, and the competition is all the better for it.

H is for Hanna Bennison

Everton midfielder Hanna Bennison has plenty to prove this season. At just 18, the Sweden international made the headlines after her six-figure sum transfer secured her place with the Toffees last summer.

Bennison is a dynamic player, one who likes to move around to make her presence felt through the whole of the middle third. With a knack for finding through balls and line-breaking passes, her skills as a playmaker are becoming more effective

and one would bet Bennison will develop into one of the most creative midfielders the league has to offer. Whilst the Toffees may not have seen the best of Bennison just yet, movement within the squad means that her time to fully integrate into the league and make her mark is right around the corner.

I is for Izzy Christansen

Sticking with the Toffees, your attention may also be drawn to Everton captain Izzy Christansen. Firstly, Christansen may look familiar. This is likely due to her being part of the punditry team that covered the Euro's on the BBC, in which she was charmingly insightful yet appropriately critical throughout.

Christansen also showed her ability to read a game, a skill that she carries with her when on the pitch herself.

Christansen has an instinctual football intelligence and is often one step ahead. On top of this she is an adept ball player and her set-piece deliveries...

Beckham-esque.

J is for Jessica Naz

Tottenham Hotspur forward Jess Naz is a player that is growing further into her role with

each passing season. Since recovering from an ACL injury that saw her out for the majority of the 2019-20 season Naz has developed into a key player for the Lilywhites, making immediate impact every time she steps on the field. Naz is quick with nifty footwork and the ability to twist and turn in a split second which regularly sees her causing problems for defenders. At 21, Naz has plenty of time to perfect her craft but this season will be an exciting and important one as she steps firmly into the fold.

K is for Keira Walsh

Where to start with Keira Walsh? In the simplest of terms, Walsh is as vital to her club Manchester City as she is to the Lionesses. As a holding midfielder, Walsh balances the act of auxiliary defender with primary playmaker, and balances it with perfection.

Yet what sets Walsh above the rest is her innate vision and a passing skill that is unmatched. With every touch of the ball Walsh embellishes play with foresight that cannot be manufactured. Walsh is the linchpin, the cornerstone, the very beating heart that knits the veins of Manchester City, and the league is all the richer for it.

WSL pre-season wrap-up: the road to 2022/23



By Sian Dennis

The 2022/23 Women's Super League is upon us. After one of the most exciting and historic summers in English football, clubs have been preparing for a campaign that is set to capitalise on the stratospheric rise in women's football.

Teams headed to different parts of the world to complete their pre-season preparations ahead of their first WSL fixtures on the 10 and 11 September 2022. And although disappointingly, pre-season coverage seemed to be lacking, we've done our best to pool together each team's highlights.

Here is a breakdown of the pre-season activities of all 12 WSL teams:

Arsenal

Our European Championship superstars from across all participating countries not long ago returned to training. Those not involved in the summer competition began their pre-season in the middle of July alongside some promising academy talent. Skipper Kim Little who spent part of pre-season on loan with her old club, OL Reign, making six NWSL appearances, also made a return to London Colney.

Unlike their rivals, the Gunners didn't have any tournaments in the pipeline and instead played several games behind closed doors, including a 2-1 win against Brighton, and took a trip to adidas HQ in Germany.

During a quiet transfer season, Jonas Eidevall waved goodbye to a handful of players. Nikita

Parris departed after just one season and joined Manchester United while goalkeeper number two, Lydia Williams, joined Paris Saint-Germain. Tobin Heath, Viktoria Schnaderbeck and Simone Boye Sorensen have also departed.

Looking ahead to the much-anticipated London Derby at the end of the month, Arsenal recently confirmed they've opened the upper tier of the stadium after impressive ticket sales. A packed Emirates is looking likely.

Arsenal starts their season with a tasty opener against Manchester City.

Aston Villa

In a busy transfer season, Villa is gearing up to be a major threat with Rachel Daly returning to home soil after a

glittering seven-year stint at NWSL side Houston Dash. With accolades such as the stateside club's record goal scorer under her belt, Daly is set to bring her iconic drive and passion to the Villa side.

Anticipated signing, Simone Magill, unfortunately, tore her ACL while playing for Northern Ireland in the Euros. Magill had only just completed her summer transfer from Everton to Villa when the striker suffered a rupture in the group-stage defeat against Norway.

The players were whisked away to Marbella and played one fixture in Spain, losing 6-1 to Savilla. Back at home, the club played pre-season friendlies against Coventry United winning 5-0 against the Championship side, as well as games against Liverpool (0-1 loss) and Everton (1-1 draw) behind closed doors and Reading at Hogwood Park where Daly netted her first two goals, but in vain with the Royals scoring three.

Villa also recently reported that the club has recorded a whopping 108% increase in season ticket sales and will play four of their home WSL games at Villa Park this season, starting with Manchester City on 17 September.

Brighton & Hove Albion

The Seagulls headed to Germany for their pre-season preparations and enjoyed an impressive 1-0 win over Champions League quarter-finalist Bayern Munich, thanks to Katie Robinson's early goal.

This summer's exodus of players will have concerned fans. The departure of the powerhouse, Maya Le Tissier, to Manchester United left a

hole in the defence while Finland's Emma Koivisto and Dutch midfielder Inessa Kaagman also bid their farewells.

Much like its rivals, Brighton has sold a record number of season tickets with sales up 294%. The club also celebrated the opening (albeit delayed due to Covid-19) of its new world-class American Express Elite Football Performance Centre 2 - an £8.5m facility and the new permanent home of the women's and girls' teams. A new strategy - "Pathway towards top four" - was launched in April with aims to develop an elite culture over the next two years showing no doubt that Brighton is a club with a strong commitment to the women's game.

Chelsea

Much like their male counterparts, Chelsea headed to the USA for their pre-season preparations and to participate in the International Women's Cup double bill, a tournament featuring the best of the best from around the world held at the home of two-time NWSL champions, Portland Thorns.

In the squad's second pre-season fixture following a behind-closed-doors game against Norwegian top-flight side, Arna-Bjornar, Chelsea was defeated on penalties following a 2-2 draw with Lyon in the opening match of the tournament, narrowly missing out on a spot in the final. However, the club finished their US tour on a high with a 1-0 victory against the hosts, Portland Thorns following a 64th-minute goal by Guro Reiten.

The Blues finished third place with Lyon crowned as the tournament winners following a 4-0 win against Monterrey. New signings, Kadeisha Buchanan and Eve Perisset made a strong impact on the pitch in both games, proving a seamless integration into Hayes' side.

To round off a busy pre-season off, Chelsea welcomed Tottenham Hotspur to Kingsmeadow for one final friendly which resulted in a 2-0 victory with goals from Pernille Harder and Lauren James sealing the deal.

Unsurprisingly, Chelsea has sold out their season tickets at Kingsmeadow and will kick off their campaign (and Hayes' 11th year at the helm) at Stamford Bridge for a London Derby against West Ham on 11 September.

Everton

It's no secret Everton had a very turbulent 2021/22 having played the season with four different head coaches in the space of 12 months. However, the club looks in good spirits with Brian Sorensen firmly taking the reins in April 2022, joining from Danish side Fortuna Hjorring.

Unsurprisingly, the team saw a flurry of exits, including Simone Magill and Danielle Turner who both have been consistent over the years. Key attackers Claire Emslie, Kenza Dali and Anna Anvegård moved on to pastures new.

However, Sorensen has worked hard to plug the gaps by signing players such as striker Katja Snoeijjs from Bordeaux and Danish twins, Sara and Karen Holmgard. Katrine Veje returns to the WSL to give

Everton much-needed versatility on the pitch. Emily Ramsey replaces departed Sandy MacIver as goalkeeper while up-and-coming talent Jess Park and Aggie Beever-Jones strengthen the squad's attack.

The Toffees are set to welcome a record crowd to Walton Hall Park for their season opener against Leicester City following an intense fan engagement activation campaign during the summer to capitalise on the increased interest in the women's game. This included taking part in various community-focused projects as well as hosting open training sessions in front of fans at Goodison Park.

Leicester City

Last season's newcomers, Leicester City will embark on their second season having finished 11th last term.

The Foxes enjoyed a varied pre-season, having faced several different opponents during friendlies at Belvoir Drive, including OH Leuven, Bristol City, Southampton, and Reading, as manager, Lydia Bedford, focused her efforts on rebuilding the squad after a rocky first season in top-flight football.

The club welcomed new arrivals Erin Simon, Aileen Whelan, and Josie Green as permanent signings, alongside Carrie Jones on loan from Manchester United. All four possess previous WSL experience which should put them in good stead for the season ahead.

The club kicks off their season away at Everton.

Liverpool

Liverpool is back in top-flight football after two years in the Championship, replacing Birmingham City in the upcoming WSL season. After a difficult few years, the team looks refreshed and rejuvenated partly due to the return of manager, Matt Beard, who injected a much-needed sense of harmony and togetherness.

Pre-season kicked off with a home training ground game at The Campus against National League North side Nottingham Forest Women, with the Merseyside team winning 6-0 in front of a record crowd of 1126.

Netherlands international winger, Shanice van de Sanden, returns to Liverpool for a second spell taking the number 19 shirt. Van de Sanden brings with her three UEFA Championship Leagues, three French titles and two French cups with Lyon and later represented VfL Wolfsburg. Beard, an ex-Hammers manager, has also reunited with experienced centre-half Gilly Flaherty.

The Reds kick off their WSL campaign with a trip to Reading before the highly anticipated derby against Everton at Anfield on 25 September.

Liverpool seems to be gearing up for a competitive season and will most certainly be looking to establish themselves as a dangerous team early on.

Manchester City

Manchester City headed straight into Champions League qualifying which ended in heartbreak after a 1-0 defeat

to Real Madrid. Ex-City player, Caroline Weir, came back to haunt her former club with the only goal of the game early in the first half putting an end to City's European journey. Back on home soil, pre-season preparations ended with a 1-1 draw against Liverpool in a behind-closed-doors friendly.

City has lost big first-team players and personalities in Georgia Stanway, Lucy Bronze, Caroline Weir and Jill Scott. However, manager, Gareth Taylor, has focused on bringing in fresh talent, including Barcelona defenders Laia Aleixandri and Leila Ouahabi, and Australian, Mary Fowler. Fan expectations will be unsurprisingly high with them firmly set on the club bringing the silverware home.

City will kick off their WSL campaign at home against Arsenal but will be without Ellen White who announced her retirement from football not long after she helped the Lionesses to Euro 2022 victory.

Manchester United

Manchester United headed to Toulouse, France as part of their pre-season preparations to take part in the AMOS French Cup. First up was a pairing against Paris Saint-Germain. Katie Zelem netted a 66th-minute beauty from the edge of the area to clinch a 1-0 victory against the French side. Marc Skinner's side then took on Bayern Munich in the final of the AMOS French Cup. Ex-Arsenal and new Red Devil recruit, Nikita Parris, made her first United appearance and enjoyed exciting link-up play with fellow new arrival, Adriana Leon, and Lucia Garcia. Despite a handful of

chances in the second half, it wasn't meant to be with Bayern Munich taking home the trophy with a 3-0 win.

One notable concern for fans was whether United's Euro champion, Alessia Russo, would stick with the club for the upcoming season. Despite rumours about Russo's future, it seems the forward will be seeing out the last year of her contract. Highly rated defender and new arrival, Maya Le Tissier, is one to watch.

United wrapped up pre-season with a 1-0 win over Everton thanks to Lucia Garcia's late goal in a friendly at Carrington. Now eyes are firmly set on the start of the WSL season with their first fixture against London side, Tottenham.

Reading

Kelly Chambers' side wrapped up pre-season with a win at the Select Car Leasing Stadium in a behind-closed-doors game against Aston Villa, winning 3-2. A welcomed sigh of relief following a 2-1 defeat against Championship outfit, Bristol City.

Reading FC had a quieter transfer window season compared to their rivals as they are the only WSL side not to be connected to a men's Premier League team, thus, working with a much smaller budget. However, the Royals did sign six new players including Ireland International, Diane Caldwell. The club also said a farewell to midfielder, Brook Chaplen, who has retired.

The club has also celebrated its highest ever season ticket sales, surpassing the 500 mark for the first time and open their campaign against newcomers, Liverpool, where a

record-breaking crowd is expected.

Tottenham

Spurs headed to the USA for a pre-season tour, taking part in the Women's Cup in Louisville. They faced Club America in their opening match, with the Liga MX Femenil side flying into the lead within the first 15 minutes scoring two goals. Spurs struggled in the first half, however, clawed back a goal in the 64th minute as new arrival Nikola Karczewska struck on her first appearance for the club. A similar narrative played out in their next fixture with a further 2-1 defeat, this time against the Japanese side against Tokyo Verdy Beleza, recording two consecutive losses in the tournament.

A busy transfer window saw Spurs sign several talents including Norway international, Celin Bizet Ildhusøy from Paris Saint-Germain, midfielder Angharad James and defender Amy Turner from Orlando Pride, forward Nikola Karczewska from FC Fleury, and ex-Chelsea midfielder star Drew Spence.

It has also been confirmed that Tottenham's home fixture against Manchester City has been selected for live television coverage at the end of October. Spurs kick off their season at home against Manchester United.

West Ham

The WSL 2022/23 season will be Paul Konchesky's first outing in the dugout after taking over as manager this summer. It's been a challenging pre-season for the Hammers. They defeated Championship side Charlton

and National League team Enfield Town but lacked winning mentality and lost to Lewes and Hashtag United. They rounded off their pre-season preparations with a disappointing 0-5 defeat against Liverpool.

West Ham lost winger Adriana Leon to Manchester United, however, Icelandic midfielder Dagný Brynjarsdóttir penned a new deal until the summer of 2024 and has since been confirmed as the squad's new captain taking the number 10 shirt. New signings such as Ex-Manchester United star, Kirsty Smith, Japan international defender, Risa Shimizu, promising Norway U19 international, Thea Kyvåg, France international, Viviane Asseyi, and former Arsenal winger Lisa Evans to give the club some much-needed fresh blood.

The Hammers has been handed what could be argued as the toughest possible start – a trip to face defending champions, Chelsea at Stamford Bridge.



Goodbye to two greats



By Helen Rowe-Willcocks

It's safe to say the news that Ellen White and Jill Scott were retiring brought out a lot of emotions for not just England fans but also fans of women's football across the world.

White and Scott are two of those names who are just known, whether it's for their talent and commitment to the game, their drive and passion to move it forward, their warmth and love for their fans or just their happiness, it is hard not to love the pair.

I, like many, many others, was brought to tears reading Scott's letter. It was a weird feeling seeing the team announced and not seeing their names.

To me, they are the game we love.

Scott was on the team sheet the first game I covered as a journalist.

White was one of the first players that I interviewed in Issue 1 in TWFM.

We have so much to thank these amazing players for but it feels fitting that they have decided to bow out when they are at the top.

One of my highlights from the Euros was when Scott went back to grab a jacket off a teammate so she could run over to a fan she had seen to give her a shirt.

She is so widely loved and is going to be a massive whole in the dressing room and on the pitch.

