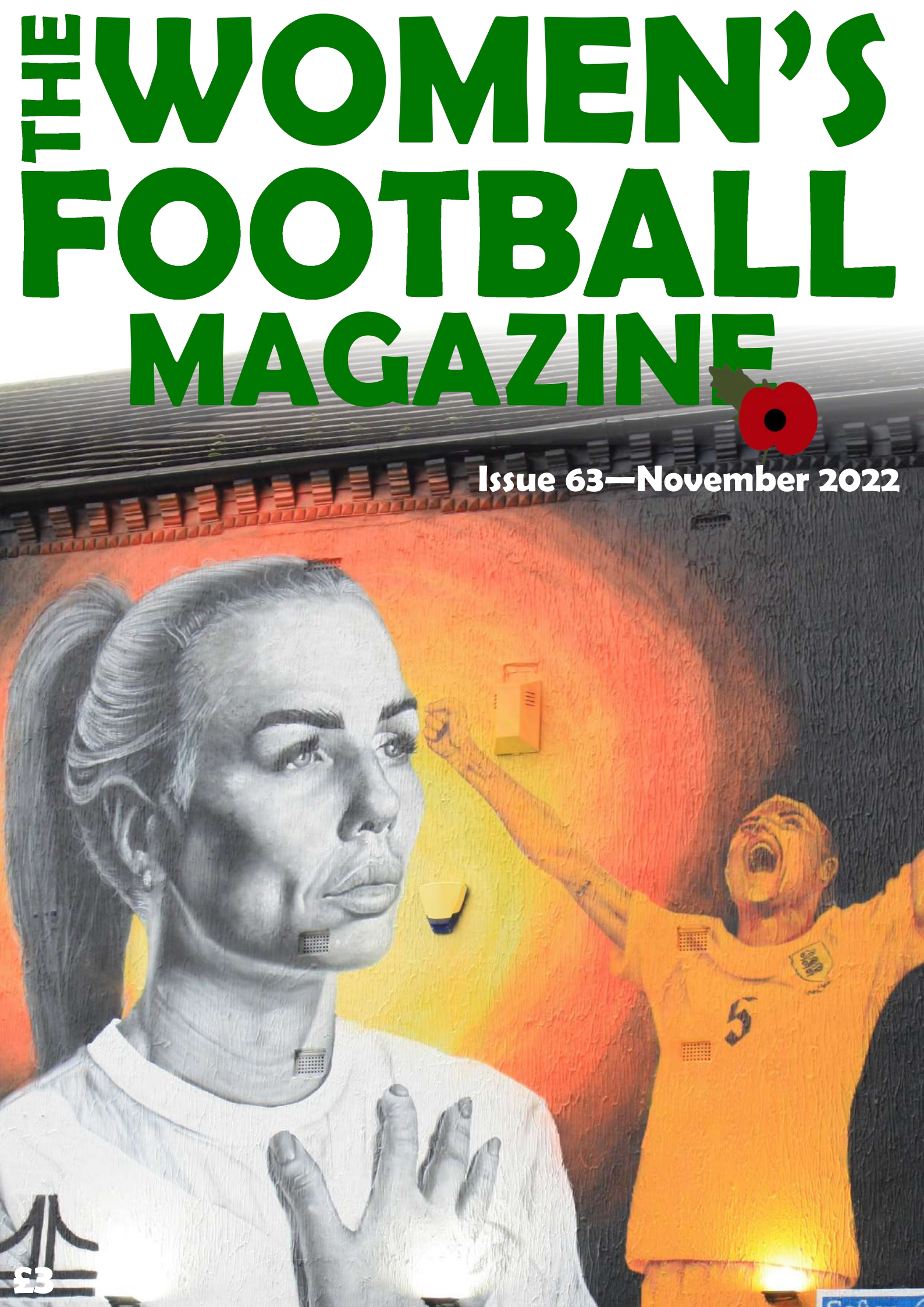
THE WOMEN'S FOOTBALL MAGAZINE

Issue 63—November 2022



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Hello and welcome to Issue 63!

We have had a fun-filled month and have been here there and everywhere.

It's always great to get out from behind the computer and out talking to people.

We spent a (rather cold) Monday evening in Bootle for the unveiling of Alex Greenwood's mural which was great fun with all her friends and family and we also had the opportunity to go into hospitality for Manchester City vs Liverpool, which was an experience—unfortunately now games without heated seats are going to be mediocre!

We have some exciting news about a new special edition we have come out in January, so make sure you keep an eye out for that later in the issue.

If you think you have friends or family members who would love the magazine, why not buy them a subscription with one of our gift cards?

Enjoy the issue!

Helen Rowe-Willcocks

Editor-in-Chief
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Greenwood: It's a real honour

By Helen Rowe-Willcocks

"It's a real honour and if I can inspire just one girl from Bootle to play football then I feel like my job is done!"

That is the message from Bootle Lioness and England Women's Footballer Alex Greenwood as she officially unveiled a huge mural honouring her successes.

The 29-year-old Euro 2022 winning Lioness said she was extremely proud to have a mural commemorating her sporting successes painted onto the front of 320 Stanley Road in Bootle, thanks to joint funding from Sefton Council and REPT Sports.

At the official unveiling on Monday, October 25th crowds of youngsters gathered alongside Alex's family and national media to officially unveil the mural, painted by artist John Culhsaw.

While all eyes are now on the 22ft mural, Alex is keen to use it as an opportunity to push for greater support for young girls in sport.

Alex added: "It's a real honour to have this mural and if I can inspire just one girl from Bootle to play football then I feel like I have done my job!

"I used to walk up and down this street as a kid and it's fantastic to know young girls and boys will walk past [the mural] and hopefully be inspired.

"I've seen a massive shift in mentality towards female sport and women's football since the Euros.

"As a collective we are going to keep asking questions of those higher up and demand more opportunities for little girls and boys in the future.

"I really hope there's another young girl standing here in however many years to come telling the same story."

The mural sits pride of place on the busy Bootle town

centre thoroughfare and be seen by thousands of schoolchildren, shoppers and commuters every day.

Alex, a former St Monica's and Savio Salesian pupil, has remained true to her hometown roots and has long been a major influence in the advancement of women & girls football within Sefton, ensuring she takes time out of her busy footballing career to motivate and inspire future generations of sporting stars throughout the borough.

Alex said: "I would like to thank Sefton Council for this mural.

"It's really important for me to be able to send a message to young girls in my area that anything is possible.

"Many of the dreams I had while walking the streets of Bootle and playing on the pitches have come true through hard work and perseverance.

"Characteristics that were formed in Bootle."

Cllr Trish Hardy, Sefton Council's Cabinet Member for Communities and Housing, said: "Alex has always been an inspiration to our sporting youngsters and we were over the moon when she, along with the other amazing Lionesses, brought home the European Championship.

"To be able to honour Alex in this way with a permanent mural in the heart of her hometown is fantastic and I know that the thousands of schoolchildren who will pass by it every day will be inspired just by seeing it.

"I want to take this opportunity to urge all our young sporting stars to take a look at Alex's hard work and dedication to getting where she is today as one of the world's best female footballers. Her progress is a testament to the excellent school and sports facilities we have within Sefton."

Popular Liverpool artist John Culshaw, who rose to fame with his incredible murals of Ringo Starr in Toxteth and Mo Salah in Anfield, designed and painted Alex's mural.

John said: "It was a real honour to be asked to create this mural.

"I think we have a way of getting behind our stars in Liverpool and for a Bootle girl to bring home our nation's first piece of international silverware in 56 years is definitely something to be celebrated!

"What better way to show how proud we are than to have this mural in Alex's hometown.

"It's about young people being able to keep being inspired by our Lionesses.

"They were inspired during the Euros and now they can continuously be inspired every time they walk past."

BARCLAYS

WOMEN'S SUPER LEAGUE

Walkers extends long-standing partnership with LCFC Women for first time

Walkers has today announced the renewal of its long-standing partnership with Leicester City Football, which now also includes sponsorship of LCFC Women.

Running throughout the 2022/23 season, the partnership with both the Women's and Men's teams will involve a series of activations and Walkers' branding being visible on home matchdays at King Power Stadium. The stadium is located less than five miles from where the nation's favourite crisps are made at Walkers' factory in Beaumont Leys.

It is the first time Walkers has sponsored LCFC Women, who recently kicked off their second successive campaign in the Barclays Women's Super League.

PepsiCo, Walkers' parent company, has made a long-term commitment to women's football, and this sponsorship marks a major step in its ongoing support. It comes after PepsiCo recently announced a partnership with Women in Football to sponsor 45 aspiring female coaches on a Football Association course, to help kickstart football coaching careers for women across the UK.

Fiona Tomlin, Chief Marketing Officer at PepsiCo UK & Ireland, said: "From our logo featuring on Foxes' shirts to our special Salt and Victory crisps marking that historic Premier League title win, Leicester City has regularly been part of the Walkers story for decades.

"Continuing our partnership with the Club and adding to the support of LCFC Women is particularly special for us. It takes PepsiCo's commitment to supporting its local team and growing the women's game to the next level, and we can't wait to see what they go on to achieve.

"With this sponsorship, we're hoping to inspire even more support for this great city and its footballing legends."

Leicester has been the home of Walkers since it was founded by Henry Walker in 1948 and its relationship with the Foxes dates back more than 25 years. The brand sponsored the Club's shirts from 1987 to 2001 and Filbert Way carried the Walkers name between 2002 and 2011.

Walkers has also been an advocate for grassroots football in Leicester, launching a community football pitch in partnership with Leicester City in the Community last year, which was made in part using recycled Walkers crisps packets. The initiative will deliver a programme of educational and sports activities for local people, as well as health and wellbeing sessions and employability workshops.

Harj Hir, Head of Partnerships at Leicester City, added: "It's an exciting time for women's football and the growth and success of LCFC Women in recent seasons has been phenomenal.

"We look forward to continuing our work with Walkers as we aim to boost LCFC Women's profile even further."

WSL Hall of Fame:

First inductees announced

Three Women's Super League players have been inducted into the WSL Hall of Fame for 2022.

They join Rachel Yankey, Kelly Smith, Emma Hayes and Fara Williams who were inducted in 2021.

Let's have an in depth look at the new members.

Karen Carney

Carney becomes the fifth individual to be inducted since The FA and lead partner Barclays launched the Hall of Fame last year and is the first of three inductees to be recognised this year.

Nicknamed 'The Wizard,' Carney had an illustrious career that included nine seasons in the Barclays Women's Super League with hometown club Birmingham City and Chelsea.

Over her entire career, she won a number of honours following stints with Birmingham City and Arsenal, as well as with the Chicago Red Stars and Chelsea, which included the infamous 'quadruple' with the Gunners in 2007.