When it comes to White, it's hard to put into words what I admire about her.

Her commitment to the game is inspiring and her passion during every game was second to none.

Even when it wasn't going her way and the ball was not finding the back of the net, her presence could always be felt.

She will be a big gap to fill not only in talent but also with regards to experience.

Scott and White have been guaranteed names on the teamsheet for as long as I can remember.

I could talk for a very long time about Jill Scott and Ellen White but for now, I just want to say, thank you.

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Karen Carney MBE to lead major review



Culture Secretary Nadine Dorries has announced that former England and Great Britain footballer Karen Carney MBE is to chair an in-depth review into the future of domestic women's football.

The review will look at how to deliver bold and sustainable growth of the women's game at elite and grassroots level. This will be with a particular focus on:

- Assessing the potential audience reach and growth of the game - by considering the value and visibility of women's and girls' football in England, including the potential to grow the fanbase for women's football and whether current growth still supports home-grown talent and can be achieved without overstressing infrastructure.
- Examining the financial health of the game and its financial sustainability for the long term. This will include exploring opportunities and ways to

support the commercialisation of the women's game, broadcast revenue opportunities and the sponsorship of women's football.

- Examining the structures within women's football. This includes the affiliation with men's teams, prize money, the need for women's football to adhere to the administrative requirements of the men's game; and assessing the adequacy, quality, accessibility and prevalence of the facilities available for women's and girls' football for the growth and sustainability of the game.

To kick off the review, a call for evidence will be launched by the Football Association (FA) in the coming weeks.

Carney will lead a series of group meetings with industry experts across the country. She will be supported in the evidence gathering and analysis by senior officials from the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) and the FA. A full report is expected to be published early next year,

with the Government formally responding shortly afterwards.

The news comes following Sarina Wiegman's Lionesses winning UEFA Women's EURO 2022 in July, a range of Government measures to support the women's game, and ahead of the Women's Super League season beginning on 10 September.

Culture Secretary Nadine Dorries said:

"The Lionesses' spectacular performance shows how far we have come at the top of the women's game. While it is right that we celebrate and reflect on that success, we need an equal emphasis on improving participation, employment opportunities, commercial investment and visibility in the media.

"We want to make sure everyone can enjoy the benefits of team sport and there is a robust infrastructure to sustain women's and girls' football for the future. A thorough review of the game will help ensure it is here for the long term."

Karen Carney MBE said:

"Over the last few years, the game has grown significantly and at a rapid pace. Of course, this is an exciting time, but

there is an urgent need to ensure there are processes and structures in place that protect the interest of the game and the people working in it. I have always said that the sport needs to be built on solid foundations to give it long-lasting success in a sustainable way.

“For me, this is a defining period for the sport and this review will be at the heart of that.

“We must capitalise on these powerful moments and can look back on 2022 as a year where we made great strides forward in the growth of the game.”

Sports Minister Nigel Huddleston said:

“We have been clear that we are right behind growing women’s and girl’s sport in every aspect - from grassroots all the way up to the elite level.

“Domestic women’s football has made significant progress in recent years. However the pandemic highlighted the shallow resources within the elite game, which have the potential to affect its long-term growth.

“This review will look in depth at how to grow the game at elite and grassroots level, as we push to level the playing field.”

During her career, Carney achieved 144 caps for England and represented Team GB at the London 2012 Olympic Games. She enjoyed a club career for Arsenal, Chicago Red Stars, Birmingham City and Chelsea. She is now a respected voice on both mens and women’s football and works as a broadcaster and columnist for the Guardian, ITV Sport and Sky Sports, as well as her role as a sponsorship consultant for Visa.

The women’s game has made significant progress in recent years, with UEFA Women’s EURO 2022 highlighting the changing attitudes to women’s sport. Records were shattered, with a record global audience of more than 365 million people, 574,875 tickets sold, nearly half of all ticket holders female, and nearly 100,000 children. There were sell-out crowds wherever the Lionesses played, and the final broke the all-time record attendance for a EUROs final - in either the men’s or women’s game.

The launch of the Women’s Super League in 2011 generated a wave of bespoke sponsorship and broadcast rights deals. The England men’s and women’s senior players are now being paid the same match fee for representing their country, and clubs in the top two tiers of domestic football are introducing improved contracts and employment rights.

In a further long-term boost for the visibility of women’s football, the Government recently confirmed that the FIFA Women’s World Cup and Women’s Euros have been added to the listed events regime, which will mean they will continue to be made available to free-to-air television broadcasters.

At grassroots level it has become the most played team sport for women and girls in England, with 3 million registered players and 12,000 registered teams. The Government is putting the game at the very centre of its plans to level up access to sport for all, with a £230 million package being rolled out to build or improve up to 8,000 grassroots football and multi-sport pitches across the UK by 2025. This funding

kicked off in March with an initial £25 million benefiting over 170 facilities. Following the EURO 2022 Final, the Culture Secretary also announced that some of these facilities will be named after the 23 players in and around each of their respective hometowns or places that shaped their footballing careers, in honour of their achievements. Further details will be announced in the coming weeks.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, the Government stood by women’s football. It provided £2.9 million in grant funding to the Women’s Super League and FA Women’s Championship to cover essential costs and allow the completion of their seasons through the Sport Survival Package, but there were still delays in the return of competition compared to the men’s game, due to a lack of investment from the football authorities in COVID-19 testing for the women’s game. Spectators were also slower to return, a number of sponsorship deals withdrawn and a number of clubs have experienced financial hardship.

The fan-led review of football governance for men’s professional football recommended a review of the women’s game. Those who gave evidence highlighted the need for women’s football to be properly financed - including the commercialisation of women’s football, the opportunities for the game to benefit from broadcast revenue and implementing a stronger administrative structure. Concerns were also raised that the sport had failed to keep up with its own popularity and there was a danger of demand being unmet.



BARCLAYS CHAMPIONSHIP

The Barclays Championship is back...



By Peter Mann

Just two games into the new season in the Barclays Women's Championship season, and we've already had a handful of derby matches lighting up proceedings, and record crowds to witness them.

The opening day would see Charlton Athletic begin with three points when they won 2-0 away to Southampton, Emily Simpkins from the spot, and Melissa Johnson, with the goals in what was the highest scoring game of the weekend.

The following day, Blackburn Rovers (home to Sheffield United) and Bristol City (away to Coventry United) both won 1-0 as Saffron Jordan netted for Rovers in first half stoppage time, and Jessica Woolley early in the second for City.

As for the first two derby matches of the new campaign, two tight affairs as was no doubt expected, Durham (who were third in 2020 and runners-up in 2021) drew 1-1 with Sunderland (champions in 2014) at Maiden Castle.

Both goals arrived in the opening quarter of the

game as the two sides quickly cancelled each other out, Saoirse Noonan notched her first for Durham after just ten minutes of her debut, Brianna Westrup with the equaliser eight minutes later, for a share of the spoils.

Meanwhile, in London, Crystal Palace snatched a 1-0 win when at Princes Park, home of the London City Lionesses, Isabella Sibley with the games' only goal five minutes into the second period.

Fast-forward a week, and another two, local dust-ups were on offer, both coming in the south of the country, whilst both Sunderland, and Durham, were being humbled.

Crystal Palace followed up their opening day success with a 3-0 win at home to Coventry United, goals coming from Molly-Mae Sharpe, Annabel Blanchard, and Elise Hughes, whilst Bristol City, the other side with a hundred percent record, defeated their visitors, Blackburn, 2-0, Shania Hayles and Emily Syme both scoring in the first half.

After their victory over Coventry, Palace's third

goal-scorer, Elise Hughes, said in her post-match interview that she was: “Absolutely buzzing, and to get on the scoresheet, but more importantly to get three points, I think the girls deserved it.

“Following on from last weekend, we just needed the performance and another three points heading into the international break and the girls got that and I thought they were class.”

Sunderland were humbled at home on the Saturday when being downed by Birmingham City, 4-0, a win which sees the Blues, third in the table, in the early stages. Harriet Scott would open the scoring in first half stoppage-time, a goal that was added to in the final fifteen, they coming through Siobhan Wilson, Ashley Hodson, and Jamie Finn.

Durham on the other-hand, they were downed by a Courtney Sweetman-Kirk brace as they lost 2-0 away to Sheffield United, both goals arriving in the second half, much to the dismay of the visiting fans. Victory for the Blades bumped them to fifth in the early standings.

The two, local affairs, meanwhile, saw first, on the south coast, Lewes and Southampton share the spoils in a 2-2 draw, the hosts leading 2-0 at the break after Amelia Hazard opened the scoring after fifteen minutes, before Ellie Hack doubled the lead in stoppage time.

That lead would last until just past the hour mark, the Saints snatching a quick-fire double thanks to Ella Morris (62) and Laura Rafferty (69) to earn a point, the pair finding themselves in the bottom half early on.

As for the other derby match, that became a seven-goal thriller in the nations’ capital, Oakwood hosting Charlton Athletic against London City Lionesses, four of the seven goals landing in the second half.

The visitors took a two-goal lead in the opening quarter hour, Jamie-Lee Napier (11) and Atlanta Primus (16) for the Lionesses; before Emily Simpkins pulled one back from the spot with fifteen to go in the first; the goal-glut continued just before the hour mark when Emma Follis made it 2-3; Amy Rodgers restored the advantage, with Lily Agg adding a

fourth with fifteen remaining, that looking like the decider, and a comfortable win.

However, deep, deep into stoppage time, Charlton striker Corinne Hanson grabbed a third, with her first for Charlton, to make for a nervy close, London Lionesses holding on for a 4-3 win.

Those Lionesses though, they’ve got but one goal in mind, winning the Championship.

“We’re not afraid to say it, we obviously want to win the league,” Lois Joel said in a recent interview.

“The team did great last year (finished sixth) and we’re trying to build on that and go one more time and get promoted.

“Then personally, just trying to be as big of an impact as I can to make that goal possible, whether that’s through assists, or maybe some goals, doesn’t happen too often.

“And off the pitch, just trying to bring whatever advice I have or good vibe.”

She’s certainly laid down the marker for opposing sides this season, although, from the early showings, it’s Crystal Palace and Bristol City that lead the way with two-from-two, and Birmingham City nestled in third, with a win and a draw.

Coventry United are bottom of the pile with two defeats, whilst the trio of Southampton, Durham, and Sunderland, have a point apiece, at the foot of the table.



Barclays Championship

2021/22 Table

Championship

		P	W	D	L	GD	Pts
1	Crystal Palace	2	2	0	0	4	6
2	Bristol City	2	2	0	0	3	6
3	Birmingham City	2	1	1	0	4	4
4	Charlton	2	1	0	1	1	3
5	Sheffield United	2	1	0	1	1	3
6	London City Lionesses	2	1	0	1	0	3
7	Blackburn Rovers	2	1	0	1	-1	3
8	Lewes	2	0	2	0	0	2
9	Southampton	2	0	1	1	-2	1
10	Durham	2	0	1	1	-2	1
11	Sunderland	2	0	1	1	-4	1
12	Coventry United	2	0	0	2	-4	0



Coventry United announce new signing

Coventry United have signed midfielder Merrick Will.

Will played for Oxford United last season but had previously worked with manager Lee Burch and assistant Sian Osmond at London Bees.

Will said “Having worked with Lee and Sian previously, and with the group being really welcoming, it’s not taken long to settle in.

“I’m looking forward to challenging in a very competitive league and hope I can bring some success to the team!”

New signings at Lewes

Lewes have completed the signing of Libby Copus-Brown, Lauren Heria and Frankie Angel.

Australian midfielder Copus-Brown had most recently played for Newcastle Olympic in her home country.

Midfielder Heria joins from National League Southern Premier Division side London Bees, and goalkeeper Angel has joined on dual-registration from neighbours Brighton & Hove Albion.

Frarrugia joins Durham

Maria Farrugia has joined Durham.

The 21-year-old forward had played for Sunderland since moving to England to pursue her footballing dreams.

Farrugia has played over 25 times for Malta, scoring two international goals.

She told Durham’s website that playing full-time football was one of the main draws to the club saying “Getting to play full-time football was one of the main things that made me want to be here. It was always one of my dreams so I’m very grateful for that.”

Attendance records broken

Blackburn Rovers and Durham both broke attendance records on the opening weekend of the Championship season.

1,001 were at Ewood Park to watch Blackburn beat Sheffield United 1-0, whilst 1,668 watched the north-east derby between Durham and Sunderland at Maiden Castle. The league also had a record opening weekend average attendance of 1,084.

11 new signings at at Coventry United

Coventry United announced 11 new signings just before the start of the season. Meesha Dudley-Jones, Ebony Wiseman, Rosetta Taylor, Hayley Hoare, Simran Jhamat, Evie Gane, Arabella Suttie, Megan Alexander and Jodie Bartle have all joined the club. Fran Orthodoxou and Keeley Davies have both sign new contracts with Coventry after being with them last season.

Dual-registration with Rovers and United

Chloe Williams and Niamh Murphy have both joined Blackburn Rovers on dual-registration from Manchester United.

Welsh international midfielder Williams spent a spell with Rovers last season, making five appearances as a substitute.

Defender Murphy has played for Scotland up to under 19 level and has been named amongst the United substitutes but is yet to make a first team appearance for them.

Bradley-Auckland steps away from football

Sophie Bradley-Auckland has stepped away from football to focus on work and family matters.

Bradley-Auckland made 18 appearances for Sheffield United last season and scored one goal after joining The Blades last summer after a spell away from the game.

The defender had played for eight different clubs and played 28 times for England.

Fab 15 for Crystal Palace

Four players have sign contract extensions at Durham.

Beth Hepple, Naoisha McAloon, Bridget Galloway and Liz Ejupi have all committed to the club for the 2022/23 season.

Hepple is a regular source of goals for the club and recently made her 200th appearance for them in the opening day draw against Sunderland.

McAloon joined the club initially in January 2022 and made eight appearances in goal during the second half of last season.

Forward Galloway joined Durham from Sunderland in 2020 and made 19 league appearances during the 2021/22 season.

Ejupi joined in 2021 and the forward scored twice during last season.

United duo move to the USA

Charlton Athletic have completed the season-long loan signings of Lucy Watson from Chelsea and Elisha N'Dow from Aston Villa.

Watson had joined Chelsea during the summer from Sheffield United. For The Blades last season, the forward scored eight goals. Defender N'Dow spent the second half of last season on loan at Coventry United and was part of the Villa side that won the Championship in 2020.

Charley Docherty has signed a new contract with Sheffield United for the upcoming season.

Docherty can play in a number of positions and made four appearances for the club last season.

Docherty said "I'm buzzing for another year with this club. I feel like I have a lot to give this season following a good pre-season for me. I'll definitely be pushing for a regular place and I'm just excited for what's to come."

United make key signings

Sunderland have signed Brianna Westrup from Scottish champions Rangers. The defender captained the The Gers to their first Scottish Women's Premier League title last season having joined them in 2020.

Westrup had previously played in the north east for Newcastle United and has also spent time with Virginia Cavaliers in the USA and Danish side B93. She scored on her debut for Sunderland against Durham on the opening day of the Championship season.

Crystal Palace vs Coventry United



By Paul Donegan

Crystal Palace made it two wins out of two in the Championship with a 3-0 victory over Coventry United. Molly Sharpe opened the scoring just before half time before Annabel Blanchard and Elise Hughes added further goals in the second half. This result means Coventry are still looking for their first points of the season.

Dean Davenport made two changes to Palace's starting 11 from their 1-0 win over London City Lionesses last weekend with Molly Sharpe and Kirsten Reilly coming in for Elise Hughes and Chloe Peplow. Lee Burch also made two changes for Coventry United from their opening weekend defeat to Bristol City with Jodie Bartle and Fran Orthodoxou replacing Freya Thomas and Arabella Suttie.

The home side started well and an early scramble in the Coventry penalty area was eventually put behind, and then Blanchard shot wide in the 6th minute. Palace were playing some really nice football with Annabel Johnson's through ball finding Sharpe but a foul was given in the end, and Coral Haines finding Blanchard but the offside flag went up.

Coventry United's first chance came in the 17th minute when they intercepted the ball and Katy Morris shot wide from long range. This led to a spell with chances at both ends with Palace having the next one when Anna Filbey shot wide in the 20th minute. A minute later at the other end, Simran Jhamat sent a shot wide as both sides went looking for the opening goal.

Palace did have the ball in the net in the 23rd minute but Blanchard was deemed to be offside. Five minutes later, Coventry United came close to going ahead when Morris sent a cross in that deflected off Palace defender Johnson and thankfully for her straight into the hands of Fran Kitching.

A dangerous low cross from Palace was put behind in the 30th minute, and from the resulting corner Haines shot wide. Coventry United were playing six across the back at times and were proving difficult to break down. Palace saw Blanchard's free kick on the edge of the area hit the wall and Haines effort from the rebound was blocked.

Isabella Sibley ran through for Palace in the 35th minute but the Coventry defence stopped

this before she got a shot at goal. Blanchard shot just wide three minutes later but the offside flag was up again anyway.

In the 41st minute, Coventry had another chance when Morris found Meesha Dudley Jones but her shot was saved.

Crystal Palace took the lead in the final minute of the first half with a nice goal. Filbey's lovely through ball found Sharpe in the area who put the ball into the net with her left foot.

At the start of the second half, Coventry put in a dangerous cross that was claimed by Kitching. Blanchard put a low cross in for Palace in the 55th minute that was cleared. Five minutes later, Filbey saw her shot from outside the area deflected wide. Orthodoxou put an effort from about 40 yards wide for Coventry in the 64th minute.

Palace made it 2-0 in the 65th minute with another nice goal. This time, Elise Hughes provided the through ball which found Blanchard who controlled and finished with a curling shot into the corner of the net for her first goal for the club.

Two minutes later, Aimee Everett put an effort over from a corner as Palace looked for more goals. Blanchard had another shot from outside the area saved in the 75th minute.

Coventry were still creating some chances with Jhamat shooting into the side netting, and Merrick Will's long range shot was easily claimed by Kitching.

Palace had further chances in the final five minutes of the match with Filbey sending a free kick straight into the hands of Jodie Whiteman, and Blanchard sending in a low cross that was also claimed by the Coventry goalkeeper.

Four minutes of additional time were signalled and during those Palace scored their third. Blanchard's low shot was well saved by Whiteman but the rebound fell to Hughes who finished from six yards out for which was also her first goal for The Eagles.

The Palace players celebrated in front of their fans at the end of the match after a good performance that sees them go top of the league, though still very early days. Their next match after the international break is away to undefeated

Birmingham City on the 11th September. Coventry United will go looking for their first points when they take on Charlton Athletic at home on the same day.

Line ups

Crystal Palace

Kitching, Johnson, Everett, Filbey, Reilly (Noble 79'), Arthur (Olding 79'), Doran (Barton 79'), Blanchard, Haines (Guyatt 69'), Sibley, Sharpe (Hughes 46')

Unused substitutes

Negri, Waldie

Goals – Sharpe 45', Blanchard 65', Hughes 90'+

Coventry United

Whiteman, Mann (Rabjohn 74'), Bartle, Gane, Hoare, Alexander, Morris, Orthodoxou (Wiseman 67'), Jhamat (Milne-Redhead 85'), Will, Dudley-Jones (Davies 67')

Unused substitutes

Smith, Thomas

Referee – Ella Broad



Roberts announces retirement

Emily Roberts has announced that she is retiring from football.

The Durham forward joined the club in 2016, made 115 appearances and scored 26 goals, which makes her Durham's second highest ever goalscorer.

Roberts said "After recently getting married, I've decided it was the right time to retire from football and move on to the next chapter of my life. "I have really enjoyed my career and Durham has been a big part of that after spending the majority of my senior career at the club."

Goodall joins Lionesses

London City Lionesses have signed Sokhara Goodall.

The centre-back had previously played for London Bees, Crawley Wasps and Moneyfields. Goodall said about the move "I'm really excited to be joining.

"The club has great ambition and is driven to build on last season's achievements.

"It's an environment that allows you to become the best player you can be and I'm grateful to be a part of it."

Coventry United appoint Lee Burch

Olivia Rabjohn has joined Coventry United on dual-registration from Aston Villa.

The youngster, who plays in midfield, has featured for Villa in the Conti Cup and has been an unused substitute in the WSL for both Villa and former side Birmingham City.

Rabjohn becomes Coventry's 13th signing of the summer.

Salgado joins Blackburn Rovers

Shanell Salgado has joined Blackburn Rovers becoming Gemma Donnelly's fifth signing of the summer.

The 28-year-old goalkeeper had played for Lewes last season where she made six appearances.

Salgado has plenty of experience at Championship level having also played for Charlton Athletic and Crystal Palace.



Charlton Athletic vs London City Lionesses



By Paul Donegan

London City Lionesses beat their local rivals 4-3 at The Oakwood. The away side took a two-goal lead before Charlton came back to level things up.

The Lionesses scored another two, and after a long break whilst Charlotte Fleming received treatment, Charlton scored their third deep into additional time.

Charlton had won their opening game 2-0 against Southampton and Karen Hills kept the same starting eleven for this match. London City Lionesses had lost their first game 0-1 against Crystal Palace and Melissa Phillips made three changes with Lois Joel, Lucy Fitzgerald and

Charlotte Fleming coming in for Grace Neville, Lois Heuchan and Sarah Ewens.

The home side had the first opportunity of the match in the 2nd minute when Heidi Logan shot wide.

London City Lionesses took the lead in the 11th minute when the ball was crossed in by Lucy Fitzgerald and Jamie-Lee Napier finished from close range.

Four minutes later, Atlanta Primus saw her shot saved. From the resulting corner, the ball reached Primus who turned and shot low into the net from around 12 yards to make in 2-0.

Rodgers saw a shot blocked for the Lionesses, whilst at the other end Beth Roe sent a free kick well over for Charlton.

The home side were awarded a penalty in the 30th minute when Roe was brought down in the area by Karin Muya.

Emily Simpkins stepped up to take and score her second penalty of the season.

Angela Addison tested Shae Yanez with a long range shot that was saved by the Lionesses keeper who was making her 50th appearance for the club.

The Lionesses had the best of the other chances before half time with Harley Bennett heading wide,

Primus causing Charlton problems whilst they were trying to play out from the back and seeing one effort caught by Sian Rogers as it was looping towards goal, and Fleming having a long range shot saved.

Five minutes into the second half, Lily Agg shot wide for the Lionesses from about 8 yards out with only the keeper to beat.

Charlton equalised after 55 minutes when Emma Follis put in a low cross that bounced out off a defender, but Follis was first to the loose ball and finished low into the corner of the goal.

The away side almost regained the lead four minutes later when Napier shot just wide from the edge of the area.

The Lionesses did re-take the in the 63rd minute when after her first effort was blocked, Amy Rodgers scored with a stunning strike into the top corner from around 25 yards out.

Napier sent in a deep cross that Lucy Shepherd was just unable to get on the end of for the Lionesses in

the 68th minute, and a minute later, Follis sent a shot wide for Charlton.

It was 4-2 to London City Lionesses in the 74th minute when following a scramble from a corner, Agg finished from close range.

Freda Ayisi saw her free kick for Charlton caught by Yanez in the 87th minute as The Addicks looked to come back again.

Five additional minutes were signalled, and during these Charlotte Fleming went down with a nasty looking injury. There was an almost 20-minute hold up whilst she was treated on the pitch and stretched off to a waiting ambulance.

Hoping Charlotte can make a quick and full recovery.

When the game restarted, Charlton did get a goal back when Roe crossed and Corinne Henson backheeled the ball into the net from around 6 yards.

The final whistle went shortly after, and this result leaves both sides on three points after two games.

After the international break, Charlton's next game is away to Coventry United, whilst London City Lionesses face Bristol City at home.

Charlton Athletic

Rogers, Roe, Godfrey, Skeels, O'Rourke, Simpkins (Henson 82'), Ross (N'Dow 46'), Logan (Ayisi 46'), Follis, Addison, Johnson (Rutherford 64')

Unused substitutes

Soper, Bashford

Goals – Simpkins 30' (pen), Follis 55', Henson 90'+24'

London City Lionesses

Yanez, Joel, Nolan, Bennett, Fitzgerald, Fleming (Girasoli 90'+12'), Rodgers, Agg (Kitching 78'), Napier (Hopcroft 78'), Muya (Shepherd 64'), Primus

Unused substitutes

Pedersen, Neville, Heuchan

Goals – Napier 11', Primus 15', Rodgers 62', Agg 74'

Referee – Lauren Impey

Attendance - 553

Why Can't I Play Football?



Children's book out now

In this book, Sarah is a young girl with a dream. All she wants to do is play football but when the boys in the park tease her and tell her she cannot play, she does not know where to turn. Written in verse with bright supporting illustrations the story explores how Sarah's mum finds a way of helping her learn from the experience. After doing some research, her mum shows her that anything is possible when she puts her mind to it.

Available at Amazon, Waterstones and all good book stores



THE FA NATIONAL LEAGUE

Simon Says

This month Simon O'Neill chats to Janet Mitchell, Chair of Chorley Women FC.

How old were you when first interested in football?

Since I can remember! My family have always been big football fans; season ticket holders at Blackburn Rovers for many years so an interest came at a very young age.

Unfortunately, my Primary and Secondary schools didn't offer girls football but I was lucky enough to have a group of friends outside school who were avid football fans and never questioned having a girl play so I was playing socially from the age of around 11 with boys older than me which helped shape my love of the game and made me a better player.

I started playing for an actual team once I went to University then on leaving Uni met the Manager of Chorley on a coaching course and that's when my love affair with the Club began.

Did you play football at a young age and if so, what it like? Did any boys or family say you can't play football with them because you were a girl?

My story is very different from the many stories I read on social media. I was lucky in that the boys I grew up with both at school and out of school always immediately accepted me in terms of football in fact bizarrely it was other girls my age who would make negative comments about me playing. I can't remember a time when I was ever

turned away for being a girl.

My parents were always behind me and when I joined Chorley, they became mine and the team's biggest supporters; following us around the country and becoming part of the Club. I think males in football often get a lot of bad press sometimes rightly so but my experience has been positive from being a young kid to playing in the FAWNL.

The barrier for me was that there were no opportunities for girls to play at school or at Clubs when I was a child; Right up until University I wasn't aware of any teams in the area I could have joined.

How far did you go as a football player?

The highest level I have played is FAWNL Div 1 North.

I often wonder had the opportunities that are out there now for young girls been around when I was young if I could have gone further in the game.

You currently work as the Chair of Chorley Women FC. How did that role come about?

In my last playing season for Chorley Women, the current Chair stepped down and I was the obvious candidate having been around the club for 14 years and a member of the Committee as Treasurer for 10 years. The Committee voted me in, and I've been here ever since. It's a tough job!

As Chair what are the good point about

the role and how do you see the role evolving in the future?

At a Club the size of Chorley Women being Chair is a tough job; when things go right on and off the pitch it's great but there are so many things to consider at this level.

The Committee here is small but fantastic and I've made some friends for life. As Chair I'm immensely proud of the Club and how we've protected it over the years and kept it sustainable at this level; that's no mean feat given the club is completely self funded and run by volunteers.

In terms of the future, it's hard to say given the current trend within the Women's game.

Unfortunately, despite all the positives around Women's football at the moment we aren't really seeing any changes at this level and my job and responsibilities haven't changed; I'm still trying to run 3 open age women's teams alongside a full time senior HR role and being a Mum to a one year old. Clubs the size of Chorley Women need more help and more volunteers so that we can grow the infrastructure of the Club and help to future proof its existence.

Following the success of the England Lionesses, have you seen a big change in the way women's football is viewed?

There have been many positive's around the Lionesses success, we've had a few more people contact the Club and ask where they can come and watch the women play etc but on the whole at this level I can't say the impact is being felt yet. My concern is that the gap between the tiers is going to grow wider as the focus seems to be at the top of the Women's game, for me the focus needs to be bottom up with more money at grass roots level to help Clubs become sustainable.

We have seen a slight growth in attendances at games but not as much as we would have hoped.

The FA Women's National League new season began recently have you seen any upturn in the interest from business in getting involved in providing sponsorships or partnership?

Unfortunately, not. We are lucky in that we have a few sponsors who help support the Club year in year out but as for new sponsors we haven't seen an increase.

We find it very difficult to find sponsors despite having a strong social media presence and being a tier 4 team; I think one of the main reasons being that we can't offer a lot in return unlike men's clubs at a similar level to us. Financially the Club still has to fundraise for the majority of it's income which would be unknown at this level for a men's team.

What are your aims for Chorley Women FC in the next 5 to 10 years?

To remain financially sustainable, which is getting a tougher challenge each year. We are competing in a league where the majority of Clubs are now offering payment to players something we have and will never be able to do.

To continue to offer the best opportunities we can within the budget we have to women and to continue to grow the game. To continue to build relationships with other girls Clubs in the area and to offer a pathway from girls' to women's football. To be a 'best practice' club who will always have the players best interests at it's heart.

The Euros Euphoria fails to trickle down for everyone



By Julian Barker

Following all the euphoria of England winning the Euros and then amid the publicity surrounding the return of the Barclay Women's Championship, the concluding World Cup qualifying group fixtures and lastly the 2022-23 Barclays Women's Super League, there has been a decent level of media publicity surrounding the start of the new FA Women's National League (FAWNL) season.

Some games have already been played at a men's main stadium and there have been several very encouraging attendances.

On the flip side, some FAWNL clubs have been struggling to raise a squad to compete in the new season. Hounslow and

Maidenhead United had their first four and three League fixtures of the season postponed with the former, at the time of writing, sadly looking as if they might not be able to resume playing.

On the scheduled opening weekend (Sunday, August 21) Hounslow had just three players registered and nearly two weeks later (before this edition's deadline) that number had increased by just one for the Division One South East outfit.

While things do look bleak for Hounslow, the picture at Division One South West Maidenhead has become rosier. They had 12 players registered on the opening weekend and that total has

since increased to 17 and they should commence playing games on Sunday, September 4.