Her honours during her time in the Barclays WSL include topping the league scoring charts with Birmingham in 2014, as well as winning the Vitality Women's FA Cup with the Blues in 2012. She also achieved an impressive league and cup double with Chelsea in 2017/2018.

Earning 144 England Caps places her as the third most capped England Women's international of all time, with her Lionesses career ending following the 2019 FIFA World Cup.

Her skills on the pitch and ability to analyse the game off it have led to opportunities in the broadcast world since she ended her playing career, working on Sky Sports' Barclays WSL coverage, as well as with ITV and Amazon Prime.

Chair of the Barclays WSL Hall of Fame panel, Kelly Simmons, said: "Induction into the Barclays WSL Hall of Fame is the highest individual honour offered by the league and I am delighted that Karen is our first inductee of 2022.

"She played at the very highest level for a prolonged period of time, and her record speaks for itself. She is absolutely deserving of being inducted into our Barclays WSL Hall of Fame.

"Not only was she an incredible player, but she is a wonderful ambassador for our game and has gone on to be a brilliant pundit. Congratulations on your induction, Karen."

Eni Aluko

Aluko's successes at both club and international level speak for them

selves, and she has been recognised for her achievements during a spell of over six years in the Barclays Women's Super League.

Aluko is also a fine example of an individual who took the dual career route during her playing days, earning a degree in Law while continuing to represent both club and country.

She began her career at Birmingham City before spells at Charlton Athletic and Chelsea. Like a number of England internationals, a stint in the United States followed just before the formation of the Barclays WSL, when she returned home in 2012 to play again for Birmingham City. It was here she won the Vitality Women's FA Cup following a penalty shootout win over Chelsea.

The most successful period in her career came when she moved to

Chelsea for her second spell at the club at the end of 2012. During this time, she won two Barclays WSL titles, two Vitality Women's FA Cups, and was awarded Chelsea's Player of the Year in 2015. Her form also saw her selected onto the PFA's Women's Super League Team of the Year in 2015 and 2017.

She departed the club in 2018 and left as the club's top scorer with 68 goals.

Playing over 100 times for her country in multiple World Cups and European Championships, the former Lioness finished her career at Juventus before announcing her retirement in January 2020. The next step in her career would see her move to the United States to take up a Sporting Director role with Angel City FC. Alongside this role, she has continued as a pundit on ITV and Amazon Prime, working on both the men's and women's game.

Jess Creighton, Broadcaster and Barclays WSL Hall of Fame panel member, said: "Eni Aluko is a thoroughly deserving Barclays WSL Hall of Fame inductee.

"As a player she set exceptionally high standards and was a key part of the growth in quality and popularity of the Barclays WSL. In a career full of goals and major trophies, Eni also broke down many barriers along the way.

"It's great to see her trailblazing contribution recognised as she continues to utilise her wealth of knowledge of the game as a broadcaster and administrator."

Katie Chapman

She becomes the seventh inductee into the prestigious Barclays WSL Hall of Fame since its launch last year and is the third player inducted this year with links to Chelsea.

Chapman's honours are almost unmatched, having played an integral role in central midfield for each team she represented during her career, including playing for Arsenal and Chelsea in the Barclays WSL. During her seven years in the league, she won four Barclays WSL titles, four Vitality Women's FA Cups (ten in total across her career) and three FA Women's Continental Tyres League Cups.

The midfield maestro began her career at Millwall in 1996, making her debut as a 14-year-old, before spells at Fulham, Charlton Athletic and Arsenal. A stint in America would follow, before she returned to begin her Barclays WSL career back with the Gunners.

There, she won two league and cup trebles as the North London club dominated the early years of the semi-professional era of the game, winning the Barclays WSL, Vitality Women's FA Cup and FA Women's Continental Tyres League Cup.

In 2014, she moved to Chelsea, where she finished her career with another two league titles in 2015 and 2017/18, and two Vitality Women's FA Cups – the second being her last match as a professional in 2018.

Chapman announced her retirement from the game following the Vitality Women's FA Cup triumph, but has remained very much in the game, working as a pundit for BBC Sport's coverage of the Barclays WSL.

Vic Akers, former Arsenal Head Coach, and member of the Barclays Women's Super League Hall of Fame selection panel said: "I'm so pleased that Katie Chapman has been unveiled as the third inductee to the Barclays WSL Hall of Fame for 2022.

"I had the pleasure of working with her when she was at Arsenal and I truly believe she is one of our most underrated players. She could dominate a midfield and her leadership on and off the field was something to admire.

"Watching her as a player was an absolute pleasure and the influence she had on the players around her was remarkable. I'm over the moon that Katie has been recognised for her impact on the women's game and inducted into the Barclays Women's Super League Hall of Fame."

All three inductees for this year have now been announced and more information on those recognised and the Barclays WSL Hall of Fame can be accessed by visiting wslhalloffame.thefa.com.

Barclays Women's Super League Hall of Fame expert panel:

Kelly Simmons – Chair and FA's Director of Women's Professional Game
Ian Wright - Barclays ambassador, ex-player, and pioneer of women's game

Kelly Smith - Barclays ambassador, ex-player, and pioneer of women's game
Hope Powell – Ex-player, Brighton & Hove Albion Head Coach, and women's football pioneer

Marieanne Spacey-Cale – Ex-player and women's football pioneer
Mary Phillip – Ex-player and women's football pioneer

Vic Akers – Ex-coach and women's football pioneer

Wendy Toms – Ex-official and women's football pioneer

Jess Creighton – Broadcaster – Sky Sports News

Jen O'Neill – Journalist – She Kicks Magazine

Suzy Wrack – Journalist – The Guardian

Rachel Pavlou – FA's Women's Development Manager

Kieran Theivam – Ex-journalist and Barclays WSL Communications Manager

Denial of an Obvious Goalscoring Opportunity

By Frankie Scott

My experience as a referee consistently shows me how much players do not know the laws of the game, or simply misunderstand them.