Hounslow were in the Southern Premier Division last season where they had a wretched time losing all 26 games.

With each of the four fourth tier Division Ones having a designated 12 teams, it is the South West which has suffered most since the former Combination Leagues were embraced by the FA Women's Premier League (as the FAWNL was known back in 2014). Just nine teams completed that initial season and the total has been either ten or 11 in each season since. The South East has fared much

better with just 2014-15 ending with less than 12 teams. Hounslow's plight could see that sequence ended.

Another club to keep a watchful eye on is Gillingham. The Southern Premier Division outfit have started the current season, but Josh Oatham issued a statement on August 18 where he announced his decision to step down as Owner and Chairman of Gillingham Women Football Club at the end of August. In 2020, Gillingham FC (men) made the decision to no longer fund and support the women's section.

By and large, while it has not always been plain sailing with the fourth tier North and Midlands Division One clubs, casualties have been much, much less. Last season Holwell folded just before Christmas in the Midlands where the only other time that section suffered a loss was 2018-19, Radcliffe Olympic folding before the campaign started.

A tricky start after relegation

Sheffield FC have gained six points from the first three games of their Division One Midlands season as they made an encouraging start following relegation from the Northern Premier Division and a pre-season where player recruitment was a testing enough task in itself. A new manager in John Bennett, succeeding Graham Abercrombie, had to contend with a raft of departures (just four out of 28 players who made appearances last season remain this time around), but the newcomers quickly put six

points on the board as they won both opening games 2-0. Only a stoppage time penalty denied Sheffield a point away to neighbours Doncaster Rovers Belles in a game where their captain Tiana Hicks netted a superb goal from over 35 yards, but she unfortunately suffered an ACL injury early in the second half. The positive results so far are in complete contrast to last season when both Sheffield's league wins came in the first six games with just a paltry two further points added from the remaining 18 games.

Promising attendances

There were two rounds of Sunday fixtures and one set of midweek games for the FAWNL in August and the attendances in the early weeks of the season have been very encouraging. In Division One Midlands two games were played at the men's stadium, Lincoln City v Doncaster Rovers Belles on the opening Sunday and Peterborough United v Lincoln City on Wednesday, August 31. The respective crowd figures were 1,003 and an impressive 2,328. One other fixture attracted a four figure crowd and that was Newcastle United v Stockport County with 1,569 watching a 2-0 home win at Kingston Park.

The future is very promising for Newcastle United Women who are officially under the ownership of Newcastle United FC for the first time. The very rich owners are committed to bringing success to the women's team and a fixture at St James' Park at the end of last season attracted a 22,134

attendance. Becky Langley has become the Women's manager on a full time basis and with the resources at her disposal, Newcastle will surely be the team to beat in Division One North.

Bigger grounds and bigger crowds

AFC Wimbledon are playing their home games at Plough Lane and MK Dons the MK Stadium, while London Bees play at Barnet's The Hive.

Forthcoming "occasional" games at a men's stadium include Exeter City v AFC Bournemouth (Sunday, October 2) and York City v Leeds United (Wednesday, October 19).

How have the promoted teams fared in their early FAWNL fixtures?

In Division One Midlands Stourbridge have made the most impressive start as they continued their West Midlands League winning form and are one of six teams level on six points, second behind Solihull Moors on goal difference. Last season's East Midlands champions Northampton Town have gained just the one point from their opening three games.

In Division One North it is North East champions York City who have made the better start with four points from three games, while North West champions Merseyrail have still to get off the mark, losing all three.

For Wymondham Town, the difference in tiers has quickly become evident. Like Merseyrail, last season's Eastern Region champions

have lost their first three games, but heavy defeats to Hashtag United (10-0) and Norwich City (7-0) have done their goal difference no favours in Division One South East. The other promoted club, London & South East champions Ashford Town, started with a 3-3 draw at home to Cambridge United and lost their other game to AFC Wimbledon.

AFC St Austell, last season's South West League champions, have made a near identical start to that of Wyomondham (above). A goal difference of minus 16 from three Division One South West games is an early handicap for the Cornish outfit whose nearest away game is Exeter. The other promoted team, Southern Region champions Moneyfields, have a brace of 1-1 draws from their first two games.

Solid start at Barnsley

After just escaping the drop last season, the 2022-23 Division One North campaign has begun brightly for Barnsley who were on the verge of promotion to the third tier when Covid severely disrupted two seasons.

Lois Daniels is now sole manager after the duties were shared with Andy Glossop (now concentrating on playing) last term.

Barnsley have started with a trio of wins without conceding a goal, 4-0 win at Chorley and 2-0 home win over Leeds and 1-0 at Bradford City. Barnsley recorded just four clean sheets last term, while only the three

relegated teams had a worst defensive record.

Daniels has brought in experience with a trio of former Barnsley players - Rebecca Fevers, Holly Findlay and Abby Parkin - all returning to the club after being part of the York City side who finished as last season's North East League Premier Division champions. Fevers is now in her fourth spell with Barnsley.

Among the key players for Barnsley is another experienced campaigner, Jodie Michalska who scored goals for fun at her previous clubs and was Barnsley's top scorer last season. Like many other strikers over the years, Michalska can also turn in an accomplished display in defence as she showed in the win over Leeds when she kept Laura Bartup (ex-Barnsley) quiet.

While still some way off, plans to build their own home at Hoyland are advancing steadily for Barnsley who are independent of the men's club.

Donny out for revenge

In winning this season's opening fixture Doncaster Rovers Belles righted their major failing of last season.

Belles, who finished runners up, two points behind Division One Midlands champions Boldmere St Michaels, gained just two points (both home draws) from their six games against the other teams who finished in the top four.

That hoodoo seemed as if it would continue when they quickly fell 2-0 down away to Lincoln City. Belles pulled it

back to 2-2, but then quickly conceded a third. However a late equaliser and then a stoppage winner secured maximum points.

There was more late drama when Belles hosted Sheffield FC in their next game at their new home ground of Thorne Colliery's Iqbal Poultry stadium.

Captain Jess Andrew converted a stoppage time penalty winner to add to her brace of spot kicks at Lincoln. Belles have lost several of last season's regular players including the division's top scorer Jasmine Saxton (to Brighouse Town). Belles have drafted several players from their Devs for the new campaign, as well as signing goalkeeper Georgia Wattam (from Leeds), Shannon Durkin (last season's top scorer at York City) and Halima Essa (from Sheffield Wednesday).

All to play for in the Midlands

Rarely can a newly promoted team have made such an astonishing home debut in the fourth tier as that of Stourbridge who registered a resounding 7-0 victory over Lincoln City in Division One Midlands. Stourbridge were near unstoppable when finishing West Midlands League Premier Division champions last season when they won 21 of their 22 games (losing the other one) as they finished ten points clear of runners up Sutton Coldfield Town who were the only team to gain league points against Stourbridge.

The War Memorial Ground witnessed goals by Zoe Clarke (2), Esme Moran, Alex Nicklin, Millie Rogers, Niamh Deasy and club captain Amber Lawrence who returned to playing midway through last season after becoming a mother. She played a quarter of the game as a second half substitute in Stourbridge's opening day 2-0 defeat at Sheffield. Stourbridge netted seven or more goals at home seven times last season. A subsequent 4-0 win at Sporting Khalsa shows that the newcomers are not to be taken lightly.

Lincoln finished third last season, just three points off of the crown and would certainly be expected to be among the teams in the running this season.

However, they have started this season with three successive defeats (shipping 15 goals in the process) and the game against Stourbridge will have been a case of déjà vu as they also lost their second game of last season against the newly promoted West Midlands Premier Division champions. That was a 1-0 home defeat to a late goal against Leek Town who also won the return and that proved costly in the determination of the title.

Lincoln were the division's top scorers last term, while they also had the fourth best defence, conceding just 30 in 22 games.

That 7-0 was the second high score in the opening two rounds of fixtures. Long Eaton United, fourth last term, crashed 9-0 at Solihull Moors on the opening day.

Tough start for Boldmere

Boldmere St Michaels can be under no illusions about how tough life is going to be in Northern Premier Division after their third tier debut ended in a 7-1 home defeat to Huddersfield Town. Last season's Division One Midlands champions fared "better" in their only other game, losing by the odd goal in three at home to West Bromwich Albion. North West champions Liverpool Feds have made a solid start with a 5-3 home win over Brighouse Town following creditable 1-1 draws against Wolves and Derby County. Loughborough Lightning, who finished one place above the relegated teams last season, look to be facing another season of struggle having lost their first three games with a minus 11 goal difference.

Early title contenders look like being Burnley who lead the way with three wins from three, while Nottingham Forest hold the only other 100% record having won both their opening games. Last season's champions Wolves, who missed out on promotion to tier two, have kept most of their squad, adding Destiny Toussaint and have seven points from their first three games.

Oxford up for the fight

Oxford United, who finished nine points adrift of promoted champions Southampton FC in the Southern Premier Division last season, will be fancying their chances of going one better this term after starting with a trio of wins. Watford, relegated from the FA Women's

Championship, have won their opening two games in their bid for an instant return.

Portsmouth are also two wins from two. At the other end of the table, both Billericay Town and Plymouth Argyle began the season with three straight defeats.





FANWNL

2022/23 Tables

Northern Premier Division

	P	W	D	L	GD	Pts
1 Wolverhampton Wanderers	4	3	1	0	14	10
2 Burnley	4	3	1	0	4	10
3 Nottingham Forest	3	3	0	0	10	9
4 Derby County	4	2	1	1	9	7
5 West Bromwich Albion	4	2	1	1	-2	7
6 Stoke City	4	2	0	2	-2	6
7 Liverpool Feds	4	1	2	1	0	5
8 Huddersfield Town	3	1	1	1	1	4
9 AFC Fylde	4	0	2	2	-4	2
10 Brighouse Town	3	0	1	2	-3	1
11 Boldmere St. Michaels	3	0	0	3	-12	0
12 Loughborough Lightning	4	0	0	4	-15	0

Southern Premier Division

	P	W	D	L	GD	Pts
1 Oxford United	4	4	0	0	12	12
2 Portsmouth	3	2	1	0	6	7
3 London Bees	4	2	1	1	-1	7
4 Watford	2	2	0	0	3	6
5 Milton Keynes Dons	4	2	0	2	2	6
6 Cheltenham Town	4	2	0	2	-3	6
7 Gillingham	3	1	1	1	0	4
8 Bridgwater United	4	1	1	2	-1	4
9 Billericay Town	4	1	0	3	-2	3
10 Ipswich Town	3	1	0	2	-3	3
11 Crawley Wasps	3	0	2	1	-5	2
12 Plymouth Argyle	4	0	0	4	-8	0



TheFA Women's
National League

FANWNL

2022/23 Tables

Division One North

	P	W	D	L	GD	Pts
1 Barnsley	4	4	0	0	9	12
2 Leeds United	4	3	0	1	5	9
3 Newcastle United	3	2	0	1	4	6
4 Hull City	4	2	0	2	1	6
5 Norton & Stockton Ancients	4	1	3	0	1	6
6 Middlesbrough	3	2	0	1	1	6
7 Durham Cestria	4	1	2	1	1	5
8 York City	3	1	1	1	2	4
9 Chorley	4	1	1	2	-4	4
10 Bradford City	3	1	0	2	-1	3
11 Stockport County	4	0	1	3	-7	1
12 Merseyrail	4	0	0	4	-12	0

Division One Midlands

	P	W	D	L	GD	Pts
1 Solihull Moors	4	3	0	1	12	9
2 Stourbridge	4	3	0	1	10	9
3 Peterborough United	4	3	0	1	8	9
4 Leafield Athletic	4	2	1	1	4	7
5 Sporting Khalsa	3	2	0	1	2	6
6 Doncaster Rovers Belles	3	2	0	1	0	6
7 Sheffield	4	2	0	2	0	6
8 Leek Town	4	2	0	2	-1	6
9 Lincoln City	4	1	0	3	-6	3
10 Wem Town	4	1	0	3	-7	3
11 Long Eaton United	4	1	0	3	-16	3
12 Northampton Town	4	0	1	3	-6	1



TheFA Women's
National League

FANWNL

2021/22 Tables

Division One South East

	P	W	D	L	GD	Pts
1 Hashtag United	4	3	1	0	15	10
2 Norwich City	4	3	1	0	11	10
3 London Seaward	4	2	1	1	-1	7
4 Cambridge United	4	1	2	1	-1	5
5 Queens Park Rangers	4	1	2	1	-1	5
6 AFC Wimbledon	3	1	1	1	2	4
7 Ashford Town	3	1	1	1	-1	4
8 Chesham United	2	1	0	1	3	3
9 Cambridge City	3	1	0	2	-2	3
10 Actonians	3	0	1	2	-3	1
11 Hounslow	0	0	0	0	0	0
12 Wymondham Town	4	0	0	4	-22	0

Division One South West

	P	W	D	L	GD	Pts
1 AFC Bournemouth	4	3	1	0	15	10
2 Exeter City	4	3	1	0	12	10
3 Selsey	3	3	0	0	9	9
4 Cardiff City	2	2	0	0	15	6
5 Portishead	4	2	0	2	-5	6
6 Moneyfields	3	1	2	0	5	5
7 Southampton Women	2	1	0	1	0	3
8 Swindon Town	2	1	0	1	-1	3
9 Maidenhead United	1	0	0	1	-4	0
10 Larkhill Athletic	4	0	0	4	-8	0
11 Keynsham Town	3	0	0	3	-17	0
12 AFC St Austell	4	0	0	4	-21	0



TheFA Women's
National League



GRASSROOTS

FOOTBALL

My Top Trumps to support women's and girls' grassroots football



Card games brand named as a partner for women's club AFC Acorns.

On the eve of the women's European football championships, the leading personalised card game brand, My Top Trumps, announced its commitment to the women and girls grassroots game with support for Surrey-based, FA Accredited football club AFC Acorns.

Although only two years old, the upcoming football club already boasts seven women and girls teams. It launched its venture to grow and raise the women's and girls game during the first lockdown of Covid in 2020. Since then, the number of youth teams has been increasing while winning trophies and promotions at the senior level.

My Top Trumps, the popular card game that currently provides personalised sporting decks, will create a unique AFC Acorns deck of cards and other products to commemorate the partnership and support the women's first team, which has enjoyed back-to-back promotions since its inception and is now joining tier 5 of the national football pyramid. With clubs such as Fulham and Millwall due to play the Surrey club in the 2022/23 season, My Top Trumps decided it wanted to support the football club and its impact on the local community.

My Top Trumps spokesperson said: "Women's and girls' football is a

growing and exciting sport; it impacts the community and challenges society on topics such as diversity and inclusion. We are delighted to support AFC Acorns with their long-term plan to grow and raise awareness of the women's and girls' game."

"We have seen the impact that the My Top Trumps game brings to all walks of life, and it has an educational value delivered subtly but used within the grassroots game, could have a positive impact on younger players, coaches, volunteers and spectators receiving the national governing bodies messages."

AFC Acorns, which has an ambitious plan to build up its youth ranks, also intends to launch a fund to support women and girls getting into football. Aimed at players from low-income backgrounds or fallen into hardship and those looking to further their education in football at local academies/ foundations or even abroad.

Acorn's club chairman, Chris Minn, said about the partnership: "We are delighted that a brand and product like My Top Trumps can see what we are trying to achieve for women's football and the wider community. Of course, any support for our outstanding first team is amazing; they are flying the flag for the football club and the local area." Chris continued: "We also see value in My Top Trumps supporting growth and education with the youth teams and the stars of tomorrow".

Lucy Pearson: The FA's Euro 2022 Legacy



By Helen Rowe-Willcocks

Legacy. It's a word that has been used a lot following England's victory at the 2022 European Championships this summer and it's one we hope to continue hearing for some time.

One of the key legacy targets from hosting the tournament this summer for the Football Association was to increase the number of women coaching at all levels of the game.

We have already seen a number of targets being put into action and records being broken both during and since the tournament, not just at international level but also in the domestic game.

We sat down with the Head of Education at the FA, Lucy Pearson, to find out what the FA hope will happen

following the successful tournament.

Can you tell our readers a little bit about yourself and how you got into the role?

I have been in education my whole life and I have been a qualified English teacher for the best part of 25 years. I became a headteacher in 2010 and then after eight years decided I wanted a bit of a change. I have always loved sport, I am a former England international cricketer which I did alongside my day job. I am very proud of it. I decided I wanted a shift in careers so I handed in my notice and then a few months later this role popped up.

Have you seen an immediate boost in interest in people interested in coaching in

the women's game at all levels?

It's still very early days because of the affiliation and turnover. In terms of interest in online activity for example, that has seen a spike. There has been a good response to some of our social media postings. It is probably a bit too soon for some of the courses because that takes a little bit of time but I certainly expect to see Playmaker see a boost. That is already tracking really well.

It's already at 15/16% female and we expect that to go up. We know we want to push that – we don't want to be happy with 15% we want to push up, why not aim for 25%? We have to take it one step at a time. The interesting thing is that we are trying to learn as we go along. Are they mums going into coaching?

Are they young females who think they could have a career? Every way you look at dividing up the coaches, they need a different response depending on what their motives are.

Seeing the number of young females at the final who are clearly football fans, it got me thinking about whether they would ever think that football could give them a career not just a pastime that they love. That younger bracket is where we have the work to do.

Do you think there is enough knowledge out there that there could be a career in the game?

It's all about confidence. The jobs are there for people, it's about having the confidence to go for them. I think there is a perception that a coach is a true expert and it's not the reality. If there are players who want to go into coaching, it is our job to say 'you can make a brilliant coach'. People need to be given a really good experience, you don't need to know it all, you can learn anything. If you don't know it, we are here to help you understand it a bit better.

Where do you think the gap is for people to have a career in coaching?

I think there are different start points – particularly in the women's game. We see a real peak of females and males coming in around about the parental age (34-44), it's a huge uptake for parents who are taking over teams for their children. Do I think that a 35-year-old is

sitting there thinking of changing careers and becoming a footballer? In their dreams maybe but in reality they probably never see it as a career opportunity.

Where I think we can begin to influence a different approach is following hand and glove where young girls are thinking being a professional footballer is a real possibility. I think alongside that, they might see they are not going to make it as a player but I could earn a living in the women's game. Wherever players lead, coaches follow. We are still having to work hard to catch up with representation in the women's game. The game leads us and we need to keep up with them.

There are a lot of male coaches when you look at the women's football pyramid, do you think the split between male and female coaches is changing?

I hope that clubs and their cultures and football and it's culture would want to insure that there is a parity in this space and would want to protect the number of females employed in the game and promote the number of females. I would hope we retain a minimum of 50% in the women's game. Partly, because if you go below that, it's hard to get back.

Whilst the main media continues to focus on the top leagues post Euros, do you think you will see a change in commitment and interest in lower leagues and grassroots?

One of the challenges for the women's game is that we now have this brilliant shop window and the likes of Arsenal really showing women's sport is commercially viable as well as a great game to watch. It is really attractive at the moment. There is not the money in the game which trickles down the pyramid. In the men's game a long way down the pyramid you can earn a living as a player or a coach, that does not translate in the women's game. For a number of years yet, there will still be a lot of people in the lower leagues who aspire to be paid but just don't have that opportunity. They are still going to have to make a lot of career choices. I don't see that changing quickly because it doesn't stand up financially on its own.

Do you think the lack of money in the lower leagues is going to make it difficult to achieve the legacy target?

No I don't think it will in the short term. This is purely speculative but I think a lot of women coach because it is their passion. We all have hobbies and passions and I hope that because of that it keeps the spirit of the game and not just financial game. I don't think we need to be in a rush to get rid of that.

To find out more about coaching courses and Playmakers, go to: <https://thebootroom.thefa.com/>

England Football Learning launches two new women's high performance football centres



The University of Essex and Birmingham City University have joined eight existing universities, which are partnered with England Football Learning, to offer support for women's and girls' football coaches at specialist Women's High Performance Football Centres [WHPFC] across the country.

The centres provide an educational and community-based hub to recruit, develop and deploy coaches and the wider workforce to lead

and inspire player development within the women's and girls' game.

They will further provide a link with the player pathway to help talented players, who will benefit from coaching, sports science, sports medicine and scholarship opportunities in an academic and community environment.

The addition of Essex and Birmingham City University is part of The FA's ongoing commitment to develop coaches within women's and girls' football. The existing eight

universities have renewed their partnership to continue operating Women's High Performance Football Centres until July 2024

- Northumbria University
- Manchester Metropolitan University
- Nottingham Trent University & Nottingham
- Sheffield Hallam University

- University of Gloucestershire
- Plymouth Marjon University
- St Mary's University
- University of Chichester

In these areas, clubs from across the football pyramid and women's football academies will benefit from the partnership by the recruitment of coaches, and the wider workforce, with the Universities providing a wide range of student placements from strength and conditioning, sport therapy, performance analysis, marketing, media and business management.

FA Women's Pathway Coach Developer Lead, Abbie Sadler commented: "It's brilliant to add two new partners to our Women's High Performance Football Centres offering at universities. The opportunities the programme creates will be invaluable to coaches and the wider workforce wanting to take their next steps in women's football.

"We are also thrilled to have also extended our partnership with all the universities we work with for another two years and cannot wait to continue

the great work in the women's and girls' game.

"With 10 centres across the country, there's real depth and breadth to the programme and opportunities for coaches nationwide."

Dr Dave Parry, Director of Sport at the University of Essex said: "We are delighted to have been selected by The FA and England Football Learning to be one of their Women's High Performance Football Centres.

"The success of the Lionesses at the UEFA Women's Euros has inspired the whole country, and there really couldn't be a better time to be part of the next phase of growing the women's and girls' game and developing coaches and support staff."

On the renewal, Phil Cook, Head of Development at Manchester Metropolitan University added: "We are excited to enter our sixth year of the project and are delighted to be one of ten universities nationally with a WHPFC.

"One area of growth has been the Women's Goalkeepers Centre hosted at our Platt Lane Sports Complex where over 40 goalkeepers now train

whilst being supported by FA accredited coaches and student volunteers.

"Our existing partnership with Manchester City Football Club has already opened up a number of exciting opportunities for our students, coaches and community, and we hope this new extension to our partnership will take the development of the women's game to an even higher level."

For further information on the Women's High Performance Football Centres



University student inspires the next generation of Lionesses



A Football Coaching student at the University of Wolverhampton is leading the way to inspire more females to score a career in sport.

Georgia Butler, who is approaching her final year studying Football Coaching and Performance at the School of Sport at the University's Walsall Campus, coaches male and female football alongside her studies.

With her dad being a passionate Blues supporter, Georgia has

grown up supporting Birmingham City FC and always had a keen interest in football.

From playing in boys' teams at the age of seven to coaching male football teams, Georgia found there to be a lack of opportunities in her local community to encourage girls to play the sport.

"Sport has always had a huge impact - both mentally and physically.

"Whether I'm playing, coaching, or seeing the smiles on everyone's faces

- it takes me to another level that I can't quite explain."

Following the many connections she has made since joining the University, Georgia set up female-only sessions at Dudley football club Goals, to provide girls with the opportunity to play football.

Georgia said: "To be honest, I was very hit and miss about going to uni.

"I'm not very academic and I like being out and interacting with others.

“Then I saw that the lecturers are very big on students going out there and getting experience.

“At Wolverhampton, we’re all on work placements alongside our academic studies and the amount of experience and extra knowledge you gain is invaluable.

“Since starting University, the lecturers have opened a lot of doors for me – the connections they have and the opportunities on offer are like no other.

“Some people think coaching is just kicking a ball around - it’s much more than that.

“You learn about coaching philosophy and how to engage and interact with young people. You’re not just a coach, you’re a

mentor and it’s vital you build those relationships and know how to make learning fun.”

Georgia states that even though she’s had a lot of support throughout her football journey, she’s also battled with the stigma around women not being able to play football and often gets mistaken for a physio while she’s coaching.

Georgia said: “The amount of girls that tell me they’ve been told they’re not allowed to play football still stuns me.

“I coach both males and females and I teach them that the game is for everyone.

“Hopefully, with the success of the Lionesses, that stigma will fade, and

it won’t just be seen as a male sport.

“Seeing the women’s England team win is what I, the nation, and every woman in sport needed.

“They’ve inspired me to continue doing what I’m doing and certainly inspired the girls I coach to become future Lionesses.”

Georgia has successfully landed a role with Birmingham City Community Trust and will be heading into the new season as their Football Development Officer, running both male and female football development sessions across the city.





CUP COMPETITIONS

The Women's FA Cup is underway

By Paul Donegan

In March, the FA announced that the Women's FA Cup prize fund would receive a significant increase to £3m per year from the start of the 2022/23 season. Details regarding of how the money will be allocated across the competition was recently announced.

Round	Winning Club	Losing Club
First Round Qualifying	£1,800	£450
Second Round Qualifying	£3,000	£750
Third Round Qualifying	£4,000	£1,000
First Round Proper	£6,000	£1,500
Second Round Proper	£8,000	£2,000
Third Round Proper	£10,000	£2,500
Fourth Round Proper	£15,000	£3,750
Fifth Round Proper	£20,000	£5,000
Quarter Final	£25,000	£6,250
Semi Final	£50,000	£12,500
Final	£100,000	£50,000

The round dates and exemptions have also been announced with the final scheduled to take place at Wembley Stadium on Sunday 14th May 2023. The WSL sides will enter the competition in the fourth round across the weekend of Sunday 29th January.

Round	Date	Exempt to Round
First Round Qualifying	Sunday 11 th September 2022	
Second Round Qualifying	Sunday 2 nd October 2022	86 clubs from tier 5
Third Round Qualifying	Sunday 23 rd October 2022	48 clubs from FAWNL Division 1
First Round Proper	Sunday 13 th November 2022	24 clubs from FAWNL Premier Division
Second Round Proper	Sunday 27 th November 2022	
Third Round Proper	Sunday 11 th December 2022	12 clubs from Women's Championship
Fourth Round Proper	Sunday 29 th January 2023	12 clubs from WSL
Fifth Round Proper	Sunday 26 th February 2023	
Quarter Final	Sunday 19 th March 2023	
Semi Final	Sunday 16 th April 2023	
Final	Sunday 14 th May 2023	

A total of 439 clubs will enter the FA Cup for the 2022/23 season, and 174 of those start in the first round qualifying on the 4th/11th September. Amongst those entering at this stage are some familiar names like Sheffield Wednesday, Preston North End, Bolton Wanderers and Brentford. Some other names are less familiar, such as Sir Tom Finney, York Railway Institute, Sport London e Benfica and Mancunian Unity.

The first match in the first round qualifying has already taken place with AFC Portchester winning 3-0 against QK Southampton.

Fixtures

Sunday, September 4

AFC Portchester 3 v 0
QK Southampton

Sunday, September 11

Pilkington v Sir Tom
Finney (1pm)

Penrith v Cramlington
United (2pm)

Boro Rangers v
Cramlington Town
(2pm)

Guisborough Town v
West Allotment (2pm)

Cullercoats v Birtley
Town (2pm)

Chester le Street United
v Thornaby (2pm)

Boldeon v Hartlepool
Pools Youth (2pm)

Workington Reds v
Washington (2pm)

Darlington v Ripon City
(2pm)

Hartlepool United v CLS
Amazons (2pm)

Stanwix v Gateshead

Leam Rangers (2pm)

Gateshead Rutherford v
Gateshead (2pm)

Altofts v Sheffield
United Community
Foundation (2pm)

Morley Town v Beverley
Town (2pm)

Harworth Colliery v
York Railway Institute
(2pm)

St Joesph's Rockware of
Worksop v Farsley Celtic
Juniors (2pm)

Market Rasen Town v
Ruston Sports (2pm)

Thackley v Grimsby
Town (2pm)

Poppleton v Pocklington
Town (2pm)

Grimsby Borough v
Brighouse Sports (2pm)

Sheffield Wednesday v
Cleethorpes Town (2pm)

Preston North End v
Atherton LR (2pm)

Macclesfield Town v

Warrington Wolves
Foundation (2pm)

Bury Foundation v
Marine (2pm)

Penwortham Town v
Altrincham (2pm)

West Kirby v Bolton
Wanderers (2pm)

Bury AFC v BRNESC
(2pm)

Hindley Juniors v
Mossley (2pm)

Macclesfield v
Wythenshawe Amateurs
(2pm)

Clitheroe Wolves v
Nantwich Town (2pm)

Willaston v Burnley
Belvedere (2pm)

Dunton & Broughton
United v Skegness Town
(2pm)

Yaxley Phoenix v
Leicester City (2pm)

Allextion & New Parks v
Long Buckby (2pm)

Bugbrooke St Michaels v Rugby Borough (2pm)	Dunstable (2pm)	Green (2pm)
Stamford v Asfordby (2pm)	Sevenoaks Town v Barking (2pm)	Frome Town v Weston Super Mare (2pm)
Kingfisher v City of Stoke (2pm)	Maidstone United v Herne Bay (2pm)	St Vallier v Pucklechurch Sports (2pm)
Bromsgrove Sporting v Coventry City (2pm)	Comets v Islington Borough (2pm)	Frampton Rangers v Oldland Abbotonians (2pm)
Coventry Sphinx v Walsall Wood (2pm)	Regents Park Rangers v Hackney (2pm)	Bideford v Activate (2pm)
AFC Telford United v Wyrley (2pm)	Hastings United v Margate (2pm)	Marine Academy Plymouth v Teignmouth (2pm)
Droitwich Spa v Tamworth (2pm)	Welling United v Glebe (2pm)	Helston Athletic v Crediton United (2pm)
Norton Canes v Sedgley & Gornal (2pm)	Buckingham United v Sport London e Benfica (2pm)	Sticker v Budleigh Salterton (2pm)
Westfields v Bewdley Town (2pm)	Mortimer v Watford Ladies Development (2pm)	Brentford v Woodley United (3pm)
Leamington Lions v Doveridge (2pm)	Milton United v Slough Town (2pm)	Dorking Wanderers v Richmond & Kew (3:30pm)
Newcastle Town v Port Vale (2pm)	Abbey Rangers v Steyning Town (2pm)	Mancunian Unity v Athletico Middleton (4pm)
Brantham Athletic v Mulbarton Wanderers (2pm)	Richmond Park v Reigate (2pm)	<i>Please check clubs social medias and The website for the English football association, the Emirates FA Cup and the England football team - The Vitality Women's FA Cup The FA for venues and any changes to kick-off times!</i>
Haverhill Rovers v Stanway Rovers (2pm)	Guildford City v Leatherhead (2pm)	
East Bergholt United v Brett Vale (2pm)	Montpelier Villa v Burgess Hill Town (2pm)	
Hitchin Belles v Bedmond (2pm)	Shanklin v AFC Stoneham (2pm)	
Biggleswade United v Headstone Manor (2pm)	Rushmoor Community v New Milton Town (2pm)	
Southend United Community Sports Club v Hertford Town (2pm)	Gloucester City v Bishops Cleeve (2pm)	
Frontiers v AFC	Pen Mills v Longwell	

FA Women's Continental Tyres League Cup stage draw

The draw for the Group Stage of the 2022/23 FA Women's Continental Tyres League Cup took place this on Tuesday, August 9 live on talkSPORT 2.