It is a frustrating aspect of refereeing that we so often judged by people who have never read IFAB's laws, and this particular law often generates the most assumptions, and the least amount of understanding.

A foul often occurs in the attacking phase, and a player will run up to me and claim, "That was last man/woman!" As if this automatically means it's a red card.

Cue their resistance when I say that last man/woman is not, in itself, a sending off offence.

The law this refers to is 'Denial of an Obvious Goalscoring Opportunity', or as its referred to among referees – a DOGSO. Whilst the number of defenders that are present is something a referee takes into account, 'last man/woman' does not always mean it's a DOGSO.

Of course, a law change that occurred a few years ago means that, should the offence take place inside the penalty area, a DOGSO is only a yellow card offence if the player made "an attempt to play the ball." For example, if the player mistimed a tackle and took the player by accident. Alternatively, if the player holds or pulls the player, this is not counted a genuine attempt to play the ball.

Outside of the penalty area, however, a DOGSO is always a sending off offence.

So what considerations are actually considered when deciding if it is a DOGSO?

The wording of the IFAB laws state that you must consider:

- Distance between the offence and the goal
- General direction of play
- Likelihood of keeping or gaining control of the ball
- Location and number of players

As a referee, you remember these as DDDC: Distance, Direction, Defenders, Control. Let's consider each:

Distance:
If the player is on the halfway line then this is a considerable distance from the goal, and is unlikely to be a DOGSO. If, however, the player in possession is a fast-paced attacker, and all defenders are ten yards back in their opposition's half, then a DOGSO would be more likely.

Direction:
Is the player in possession heading toward goal? If the player is travelling down the wing, and has quite a bit of work to do to be central enough for a decent shot, then being "last man/woman" might not be enough for a DOGSO.

Defenders:
Of course, whether there are any more defenders left between the attacker and the goal, is a consideration. As I've highlighted, however, it is one of four factors to consider.

Control:
How here is a key one. How in control of the ball is the player?

Many referees believe that the player's ability comes under this requirement.

For example, if Sam Kerr or Lionel Messi has the ball, they are far more likely to score than your average grassroots Sunday league player. They are likelier to be able to control a difficult ball and get it on target than an amateur in the local park. Therefore, if you see a player sent off for a DOGSO in the Women's Super League or Premier League, that doesn't necessarily mean that the same situation would be a DOGSO in the league you play in.

So far this season, we have only had one DOGSO red card. This was seven minutes into Brighton's WSL opener against Arsenal, when Emma Kullberg was sent off. Blackstenius was through on goal and, at the edge of the area, Kullberg clipped her opposition's feet, taking her down.

In this situation:

Distance:
Blackstenius was at the edge of the penalty area, close enough to goal to keep running in for a better shot, or to have a decent shot from where she was.

Direction:
Blackstenius was running directly at the centre of the penalty area.

Defenders:
There were no other defenders that were in a position to prevent a shot or a run.

Control:
Blackstenius was in full control of the ball, and is a decent enough player to have had a decent shot.

The foul met all four requirements, meaning the referee was able to confidently show the red card.

So next time you run up to the referee saying, "That was the last man/woman!" – just remember; they have four things to consider, and your observation is NOT the deciding factor.

Beth Mead scoops second place at the Ballon d'Or awards

After a sensational summer with the Lionesses and a standout season with Arsenal, winger Beth Mead was voted for as the world's second-best player.

She came behind Barcelona and Spain midfielder Alexia Putellas.

Fellow Lioness Lucy Bronze placed 10th whilst club teammate Vivianne Miedema was ranked 11th.

Sam Kerr clinches third

Chelsea striker Sam Kerr clinched third place at the Ballon d'Or awards.

Kerr was prolific for the London Blues last season, scoring 20 WSL goals in 20 appearances and she looks to be aiming for the same impact this time round.

Teammate Millie Bright also placed in the top twenty, ranking 15th.

Cissoko receives red card

Tensions boiled over when Aston Villa hosted West Ham earlier this month with the match ending with three red cards being shown in stoppage time.

West Ham defender Hawa Cissoko was involved in an altercation with Villa's Sarah Mayling that resulted in Cissoko using her hands to visibly hit Mayling. Cissoko received a red card for her reaction and Mayling received a yellow for her part.

Daly scoops WSL award

Rachel Daly picked up the WSL's Player of the Month award beating out stiff competition from Beth Mead, Fran Kirby, Maya Le Tissier, Raffaele Souza and Katie Zelem.

Daly got off to a flying start with new club Aston Villa netting three goals in their first two games.

Carter signs new deal

Chelsea's versatile defender Jess Carter has signed a three year deal that will keep her with the London Blues until 2025.

On her new contract, the Lionesses star said, "I'm very excited and proud to extend my contract at Chelsea for three more years.

"I'm looking forward to continuing my development with the team, helping them to become even more successful."

Carla Ward picks up Manager of the Month

Double whammy for Aston Villa as Carla Ward picked up the award for Manager of the Month. Ward beat out Arsenal's Jonas Eidevall and Manchester United's Marc Skinner.

At the time Ward's side had played two, won two and scored three.

EA Sports host Women's Football Summit

In the first of it's kind EA Sports presented a Women's Football Summit to celebrate the launch of the WSL in FIFA23.

A whole host of present and former WSL stars including pundits Fara Williams, Kelly Smith and Karen Carney as well as European Champion Rachel Daly and Chelsea sensation Lauren James walked the red carpet before Sam Kerr joined host Robin Chowdhury to talk about the development of the game.

Boye-Hlorkah suffers ACL injury

Aston Villa winger Chantelle Boye-Hlorkah ruptured her ACL during their Conti Cup tie with Everton.

Villa have confirmed that Boy-Hlorkah will begin a rehabilitation period immediately.

Ellie Brazil suffers knee injury

Tottenham Hotspur's Ellie Brazil sustained an ACL injury in their first home game against Manchester City.

Brazil joins the Lilywhites list of stars who are recovering from torn ACL's as Ria Percival, Kyah Simon and Kit Graham are all still out.

Earps earns clean sheets

Manchester United goalkeeper has now earned five clean sheets in five games this season making her the only keeper who has not conceded so far.

Manchester United have enjoyed a flying start to the season winning all of their games and currently sit top of the table with 15 points and a goal difference of 14, one more than Arsenal.

Arsenal break WSL record

The Gunners have set a new WSL record for the longest consecutive run of wins in the competition's history. Arsenal have now won their last 13 WSL games with the last one a 3-1 win over fellow London Club West Ham at Borehamwood.

Hope Powell steps down as Brighton manager

Brighton and Hove Albion head coach Hope Powell has parted ways with the club "with immediate effect" following the Seagulls 8-0 thrashing from Spurs.

Powell joined in July 2017 and oversaw a total of 116 matches winning over 40. In her four seasons in the WSL, Powell led the club to two ninth place finishes, seventh place last season, and the club's best finish - sixth place - in the 2020/21 season.

Powell commented, "As a club, we've made a lot of progress in the past five years, but I feel now is the right time to step aside and allow a new coach to take the team forward with plenty of Super League football still to play this season."

A steps in with fines for Aston Villa and West Ham

Hawa Cissoko received a red card for her actions against Sarah Mayling in West Ham's match against Aston Villa, however, the Hammers head coach Paul Konchesky and a member of Villa's backroom staff were also shown a red after altercations in the dugouts following Cissoko's marching orders.

The FA have confirmed that both clubs have been fined with charges of improper conduct.

Clubs had the opportunity to respond but no further developments have been shared.

Match Report:

Arsenal vs West Ham

Liam Asman/SPP

By Paul Donegan

Arsenal set a new Women's Super League record of 13 successive wins when they came from behind to beat West Ham. Dagny Brynjarsdottir had given West Ham the lead in the first half, before Jordan Nobbs equalised for the home side two minutes after coming on for the injured Kim Little. Stina Blackstenius and Frida Maanum added goals for the Gunners during the second half to seal the victory.

Arsenal had slipped down to third in the league before the start of the match after wins for Manchester United and Chelsea earlier on Sunday and had to win by three goals to go back top. It was West Ham though who had the first chance of the match when Brynjarsdottir saw her header from a corner saved. West Ham defended well in the early stages, and they had another opportunity in the 20th minute but former Arsenal player Lisa Evans sent her shot wide.

Arsenal's first effort at goal came in the 23rd minute when Katie McCabe's fierce shot went wide. West Ham did have the ball in the net in the 27th minute but Brynjarsdottir's header was disallowed. Not sure for what reason though?! Caitlin Foord's shot from 25-yards was caught by Sophie Hillyerd, who was making her first start in goal for the Hammers.

Arsenal were causing some of their own problems when trying to play out from the back, and it was a defensive mistake that led to West Ham taking the lead in the 35th minute. Steph Catley's poor back-pass hit the post and Brynjarsdottir was first the rebound to score her fourth league goal of the season from close range. This ended Arsenal's record run of 10 consecutive WSL games without letting a goal in.

There was a bit of an edge to the game, and a good atmosphere with a sold-out crowd of 3,988 at Meadow Park watching. Hillyerd made a good save to keep out a Beth Mead shot in the 38th minute. Five minutes before the break, Arsenal captain Little picked up an injury and had to be helped from the pitch then stretchered off.

Nobbs came onto to replace her and two minutes later scored Arsenal's equaliser. A corner was cleared only as far as the Gunners midfielder who smashed in a low shot from about 15-yards.

Arsenal had an opportunity to go in further ahead before half time but Foord saw her shot saved as the sides went in level. They had a good chance in the 52nd minute but Blackstenius' shot was pushed away by Hillyerd then Foord put the rebound into the side netting.

The home side did go ahead a minute later. Catley swung in a free-kick that Blackstenius volleyed into the net from 6-yards.

Honoka Hayashi shot over for West Ham in the 55th minute as they looked to quickly equalise. At the other end, Beth Mead sent a cross fizzing across the goal in the 65th minute which was put behind for a corner.

The Gunners extended their lead in the 70th minute. McCabe crossed and Maanum headed in at the far post to finish a move that she had started.