The draw was conducted on 'The talkSPORT2 Social' by former England striker, Darren Bent.

The full draw is as follows:

Northern Section

GROUP A

Aston Villa
Sheffield United
Everton
Durham
Manchester United

GROUP B

Leicester City
Sunderland
Liverpool
Blackburn Rovers

Southern Section

GROUP C

Brighton & Hove Albion
Birmingham City
West Ham United
London City Lionesses

GROUP D

Bristol City
Charlton Athletic
Lewes
Crystal Palace

GROUP E

Southampton
Reading
Tottenham Hotspur
Coventry United

The three Clubs who have qualified for the 2022/23 UEFA Women's Champions League – Chelsea, Arsenal and Manchester City - will be exempt from the Group Stage, and will enter at the Quarter-Final stage. However, should Arsenal or Manchester City exit the UEFA Women's Champions League in Round 1 or 2, they will enter the FA Women's Continental Tyres League Cup at the Group Stage and will be drawn in an existing group of four clubs in the appropriate geographical grouping.

The Group Stage will run from 1-2 October through to 17-18 December, with the Quarter-Finals scheduled for 25-26 January, the Semi-Finals 8-9 February, and the Final on the weekend of 4-5 March.

The FA and Nike announce new partnership



The Football Association (The FA) is delighted to announce a multi-year partnership with Nike to become official ball supplier of the Barclays Women's Super League (BWSL), Barclays Women's Championship (BWC) and The FA Women's Continental Tyres League Cup from the 2022/23 season.

The agreement will see Nike's Flight ball technology being introduced for the first time when the new season kicks off in the Barclays Women's Championship this weekend (August 20-21), and the Barclays Women's Super League on September 10-11. Each competition will have its own branded ball, while the FA Women's Continental Tyres League Cup will have a competition branded ball for the Final in March.

Breakthrough Aerowsculpt technology uses features on the surface of the ball to help air move around it more easily. That means less wobble in the air and a more stable, predictable flight path.

The FA has a longstanding relationship with Nike that stretches back to 2013, and this new partnership highlights a big step forward for the women's professional game, associating itself with a brand that looks to invest in women on and off the field.

The FA's partnership with Nike will allow for

continued investment into the women's game, from grassroots level right through to the professional game, as The FA looks to further develop the sport following England's magnificent triumph at this summer's UEFA Women's EURO.

Navin Singh, The FA's Commercial Director, said: "I'm delighted that we are able to expand our relationship with Nike and have one of the most recognised sports brands in the world partnered with the Barclays Women's Super League, Barclays Women's Championship and The FA Women's Continental Tyres League Cup.

"Nike continuously push the boundaries when it comes to investment in women and giving them the opportunity to succeed, which is exactly what we strive to do in the women's game. This is a really positive step for both parties, and I look forward to us working with Nike going forward."

Whitney Malkiel, Vice President, Global Women's, Nike, said: "The energy in women's football in England right now has never been higher as we enter into this partnership with The FA at such a critical moment in our long-standing efforts to help keep growing the women's game."



HOME NATIONS

England to face Czech Republic in Brighton



England are to return to the scene of two of their most memorable UEFA EURO 2022 victories when they welcome Czech Republic to Brighton on Tuesday 11 October.

The south-coast venue was where the Lionesses were 8-0 winners against Norway in a group-stage fixture, before a dramatic 2-1 quarter-final defeat of Spain after extra time.

The Czechs are an emerging force, having drawn twice with the Netherlands in their qualifying group for the World Cup. They also earned a goalless draw away to the United States in last February's SheBelieves Cup. England last faced Czech Republic in November 2019 when Bethany England, Beth Mead and Leah Williamson were all on the scoresheet in a 3-2 victory away from home.

The Brighton game will follow England's Friday 7 October meeting with the US at Wembley Stadium connected by EE with both fixtures seen as vital to the squad's 2023 FIFA World Cup preparations.

Sarina Wiegman said: "The World Cup has our full focus. It is great we will have challenging matches against two opponents who have very different styles of play, as we start the road to Australia and New Zealand. We have achieved so much this year, but we need to be thinking about where we want to

be as a squad next summer on the biggest stage of all. I am also very happy we get a chance to go back to Brighton and say thank you to the fans who played such a big part in our EURO experience."

Tickets will go on-sale to My England Football members at 12pm on Wednesday 7 September for an exclusive 24 hour window. General sale will start from 12pm on Thursday 8 September.

Prices start at £7.50 for adults and £5 for children, with discounts available for group bookings in Category 1 and 2 seats.

Ticket Plus: £25

Cat 1: £20

Cat 2: £15

Cat 3: £7.50

Child: £5

*Concession: £10

*Group Adult: £10

*Available in Category 1 and 2 only

More Than a Piece of Silverware



By Clare McEwen

On the evening of the Women's Euros final, I spent an hour crying. Tears streamed down my face, smearing the red and white paint from the flag on my cheeks.

England are Champions of Europe! Better still, England's women are Champions of Europe!

As long-suffering English football fans, this is the trophy we've waited so long for: 56 years to be precise. But as a woman — once a football mad young girl — this is far more than a piece of silverware.

A Girl's Football History

I grew up in the 1980s and was frequently described as a 'tomboy'. I wasn't interested in dolls or princesses; I wasn't

interested in fairy-tale castles; I was interested in football.

Kicking a ball around in the park was all I wanted to do. I was deemed 'good enough' by the boys to join them, so I did.

My dad bought my first proper football, a Mitre Delta — 'the' football of the '80s. It was my most precious possession. My love of the beautiful game was cemented, and I played with my friends whenever I could.

In the Beginning: Dick, Kerr Ladies

As an 11-year-old, I didn't know about the battles that women were fighting to play football. I didn't know about the enduring prejudices and the outright bans. I just

knew that not many girls played football. I had no idea that nearly 60 years before I was born there was an extremely successful women's team.

Coincidentally, on the morning of the Euros final, I finished reading, "In a League of Their Own: The Dick, Kerr Ladies 1917-1965" by Gail J. Newsham. A story that was probably the best kept secret of women's football. A team of working-class women playing regular football and drawing crowds of thousands, sometimes even tens of thousands.

A team that played with flair and near total dominance. A team that included a striker who scored around 1000 goals during her playing days. A team that should have signalled the beginning of women's football.

This team made such a stir and drew such large crowds that, in 1921, The Football Association (FA) chose to ban them from their pitches. The reason given? A women's physique was not suited to football, it was not safe for them. The real reason? Almost certainly the perceived threat to the popularity of the men's game.

This ban lasted for 50 years, only ending in 1971, a few years before I was born.

Battling Uphill

For many of the last 100 years, the battle for women to play football has been hard fought. So many, myself included, were desperate to play the beautiful game, without a clear opportunity to do so, and as was noted during the Euros: if you can't see it, you can't be it.

In England, there has been a continual undercurrent of sexism; a constant supply of insults about talent; and a chronically under-funded women's football programme. This has meant that the game for women has remained largely side-lined, until more recently. Despite each new generation of proactive women footballers, the progress has been slow. Women may have continued to play, but it has been very difficult to gain momentum when the football establishment hasn't been supportive, and girls haven't been encouraged to play.

At age 15, I was given the option to play football for a few weeks as part of PE at school. This was the early 1990s. The male PE teacher was one of the younger members of staff, but not a good one. He was a well-known chauvinist; he was bullying to those who weren't good at sport; and he was arrogant.

I remember the first session of football with him. I was excited, this was what I had been dreaming of - legitimately playing football. There were a few girls in the lesson, some better than others, but all had chosen to play football.

The teacher spent the lesson sneering at the idea of girls playing football and putting us down. Instead of the joy I was supposed to feel, I felt angry, sad, and let down. Those weeks were not the dream I had anticipated.

Most women (if not all) will have a similar tale in their footballing history.

Glory

Now, 100 years after that FA ban and 30 years after my experiences, the weight of history is beginning to feel lighter. This Euros tournament was filled with skill, drama, determination, and class: this was a win for sport, women's sport.

As a football fan, I am thrilled that England finally have another piece of international silverware. But that isn't the

reason I cried so hard and for so long after the final. The tears were for what this meant to every little girl who has ever wanted to play football.

Before the match, Jill Scott acknowledged that if this team won, it wouldn't just be their hands on the trophy, but also those that had come before them. The women that paved the way: battling prejudice; buying their own kit; ignoring the abuse and doing it anyway. The team understands what this means to women's football.

Legacy

This tournament is going to leave a mark.

Record attendances; world class goals; a genuine excitement about the women's game. It has shown the stuffy old suits that women's football does matter — more people were at Wembley watching the final than at any previous Euros final: women's or men's!

The footballing world can no longer pretend that girls can't play football. And the celebrations showed what the journey has meant as a female footballer.

My favourite part? Young girls now have a woman's name to scream when they score at the park.

Hopefully in the future it won't matter which sex lifts the trophy. Right now, it does.

Playing for fun



By Clare McEwen

I loved everything about the Women's Euros: the passion, the end-to-end action, the goals, and the big crowds. But one other thing that struck me about watching England was that it was joyful: the Lionesses were having fun.

It is much easier to have fun when you're banging in goals every which way, but it wasn't just that: there was a spring in their collective step, a fundamental joy. That has been missing from football recently (and I don't just say that as a Manchester United fan).

Behind the Scenes

If you follow the Lionesses on social media, you'll have seen some of the behind-the-scenes footage of them. Everything posted on Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube involved laughter — entertaining interviews, dodgeball, volleyball, mates chatting, banter, pranks, and rap battles! A whole lot of fun.

They clearly have a great rapport: enjoying being together, bouncing off each other, winding each other up, and laughing together. That feeling spilled onto the pitch. They played with freedom, flair, and, as demonstrated by Russo's cheeky backheel, they were having fun. They didn't play like a team restricted by the pressure of being one of the favourites to win; the Lionesses played football like it should be played: as a team enjoying themselves.

Bonds

Much of the fun on and off the pitch can be attributed to the strong bonds between the players; many of them have grown up

together. Ella Toone and Alessia Russo have been best mates since they were young teens; Rachel Daly and Millie Bright are inseparable; Lucy Bronze and Demi Stokes used to drive to matches together when they were young; and although Jill Scott is older than many of the team, she knows how to keep everyone entertained.

Sarina Weigman has fostered a safe space where the players can express themselves individually whilst being part of a strong, cohesive group; a group that works together perfectly and believes in each other completely. As an example, several of the players said after the Spain quarter-final that they never felt like they were going to lose that game, despite being a goal down — that is belief.

After Party

And if it wasn't clear throughout the tournament, then it was obvious by the end - these girls know how to have fun. The on-pitch celebrations were pure joy to watch. No clichéd interview answers, just unscripted joy.

Singing, dancing, and jumping on each other; a passionate on-pitch speech from Leah Williamson; Scott referring to the women who paved the way — a team built on respect, pride, and strength, but a team enjoying every moment.

And if the on-pitch celebrations didn't convince you of the fun being had: Mary Earps and Bronze dancing on a table at Weigman's press conference — perfection. That moment should be the new definition of fun!

Interview: Sarina Weigman



England manager Sarina Weigman is delighted with her England side after they secured their place at next summer's Women's World Cup.

Following on from their European Championships success in July, the Lionesses beat Austria and Luxembourg.

After the 10-0 win at Bet365 Stadium in Stoke against Luxembourg, Weigman said: "I don't think it could be much better than this so I'm really happy.

"The team has done a tremendous job coming out of the summer.

"We knew we were better than Luxembourg but we had to keep the energy in the game and I think we did that for most of the game."

The starting XI in Stoke only had three changes from Weigman's usual side—a decision which surprised many but the Lionesses boss said it was for a mixture of reasons.

"People come to the stadium to see the team [that's why I don't make many changes] but lots of the players got chance to play.

"We always want to perform. It was about balancing and performing but also to manage loads.

With the Barclays Women's Super League starting this weekend, Weigman's job does not rest there.

"I will go home but I will watch domestic matches and Champions League matches," she added.

Next up for England will be the current Women's World Cup champions United States of America at Wembley.

The game is a sellout and Weigman is looking forward to the test.

"I think the USA will take energy but both the game with them and Czech Republic will help us develop our styles.

"I think it is going to be very exciting and a loud night.

"It's exciting that it is sold out and that we are going to be playing the number one side.

"It's important to see how we are ranking.

"It's so important to play games like this. We need them.

"I am really happy that we have played now and we can go and further our preparation.

"At the moment we are very popular and I hope we keep our fans happy."

Where can you find the Lionesses?



By Frankie Scott

With more than a month gone since the Euros, it almost seems like a distant memory... But the legacy of England's victory lives on.

The Women's Super League resumes in September following the Lionesses' World Cup Qualifiers against Austria and Luxemburg. But you need not fret – though England's games will be over for now, you can still catch most of the Lionesses at a stadium near you.

So where can you find them?

Most are spread across the 'big four' of the WSL (Chelsea, Manchester City, Arsenal and Manchester United), whilst a few play in other clubs, both here and abroad. So, just so you can be sure to catch your Lionesses in action, here is where you can find them:

CHELSEA

The WSL's reigning champions will be looking to defend their title with no less than four of the Lionesses as star players in their squad.

Millie Bright, the ever-present, strong defender will be in

Chelsea's back line, alongside Jess Carter at full back. Fran Kirby is a leading player for her side, though she is currently out with injury. And, despite not playing a minute in the Euros, Beth England is still a strong striker who can put goals away for Chelsea this season.

MANCHESTER CITY

With the most Lionesses in their squad – six, to be exact – Man City will be a formidable force to contend with this season.

Young and promising keeper Ellie Roebuck can be found in goal, with Alex Greenwood and Demi Stokes in defence. Up front, the exciting young winger Lauren Hemp can be seen dribbling past opponents, whilst Chloe Kelly will return to Man City's front line following her iconic celebration in the final.