Hillyerd made a few more saves from Lina Hurtig and Jordan Nobbs on what was an impressive performance from the West Ham goalkeeper. Manuela Zinsberger made a good save of her own as the match entered additional time when she clawed away a shot from Brynjarsdottir. Arsenal had the final chance of the game when Hurtig's shot was saved then Maanum hit the post.

Line ups

Arsenal (4-3-3)

Zinsberger, Maritz (Wienroither 72'), Wubben-Moy, Catley, McCabe, Little (c) (Nobbs 40'), Walti, Maanum, Mead, Blackstenius (Miedema 71'), Foord (Hurtig 71')

Unused substitutes: Marckese, Beattie, Iwabuchi, Agyemang, Reid

Goals: Nobbs 42', Blackstenius 53', Maanum 70'

West Ham United (4-3-3)

Hillyerd, Shimizu, Fisk, Stringer (Filis 81'), Smith, Longhurst, Haysahi, Brynjarsdottir (c), Evans (Atkinson 88'), Asseyi, Kyvag (Walker 72')

Unused substitutes: Flannery, Houssein

Booked: Longhurst 53', Kyvag 57', Filis 84'

Referee – Abi Byrne

Attendance – 3,988

Karl Newton/SPP

Jordan Nobbs:
The fans are the best part of football

By Paul Donegan

Jordan Nobbs has quashed any doubts of her place in the Gunners squad in her last two appearances for the Arsenal, scoring in both with complete finesse and conviction.

The Arsenal and England midfielder spoke to the media after the Gunners 3-1 win over West Ham in the WSL on Sunday. Nobbs has won the Arsenal Women Supporter Club's player of the match in the last two matches and the crowd certainly seem to be on board with this.

Here is what she had to say....

How has it felt waiting for you chance this season?

"I don't know. Obviously I love this club so much and I've absolutely trained my bum off for the past five/six months. I think eventually just them little moments of things come, whether that's something happening and I've got to be ready but, I am a little bit proud of myself just staying in it. And what a set of girls we have. Like it is hard to get in to the team and I think that is what makes it so special when you get chances on the pitch because you know you are playing up against a top, top talent."

How much inspiration have you drawn from other players (Lotte Wubben-Moy and Frida Maanum) that have had to wait to take their chance?

"I think it just shows what talent we have with some of the players. Frida came in and had a fantastic game against Lyon and obviously me and Frida were on the bench a lot. We kept pulling each other through when we are going out for training.

"Because sometimes you have to keep saying 'right we do the training again, we go again', and it brings the team together because at the end of the day we all have to play a part.

"You have seen how may people over the last two weeks have played minutes in this squad and put in a great performance, so it is all credit to people's mentality and staying focused for what's best for the team."

You came on in the number 8 position tonight, do you think that is your best position and how nice was it to get a lot of minutes in the position tonight?

"It was nice. Obviously, I haven't had much chance to show that over the last few years that 8 has been my role for the last ten years, but I love that role.

"I think I am one of them players that wants to get on the ball and everything like that, so yeah, it is a position I have always loved. I mean right now I am just thinking about being on the pitch and playing, but I definitely think it is something I enjoy - to start deep and go high."

The reception from the crowd.... (there were lots of shouts, screams and cheers for Jordan)

"I cannot thank the fans enough. I mean anytime I've stepped foot on that pitch they've been there, such a boost for myself and how, hopefully, I've shown myself towards this club and they make me feel such a part of it. And I want to play well and score for them because without them... yeah, it is the best part of football."

Kenza Dali: Carla Ward deserves all the praise

James Holyoak/SPP

We were lucky enough to attend EA Sport's Women's Football Summit in London to celebrate the launch of the Women's Super League in FIFA23.

We spoke to midfielder Kenza Dali who signed for Aston Villa over the summer. The France international has enjoyed a spectacular start to the season in claret and blue having been instrumental in goal creation, assisting, and has even hit the back of the net herself.

On the red carpet, we chatted all things WSL and touched upon the impact of women's leagues becoming available to play on FIFA, here's what Dali had to say...

Settling in at Aston Villa...

"I feel really good to be honest. We had a really good start to the season, obviously a bit disappointed with the game [last] weekend but you know you're going to drop points in this league because every team is hard to beat. But I feel really good, it's a really nice group."

Playing under Carla Ward....

"I really love my manager. Really, really, a good manager. A nice human being first of all, which makes things easier, and she's working hard. I think she deserves the credit that she had this last month."

Oppositions in the WSL....

"To be honest it's a really hard league. When I'm watching every week and I analyse the opposition, I think "oof, another tough one". You can never go easy. You play in this league for that and I love that."

The toughest league opposition...

"I will go for Chelsea. I think Chelsea have a really strong team with a big depth, so this season I would go with Chelsea. But Arsenal, I think, have really improved."

Whether the league is becoming more competitive....

"Definitely. I don't think there's any team that you're going to start the game and say "oh, it's going to be an easy one today, or that I can be at 60 or 70 per cent." I think in this league, if you're at 70 per cent, you can't win games."

The WSL being available to play in FIFA23....

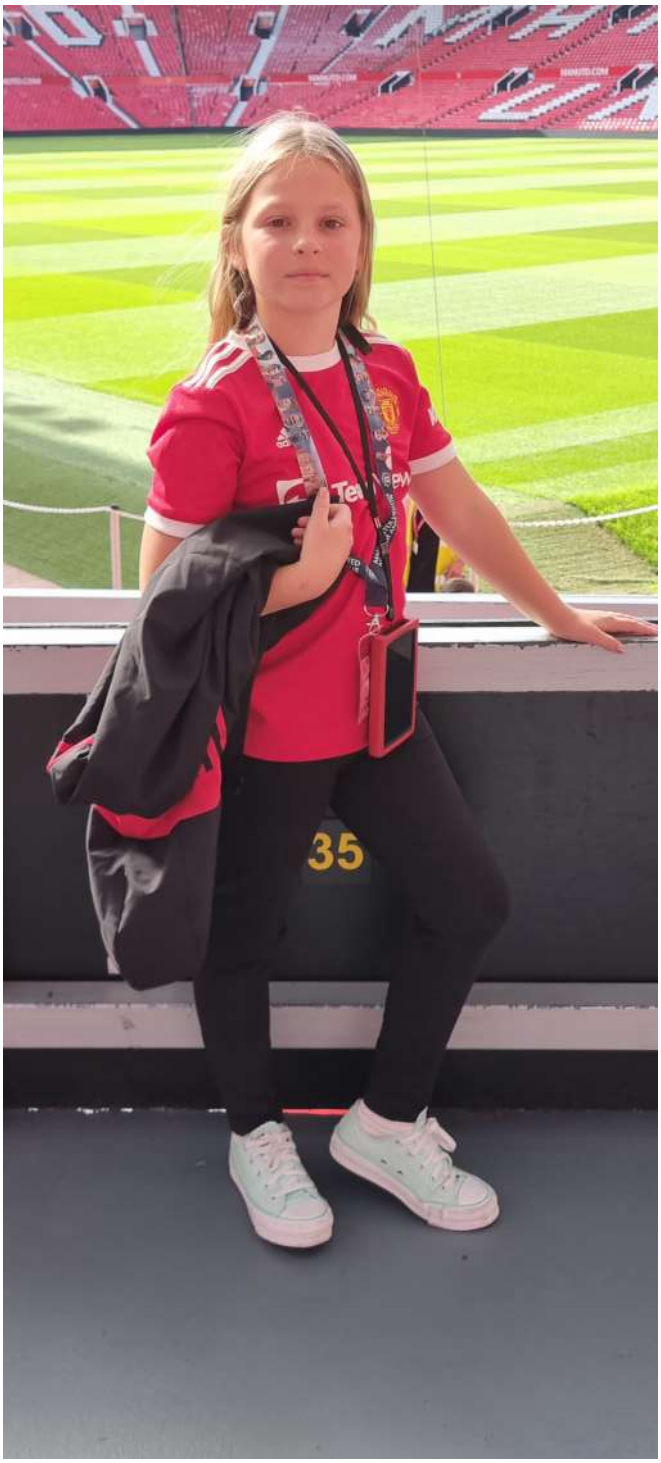
"To be honest I played as myself in the previous game because the national team was in it. But seeing me in the club kit is amazing! I think it's a big part of the game too because it shows how much the game has improved.

"As I'm passionate about football, I love football - I'm eating, I'm drinking football – I would love to go back, say, ten years before and play as some of the girls back then. I would love that. So, I think it's amazing for the new generation."

United we Stand

The Diary of a nine-year-old United super fan

By Lydia Charles



Manchester United VS Reading

Saturday, September 17 was amazing!

We won 4-0 against Reading. It was the first match of the season too. The first match was meant to be Tottenham Vs Manchester United but it was postponed due to the death of the Queen. At the start of the of the match we held a one-minute silence in honour of the Queen; the respect for the Queen was outstanding everybody kept silent and knew how important it was.

The Barmy Army were singing their songs proudly and loudly like usual, almost all the players have their own song. I am looking forward to learning the new songs for the new players: Lucia Garcia, Maya Le Tissier, Aissatou Tounkara, Adriana Leon, Rachel Williams, Nikita Parris and Grace Clinton. I was sad to see all the old players go. The question is will Mark Skinner play the new players in this game?

The players were on form and we scored the four goals in the first half, Manchester United played great as a team, their passing was good and all their shots were incredible. I was so excited, and I can tell you all the Barmy Army

and everybody else was too. The players that scored the goals were Katie Zelem in a penalty, Maya Le Tissier scored twice and Alessia Russo scored once which makes four, they were all goals in the first half there were no goals in the second half, it was an amazing start for Manchester United. There were over 5,000 fans there It was the first time almost all the stands except the standing one was open. The atmosphere was incredible. Last year the average was only 1,500 fans.

I loved the match my voice is still a bit sore from shouting and singing, I had my hotdog like usual which was delicious and began to sing my heart out going to watch Manchester United helps me improve my football and makes me love even more every time I go. I am looking forward to watching Manchester United at their next match either on TV or going.

Lydia makes debut for PNE

Everyone at TWFM would like to congratulate Lydia on making her debut for Preston North End U10s.

During the summer, Lydia had trials and both Manchester United and Preston North End and chose to join the Lancashire side.

We are really excited to be heading down to watch Lydia at a game this month!

Everton continue as football manager official partner

Sports Interactive have announced that they have extended their official partnership with Everton Football Club's women's team.

The renewal of the partnership, first launched in 2021, will see Football Manager branding continue to appear on interview backdrops and across content output from Everton Women's official social media accounts.

Football Manager will also be represented in pitchside advertising at Everton Women's purpose-built home at Walton Hall Park.

Women's FA Cup winners in 2010, Everton are currently enjoying their sixth successive campaign in the Women's Super League.

The continuation of this partnership, one of Sports Interactive's first with an FA WSL side, provides the studio with access to matchday experiences, player appearances and official merchandise for giveaways.