ARSENAL

Having been the most successful team for decades, Arsenal are looking to fight off the other teams who rival their supremacy, and they will have

no less than three Lionesses to help them do it. In defence will be the England captain Leah Williamson, as will Lotte Wubben-Moy, who may not have featured over the summer but should not be ignored. Meanwhile, the top scorer of the Euros, Beth Mead, will be up front.

MANCHESTER UNITED

For the past few seasons, it seems like Man Utd have been continuously knocking on the door, hoping to become one of the WSL's top teams. They haven't quite gotten there yet, but when you look at which Lionesses they have on their side, you must give them a fighting chance this season.

In goal, Mary Earps looked strong in every match of the Euros, and will do well for Manchester United. Up front, Nikita Paris recently moved from Arsenal and looks to be a good signing – but it is, without a doubt, Alessio Russo that all eyes will be on. After her performances at the Euros, she will be one to watch.

THE REST?

As for the rest, you will find them in the WSL and across

Europe. The Lionesses' reserve goalkeeper Hannah Hampton will turn out for Aston Villa alongside her new teammate, Rachel Daly, who just moved from Houston Dash.

Meanwhile, Lucy Bronze has just signed for Barcelona and in midfield, one of our most consistent players in the summer's tournament, Kiera Walsh, will be keeping the team's shape. Georgia Stanway has just signed for Bayern Munich – two sides that will be present in the Champions League.

And, of course, it is with great sadness that we recently learned that two of our Lionesses have retired. Jill Scott, after a record number of tournaments with England, and Ellen White, England's record goal scorer, have both announced it that it is time to end their playing careers.

THE NEWBIES

And, of course, as some of the players move away from international football, others step up to take their place. With the squad announced for the upcoming WCQs, we will see Jordan Nobbs, who is a first team player for Arsenal, and unfortunately missed out on the Euros with an injury; Katie Zelem, who plays for Manchester United; Lauren James who plays for Chelsea, just as her brother Reece James does; Ebony Salmon, who plays in the US with Houston Dash; and Sandy MacIver, a goalkeeper for Manchester City.

Wherever you go this season to get your fix of WSL action, you will be able to see top England talent on show. It's an exciting time to be going around the grounds – so make sure you get your tickets now to ensure you're part of it!



Scotland secure WWC play-off place



Scotland finished their qualifying campaign with a dominant 6-0 win against Faroe Islands.

Nicola Docherty curled in the opener before strikes from Caroline Weir, Erin Cuthbert and Martha Thomas - all in the space of six first-half minutes - sent the Scots into the break four up.

Rachel Corsie and Jen Beattie both nodded in to add a fifth and sixth for Pedro Martinez Losa's side, who had already booked a spot in Friday's play-off draw.

Despite finishing second in Group B, Scotland will be among the unseeded nations, meaning they will have to navigate two one-off ties to qualify for the finals in Australia and New Zealand.

They will face one of Austria, Belgium, Portugal, Wales or Bosnia and Herzegovina, with Switzerland, Iceland and Ireland awaiting in the second stage.

The two winners in that round with the highest ranking will qualify, with the

third play-off winner competing in the inter-confederation play-offs.

Play-off draw

There will be a special live edition of Scotland HQ - kicking off at 12.20pm on Friday, September 9.

Host Shebahn Aherne will be joined by roving reporter Amy Canavan, Scotland coach Leanne Ross and Kelly Clark.

Teams

Faroe Islands: O. Joensen, Rasmusdottir, Lakjuni, Ryan, A. Johannesen, Sevdal, Mittfoss, Torolvsdottir, Svarvadal, Lisberg, Sevdal.

Unused substitutes: Ostero, R. Johannesen, Mortensen, Hansen, T. Joensen, Olsen, Mohr, Benbakoura, Stora Carlsson, Jacobsen.

Scotland: Gibson, Brown (Davidson 80), Corsie, Beattie, Docherty, Graham (Murray 46), Cuthbert, Weir, Clelland (McLauchlan 46), Thomas (Harrison 46), Emslie.

Unused substitutes: Fife, Cumings, Mitchell, J. Clark, Robertson, McAllister, Howard, K. Clark.

Preliminary Round Draw for Scottish Cup



Jane Ross made history as she conducted the first ever draw for the new Women's Scottish Cup at Hampden Park.

The Scotland Women's National Team international joined draw host Gordon Duncan as she made the draw for the Preliminary Round of the Scottish FA's new competition.

The ambitious national cup competition was announced last month, as the latest step in the governing body's bespoke women's football strategy, Accelerate Our Game, launched in 2021.

Both the Semi-Finals and Final will be played at Hampden Park in 2023.

Six ties were confirmed to make up the Preliminary Round, with the remaining 10 teams receiving byes into the hat for the First Round.

Speaking after the draw Ross, who has 62 goals from 146 Scotland caps, said: "It's obviously great to see the growth of the women's game, with this new tournament pushing the game forward and I'm sure it's going to an exciting season.

"I think for any Scottish player you want to be playing at Hampden so for all players in the leagues they now have that opportunity as well, and it's a

motivating factor for getting to the latter stages of the tournament.

"Since my return to Scotland a year ago I've definitely seen a large improvement and the game is definitely moving forward.

"Every year it seems to be growing and growing so I think it's only going to keep pushing that way – it's an exciting time."

The Preliminary Round ties will take place on Sunday, 11 September.

Drawn to receive a bye into First Round

Alloa Athletic
Bonnyrigg Rose
Buchan Ladies United
Clydebank
Dunipace
Linlithgow Rose
Queen of the South
Stewarton United
Stonehaven
West Park United

Preliminary Round Draw

Clachnacuddin Women v Brora
Rangers
Drumchapel United v Nairn St Ninian
Women
Dunfermline Athletic v Clark Drive
Harmony Row v Orkney Women
Murieston United v McDermid Ladies
Nithsdale Wanderers v Central Girls

Wales secure play-off place in front over record crowd



Wales have secured their place in the World Cup play-offs for the first time.

Gemma Grainger's side put in a phenomenal effort to get a 0-0 draw with Slovenia on Tuesday, September 6.

The result was watched in front of a record crowd of 12,741 and they went into the game knowing they needed a point to secure their place in the play-offs.

Gwennan Harries, former Wales player told BBC:

"I find it hard to sum up my emotions.

"It's been a hard group, a hard game of the season.

"Now can Wales be more ruthless when they get to the play-offs and take those chances.

"This is a great achievement but we want to take that next step and get to the World Cup."

Former international Nia Jones said: "I know we are only in the play-offs, but we have to celebrate these moments."

The players dug deep throughout despite a nervous opener and goalkeeper Laura O'Sullivan made two great saves, one vital right at the end of the game.

Wales manager Gemma Grainger told BBC One Wales: "I couldn't be prouder of the players.

"The players need to take all the credit, the 12,000 supporters here tonight were behind us and we fed off that.

"Now we want even more, we know we have game 11 and game 12 so all the preparation goes into those.

"I think as a team we have an identity, we knew out of possession we are strong, you saw that tonight.

"Jayne [Ludlow] left some great foundations, for us we wanted to build on that, now we're better out of possession and we also have some players who are great with possession.

"We'll work hard, plan hard, to make sure they are all as successful as they can be."

Wales defender Rhiannon Roberts told BBC One Wales: "We came here to win, but we knew their strengths and nullified them.

"We've made the play-offs and hopefully we can get further.

"You can tell from the celebrations that everyone is buzzing.

"We know we should be qualifying for tournaments, so we'll take it game by game now and hopefully get there.

"The crowd were unreal, every time we crossed halfway they roared us on, we can't thank them enough.

"Filling this stadium was unbelievable."

Record Breaking Crowd's in Genero Adran Premier Round One

Welcome back to the Genero Adran Premier and what a welcome it was – a record breaking 1426 fans joining us at the Swansea.com stadium this evening, for the first ever Swansea Ladies match at the stadium!

With Cymru women set to break an attendance record on Tuesday in Cardiff, it was the Genero Adran Premier's turn on Sunday to play in-front of the highest ever crowd for a domestic match, which was also covered live on S4C and their digital channels.

The Swans played hosts to last season's league runner up and Genero Adran Trophy winners, Cardiff Met. The Archers thought they'd opened the scoring in the first half, but captain Steph Turner's goal was ruled off side. Instead it was the Swans who went ahead in the 41st minute with Katy Hosford slotting home, Stacey John-Davies then doubled their lead early in the second half and with no reply from the Archers sealed the three points.

The first goal in the league was scored by Libby Isaac who put Aberystwyth in the lead after just three minutes against promoted side Abergavenny. The Seasiders added a second just over 10 minutes before the end of the game, with Rebecca Mathias getting on the scoresheet; Abergavenny's Lisa Bird replied instantly to make it 2-1, but they couldn't find a second and Aberystwyth went home the victors.

At Cardiff International Stadium, Cardiff City faced Pontypridd United in their first match under manager James

Fishlock, who is in charge while Fern Burrage-Male is on maternity leave. The Bluebirds were keen to put a marker down for the season and Danielle Broadhurst's opening goal was certainly that. A second from Pheobe Poole in the second half confirmed the win.

Last season's two newcomers faced off in the final 2pm KO of the day, with Barry Town United heading north to TNS. The hosts went ahead in the 11th minute, but five minutes before half time Emily Nicholson pulled one back. TNS could have retaken the lead when they were awarded a penalty just three minutes after the break, but this was missed and Barry's Mackenzie Olden added two in extra time to not only win the game, but also end the day top of the Genero Adran Premier table on goal difference after Round 1.

What a start to the season – here's to the best one yet!

See you for Round 2!

Ianthe

Abergavenny 1 (Bird 80') Aberystwyth
Town 2 (Isaac 3'; Mathais 79')

Cardiff City 2 (Broadhurst 24'; Poole
72') Pontypridd United 0

Swansea City 2 (Hosford 41'; John-
Davies 52') Cardiff Met 0

The New Saints 1 (Platt 10') Barry
Town United 3 (Nicholson 40'; Olden
90+1', 90+2')

Northern Ireland record haul



Northern Ireland finished their Women's World Cup qualifiers on a high with a 2-1 win over Luxembourg and a 3-1 victory against Latvia.

Kenny Shiels' side two victories meant they set a new record for the number of points secured by a Northern Ireland women's team in a qualification campaign.

The Latvians, ranked 122nd in the world, took the lead against the run of play when Anastasija Rocane's powered a header home to capitalise on Demi Vance's mistimed jump on 27 minutes.

Vance redeemed herself with a crucial role in Northern Ireland's equaliser 10 minutes later when her dangerous corner was spilled in to her own net by home goalkeeper Enija-Anna Vaivode.

Marissa Callaghan struck the crossbar as Kenny Shiels' side pressed for a

winner, which came when Arta Luize Lubina touched the ball beyond the Latvian line with two minutes to play before Vaivode's second own goal, which came after Caragh Hamilton's effort hit the post, sealed NI's win.

Northern Ireland could not progress to the World Cup finals and were locked into a third-place finish behind Euro 2022 winners England and Austria, however the win secured a record points tally of 19 in a qualification campaign.

The match was Northern Ireland's final competitive outing for 12 months until the start of Euro 2025 qualifying and Shiels' side will have to count on friendlies to maintain the momentum built during a maiden appearance at a major tournament at Euro 2022 this summer.

Rachel Furness takes a break from NI



Rachel Furness has announced that she has made herself unavailable for international duty for the foreseeable future.

The 34-year-old Liverpool player has made herself unavailable for selection for the World Cup qualifiers and training camps.

She cited personal reasons as her reason for withdrawal.

The 34-year-old Liverpool midfielder - who has 38 goals in 85 caps for her country - insists she is not retiring from international football.

Furness added in a statement: ""(This is) A decision that I've found incredibly hard but one I feel is right.

"I have informed the Irish Football Association that I am making myself

unavailable for selection for the upcoming games and training camps for the foreseeable future, due to personal reasons.

"I'd like to put on record that I am not retiring from international football and I hope to make myself available again in the future.

"I wish all the girls the best."

Following Northern Ireland's World Cup qualifier, which saw them qualify for the play-offs, she wrote:

"Congratulations @FAIreland, Niamh Fahey, Megan Campbell and Leanne Kiernan on making the play offs for the World Cup. I'm so proud to call you all my team mates at Liverpool.

"An inspiration to so many."



INTERNATIONAL TOURNAMENTS

Spain win U20s Women's World Cup



Spain for the very first time became U20 Women's World Cup winners after beating Japan in the final 3-1 in Costa Rica.

A goal from Inma Gabarro before a brace from her teammate Salma Paralluelo sealed their historic night and gained revenge over Japan after being runners-up to them in the same competition, four years prior.

All three goals from Spain were scored in the first half before their opponents got one back from Suzu Amano in the second half but it would be a consolation goal as it seemed to be too little too late.

The final featured the same two countries who fought in the previous U20 World Cup final in France in 2018 as Japan, the defending champions, once again squared off against the U20s Spain team. The final was also a rematch between coaches Ikeda Futoshi (Japan) and Pedro Lopez (Spain) who both led their teams to the final in back-to-back World Cups.

Futoshi made no changes to his Japanese starting line-up against Brazil in the semi-finals in order to deal with the high pressure Spain developed from the get go. Spain also stuck to their 11 that beat the Netherlands in the semi-finals.

The opening goal arrived just 12 minutes into the final when Spain's Gabarro responded to a lobbing pass delivered into Japan penalty area, she superbly controlled the ball with her chest and slotted the ball into the corner of the goal.

It would only take another 10 minutes for Spain to continue their momentum with an-

other ball delivered behind the Japanese defence line, this time it was Paralluelo who would find the net just 22 minutes into the game.

The holders were in trouble and realized they had to react sooner rather than later as a chance created by Hamano Maika picked up a pass from Oyama Aemu to strike a shot at goal but was saved by goalkeeper Txell Font.

Seconds later, Japan were punished again as Paralluelo's strike struck the hand of Iwasaki Kokona inside the box resulting in a penalty. Paralluelo scored from the penalty spot to put the Spaniards 3-0 up, the game looked to be going in one direction.

Japan tried to make changes with their formation in response to Spain's first half goals by playing four at the back instead of three then a chance followed, as Hamano delivered a good through ball that allowed Sugisaawa Mihoshi to find an opportunity in the box by firing a shot but the attempt went wide.

After half time, the team trailing made changes from the bench in an attempt to turn this 3 goal deficit around. Just two minutes after the interval, Japan got a goal back from a free kick that was converted by Amano.

Spain allowed Japan to create more chances later on in the second half but they couldn't find another goal which would have created some nerves before the final whistle.

The Spaniards held on under the flood lights in Costa Rica to lift their first ever U20 World Cup.

FIFA Women's World Cup 2023:

Just Months Away

By Jamie Davies

In just under a year's time, the football world will discover who will be crowned world champions when The Women's World Cup Finals take place in Australia and New Zealand – here is everything you need to know with qualification still in progress.

It feels hard to believe that the 4-year cycle is close to resetting yet again after the events of 2019 in France saw the USA win a second successive World Cup. This time it is Australia and New Zealand coming together to host the biggest football tournament in women's football.

The upcoming World Cup will set some new records. First of all, it'll be the first time this tournament will take place in Oceania as previous editions have seen it in Europe, North America and Asia. South America have still not hosted the tournament. Colombia were Australia and New Zealand's rivals to host this time but they were outvoted by nine votes. It could be a very likely scenario that we see South America finally get a Women's World Cup in 2027.

Going back to what is new for next year's World Cup, 2023 will be the first time more than one nation has hosted the tournament. It also sees the Women's World Cup expand to 32 teams to match the current men's tournament. So next year promises to be the biggest one yet as the countdown really begins now with just a few spaces left for teams to qualify through the play-offs.

Here is everything you need to know ahead of the BIG kick-off next summer!

Tournament Dates	
Group Stages	Thursday, July 20 – Thursday, August 3
Last 16	Saturday, August 5 – Tuesday, August 8
Quarter-Finals	Friday, August 11 – Saturday, August 12
Semi-Finals	Tuesday, August 15 – Wednesday, August 16
3 rd Place Play-Off	Saturday, August 19
The Final	Sunday, August 20

When is the official tournament draw?

The group stage draw for next year's finals will take place before the qualification is completed so not all 32 entries will be confirmed before the event.

The draw will be staged at the Aotea Centre in Auckland, New Zealand on Saturday October 22nd. Here we will find out which groups the qualified teams will be playing in, who will face who in which stadiums plus the possible routes to the final on August 20th.

Where are the matches being played?

A total of 10 venues will be hosting the matches with Australia having six stadiums while neighbours New Zealand will welcome the players to four grounds.

Eden Park in Auckland, New Zealand will play host to the opening match at which it has already been announced that Football Ferns will kick off the tournament in front of their home fans on July 20th. The final will be in Sydney, Australia at the famous Accor Stadium, otherwise known as the Olympic Stadium for the 2000 Summer Olympic Games. It is also the home ground of football team Sydney FC.

Venues (capacities)	
Australia	New Zealand
Hindmarsh Stadium, Adelaide (16,500 expanding to 22,000)	Eden Park, Auckland (50,000)
Melbourne Rectangular Stadium (30,050)	Forsyth Barr Stadium, Dunedin (30,748)
Perth Rectangular Stadium (22,500)	Waikato Stadium, Hamilton (25,800)
Stadium Australia, Sydney (83,500)	Wellington Regional Stadium (34,500)
Suncorp Stadium, Brisbane (52,500)	
Sydney Football Stadium (45,000)	

Who have booked their places so far?

As we write this, exactly 25 out of the 32 teams have qualified for the World Cup with seven places still remaining. As this month's magazine was going to press, World Cup qualifications were being played across the planet including England's away win against Austria to seal their plane tickets down under for next year. Germany had also cemented their place after winning in Turkey by three goals to nil to stay ahead of Portugal by at least five points.

Federation qualifications

	AFC	CAF	Concaca f	CON-MEBOL	OFC	UEFA
Direct places	6	4	4	3	1	11
Play Off places	2	2	2	2	1	1
Qualification secured	Australia (co-hosts), China PR, Japan, Korea Republic, Philippines, Vietnam	Morocco, Nigeria, South Africa, Zambia	Canada, Costa Rica, Jamaica, USA.	Argentina, Brazil, Colombia	New Zealand (co-hosts)	Denmark, England, France, Germany, Norway, Spain, Sweden
Play-off berth secured	Chinese Taipei, Thailand	Cameroon, Senegal	Haiti, Panama	Chile, Paraguay	Papua New Guinea	

As mentioned before, there are still seven spaces up for grabs, three of which will qualify via the intercontinental play-offs, a ten-team tournament to be played February 18 - 23 next year. It is expected that the intercontinental play-offs will take place in New Zealand, which is to be seen as a test event prior to the World Cup finals.

The format is pretty simple, teams will be seeded into groups based on their FIFA Women's World Rankings, with a maximum of one seeded team per confederation. Teams from the same confederation will not be drawn into the same group. The winner of each group will qualify for the World Cup Finals.

Conclusion and Next Up

The Women's World Cup is just around the corner with final adjustments being sorted as we speak and seeing the women's game being promoted in Australia and New Zealand with the familiar icon of Chelsea's Sam Kerr expected to be the poster girl, it is a fantastic opportunity for FIFA to help the two co-hosts put women's football on the map in that region.

Next up on the international tournament calendar is the FIFA U17 Women's World Cup between October 11 and October 30 in India where sixteen teams from six confederations will battle it out to become the stars of the future, all no doubt with an eye on being full international in time for 2027.

News from the tournaments

Inma Gabarro wins Adidas Golden Boot

The Spain midfielder proved to be the top goal scorer of the FIFA U20 Women's World Cup by finding the net 8 times.

Gabarro's goal contribution helped her side become world champions by beating Japan in the final. The 19 year old opened the scoring in the tournament's finale before teammate Salma Paralluelo secured a brace to win 3-1.

Nearly 30,000 witnessed Spain win U20 World Cup

Exactly 29,891 spectators attended the FIFA U20 Women's World Cup Final at the Estadio Nacional de Costa Rica to see Spain win their very first edition of the tournament.

Maika Hamano awarded best player of U20 World Cup

The Japanese international may not have won this year's U20 World Cup but instead got some consolation by being picked as the tournament's best player by re-

ceiving the Adidas Golden Ball.

Hamano became the second Japanese player to receive the award after Hina Sugita in 2016.

Republic of Ireland defeat Finland to book play-off spot

Lily Agg's scored the only goal of the game to put Republic of Ireland in with a chance of competing at next summer's FIFA Women's World Cup in Australia/New Zealand.

A header home in the 54th minute was witnessed by a sellout crowd at Tallaght Stadium.

A record global audience watched Euro 2022

An estimated total of more than 365 million people watched this summer's UEFA Women's Euro 2022.

It is believed 50 million alone watched the Euro final where England beat Germany in extra time.

UEFA announced the figures had more than doubled than the previous amount from Euro 2017.

Miedema celebrates

Netherlands and Arsenal forward Vivianne Miedema took to social media to celebrate after they secured their place at the 2023 Women's World Cup.

Netherlands beat Iceland 1-0 in their final qualifying game to secure their spot at the top of the group.

Miedema wrote: "We did it! PS. Sorry about the wait!"

Where next for the European Championships?

The next hosts are expected to be announced in December.

Applications had to be submitted by August with final submissions made in October.

Confirmed bids:

- Poland
- Denmark, Finland, Norway & Sweden
- France
- Switzerland & Liechtenstein





AROUND
THE WORLD

NWSL Round-up



By Peter Mann

August 2022, a month which, stateside, would see not one, but two tournaments, of an international flavour, played out, in Kentucky (The Women's Cup) and in Oregon (International Champions Cup), and with three, National Women's Soccer League sides in action, Racing Louisville and OL Reign in the former, and Portland Thorns the latter. .

Of the two, The Women's Cup, a friendly, invitational tournament, would see its inaugural event in 2021, won by Racing Louisville, against Bayern Munich (7-6 on penalties following a 2-2 draw); in fact, with there being two sides in the competitions

debut outing, Chicago Red Stars also involved, when the two played out a 2-2 draw, it was also classed as being a regular season, league fixture (the game, for tournament sake, was decided on penalties).

This time around (14-20 August) it would be the two NWSL sides who'd reach the final, with the competition having been expanded from four, to six clubs, OL Reign seeing off defending champions, Racing Louisville, 2-1, in Louisville.

Of the other sides competing, Tokyo Verdy Belezza (Japan) defeated Tottenham Hotspur (

England) 2-1 (fifth place match), and Club America (Mexico) saw off AC Milan (Italy) in a nine-goal thriller, 5-4 (third place match).

The final itself, that would be decided, in OL Reign's favour, by goals from Canadian-born, ex-Paris Saint-Germain striker, Jordyn Huitema, and Californian Olivia Athens, she having only joined the Reign back in March – she netted on her first professional start for the club, against Portland Thorns.

Speaking of the Thorns, their defence of the ICC (17-20 August) was in vain, falling at the

Americans.

In the other semi-final, four-time finalists, Olympique Lyon Feminin saw off a resolute Chelsea side, 4-3 on penalties (after a 2-2 draw), to reach the final of the tournament they first won in 2019; the Thorns, they would proceed to lose the third place play-off as well, Guro Reiten's goal enough to give Chelsea a 1-0 win.

Lyon would claim the trophy for a second time, with an emphatic, 4-0 win, over Monterrey, goals coming from Dane, Signe Bruun (she netted in the win over Chelsea), and German midfielder, Sara Dabritz, with her first for the club.

Alongside Bruun and Dabritz, was a brace from Lindsey Horan, who, having scored in the Chelsea, finished as top-scorer with three goals, she making it back-to-back ICC victories for herself following victory in last years' competition.

Horan, a Coloradonative, would spend four seasons (2012-16), in France, with Paris Saint-Germain (54 goals in 76 games), before returning home, being signed by, the Portland Thorns (32 goals in 105 games), coinciding with a successful

run of silverware in Oregon.

With them she's lifted the NWSL Championship (2017), two Shield's (2016, 2021), a Community Shield (2020), Challenge Cup (2021) and the ICC (2021), prior to moving back to France earlier this year, and Lyon Feminin, where she's already lifted the UEFA Women's Champions League (playing the full, ninety minutes, as Lyon defeated Barcelona, 3-1, in Turin)

A member of the successful, USWNT (25 goals, 116 appearances), Horan has also claimed Olympic Bronze (2020), Women's World Cup (2019), CONCACAF titles (2018, 2022), and four, SheBelieves Cup victories – the accolades just continue to land for the 28-year-old, central/attacking midfielder.

Meanwhile, in the NWSL itself, and with a number of rounds of matches still to play, heading into September's 'crunch-month,' the top eight sides are separated by just ten points, several of whom having games in hand on the rest.

Of the top four, San Diego Wave just about lead the way on 31 points, two ahead of the Houston Dash and Kansas City

Current, whilst fourth place Portland Thorns are just three off top, and fifth place OL Reign (both of whom were on 'cup' duty) are four adrift – it's that close.

The most recent round of matches saw SD Wave keep their noses in front with a 2-0 win away to the Thorns, thanks to first half goals from Kristen McNabb and Alex Morgan; the Dash were held to a 2-2 draw when home to Washington Spirit, Ashley Hatch's brace for the visitors so close to giving them all three points, having cancelled out Sophie Schmidt's first half opener, however, the late introduction of defender, Michelle Alozie, proved decisive as she snatches a 91st minute equaliser.

OL Reign would win 2-1 away to Orlando Pride thanks to Megan Rapinoe's 92nd minute winner, and Kansas City Current edged a five-goal thriller when home to North Carolina Courage, a game which swung both ways following Lo'eau LaBonta's early, spot-kick opener, Cece Kizer and Kristen Hamilton scored two in three minutes for the win, Kerolin Nicoli with a brace for the Courage.



Home Nations players around the world

By Jamie Davies

With many of the European leagues about to start for a new season, we decided to check in to see how some of the home nation's players are doing overseas.

Over a month has gone since the UEFA Women's Euros came to a glorious end for the Lionesses at Wembley Stadium and since then all players have had vacations before being back in training camp getting ready for pre-season and, of course, the brand new season.

We've tracked down some recognized faces from around the parts of England, Wales, Scotland and last but not least Northern Ireland to see how their preparations have been so far – beginning with Caroline Weir.

Caroline Weir
(Scotland) – Real Madrid

You may or may not have seen the news from earlier this summer that Caroline Weir is no longer and Manchester City player after leaving them for

Spanish Giants Real Madrid.

Now when you play for top clubs in Europe, you can always be open minded that you may face your old friends at some point but maybe not as early Weir was expecting as City faced Madrid in the Women's Champions League qualifier.

It was a kick in the City fan's heart as Weir scored the winning and only goal of the tie to knock the sky blues out of Europe.

Must have felt a little awkward for the Scottish midfielder.

Jess Fishlock (Wales)
– OL Reign

As we all know in the women's football community, the summer months in Europe can be a bit quiet when it comes to club football. But when there's a lot more activity in North America – all eyes focus on the NWSL and it is arguably the biggest league in the world when you consider the names that play over there including Megan Rapinoe, Alex Morgan, Marta and the long list goes on.

Jess Fishlock may not have been able to get Wales into the Euros this summer but her commitments at OL Reign in Seattle have kept the 35 year old busy.

In August, OL Reign have won three games but have lost two matches while only 5 points off the top of the table where San Diego Wave currently stand.

Jacqueline Burns
(Northern Ireland) – Reading

Even though Jackie Burns is back on home nation's soil, it was only six months ago the Northern Ireland goalkeeper had joined Swedish side BK Hacken on a two year deal. Only for her time in Sweden to come to an end just three months later in June as Women's Super League side Reading signed the 25-year-old.

The upcoming season will be Burns' first season playing in England and will be competing for the number one spot against Republic of Ireland goalkeeper Grace Moloney.

Exciting times ahead for Miss Burns!

Rebecca Holloway (Northern Ireland) – Racing Louisville

From one Northern Irish player to another as this time Rebecca Holloway gets a mention as she is living the American dream by playing the beautiful game in the States for Racing Louisville.

Holloway joined the NWSL back in March earlier this year from Birmingham City.

Holloway has mainly been featuring on the bench for her club but did play some minutes in the 1-1 draw to OL Reign and the 0-4 defeat to Chicago Red Stars.

As we write this, Holloway is back at home for the next few days to represent Northern Ireland in some crucial FIFA World Cup qualifiers away in Luxembourg and Latvia.

Georgie Stanway (England) – Bayern Munich

Straight after the success of Euro 2022, Georgie Stanway flew to Germany to begin a new chapter in her career by wearing the famous red colours of Bayern Munchen.

No rest for a winner as the former Manchester City player took on her England teammate of Lucy Bronze in a friendly where

the Germans came out on top. 1-2 was the result in that one.

Stanway spent the following match on the bench when Bayern took on Manchester United and it proved to be a one sided game by beating Marc Skinner's team by three goals to nil.

The 23-year-old was selected for the starting line-up again in a friendly with Atletico Madrid but would go onto lose 0-2 in her first defeat as a Bayern player.

Lucy Bronze (England) – FC Barcelona

A new adventure as well for Lioness Lucy Bronze come the new season as she adds Barcelona to her CV listed alongside Manchester City, Lyon, Everton, Liverpool and Sunderland.

There was some news recently at the Nou Camp that the Catalan club could not register no more than two non-EU players but that would not count under Bronze as she holds a Portuguese ID card. This is all due to her father being Portuguese, she told The Guardian: "I have a Portuguese ID card. I am half English, half Portuguese. I'm not playing anyone, my dad's literally Portuguese and my mum's literally

English. So I can get my Portuguese passport whenever I want."

Bronze has got stuck in since the friendlies got going in August with Bronze starting three of the four matches played. It shall be interesting to follow Bronze bidding to win another Women's Champions League title as she did at Lyon on three occasions.



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**THE WOMEN'S
FOOTBALL
MAGAZINE**

*Leah
Taylor*