Richard Trafford, Sports Interactive's Head of Partnerships and Business Development, said: "We are delighted to extend our relationship with Everton Women.

"The founders of our studio are lifelong Everton fans, so we know very well just how passionate and loyal the supporters are."

"Everton was the studio's first top-flight partner a decade ago and to continue this relationship with the club, who not only do great work in the community, but also have an ever-increasing global reach, will hopefully help us reach new heights with all our Football Manager titles.

"Introducing women's football to Football Manager is a long-standing commitment of the studio and this partnership with Everton is a key part of reinforcing our support of the women's game."

Alan McTavish, Chief Executive Officer for Everton Women, added: "Having worked extensively with Football Manager in the past, it's great to be able to continue our relationship with the Collyer brothers, Miles Jacobson and his fantastic team as they work towards incorporating women's football into their globally successful game."

"Women's football is a rapidly evolving commercial landscape and top brands from diverse industry sectors across the globe are identifying it as a phenomenal opportunity to deliver both return on investment and return on objectives."

Football Manager announced in 2021 that they would be including women's football in the game for the first time.

The company is continuing to build its resources and it will take time to build up a database.

Steps have been made already including motion capture sessions, it is exciting to see what happens going forwards.

	Club	MP	W	D	L	GF	GA	GD	Pts
1	Arsenal	6	6	0	0	18	1	17	18
2	Chelsea	7	6	0	1	17	6	11	18
3	Manchester	6	5	0	1	15	3	12	15
4	Manchester	6	4	0	2	15	7	8	12
5	Tottenham	5	3	0	2	11	8	3	9
6	Aston Villa	6	3	0	3	9	9	0	9
7	Everton	6	3	0	3	6	7	-1	9
8	West Ham	7	3	0	4	12	16	-4	9
9	Brighton &	6	2	0	4	7	23	-16	6
10	Liverpool	6	1	0	5	3	10	-7	3
11	Reading	6	1	0	5	5	14	-9	3
12	Leicester City	7	0	0	7	2	16	-14	0

Table correct as of November 7, 2022

BARCLAYS CHAMPIONSHIP

Starling Bank sponsors Southampton FC

Starling Bank is to be the official principal partner for Southampton FC Women for the 2022-2023 season. Starting Sunday 30th October with a match against Sunderland AFC Ladies, Starling's logo will feature on the front of players' shirts.

This sponsorship is a continuation of Starling's celebration of women's football, following the bank's national sponsorship of the UEFA Women's EURO 2022, which saw it launch the first fantasy football game for women's football in the UK and award £23,000 in grants to women's grassroots teams.

The bank, which has 400 employees in Southampton as well as offices in London and Cardiff, aims to keep the momentum going in women's football to highlight the glass ceilings that have been smashed for women in sport, technology and banking.

The partnership comes at an exciting time for the club, with its football team now playing in the FA Women's Championship following back-to-back promotions.

Southampton FC is on a mission to encourage more fans to support the women's game and has seen a 120% increase in season ticket sales compared to last season. As part of this drive to grow the women's game, all Southampton FC Women's games will be played at St Mary's Stadium. The team also trains at Staplewood Campus, the same facilities as the men's side, and are now full-time professionals.

The team is managed by Marieanne Spacey-Cale, MBE, an English former international women's footballer. Having played 91 times for England, she is currently Head of Girls and Women's football at Southampton F.C. and head coach of Southampton FC Women.

Marieanne Spacey-Cale, Head coach of Southampton FC Women said: "We're all delighted to welcome Starling onboard as our Official Principal Partner. This is an exciting time for the team as our first season in the championship. To have the backing and support of Starling, an organisation that's fully committed to growing the women's game, is really motivating. We look forward to our first match showcasing Starling and beyond as the season goes on."

As part of the partnership, together Starling and Southampton will also launch an initiative to develop grassroot coaches at local clubs throughout Hampshire to grow the pipeline of female footballing talent.

Sarah Batters, Director of Marketing and Partnerships at Southampton FC comments: "It was important for us to find a partner that was prepared to invest in the women's game - going further than just putting a logo on a shirt. From the moment we started conversations with Starling Bank, their commitment to making an impact to the success of the women's game with their sponsorship was clear - and we can't wait to get started. We hope to see a record attendance for this Sunday's big game against Sunderland where we will showcase Starling Bank on the front of our women's shirt for the very first time."

Jill Scott MBE, former Lioness and ambassador for Starling Bank said: "It's fantastic to see the investment and passion for women's football continue. Funding, training and development at grassroots level is essential to help take the game to the next level."

Rachel Kerrone, Brand & Marketing Director at Starling Bank adds: "Sponsoring Southampton Women's Football Club reinforces Starling's commitment to supporting up-and-coming female football players as we try to level the playing field through equal training opportunities and dedicated resources."

Bristol City lead the way

Sam Mallia/SPP

By Peter Mann

A third of the way into the current, Women's Championship campaign, and its Wiltshire side, Bristol City, leading the way after seven games.

Already boasting a five-point advantage on joint-second duo of London City Lionesses, and Southampton, the Robins are currently enjoying an unbeaten start, with six wins and a draw already under their belts.

In fact, the Robins also lead the way in both goals, and assists, the former seeing Shania Hayles with six goals, followed by Sarah Ewens (London) and Saffron Jordan (Blackburn) with five apiece, whilst the latter has Abi Harrison, alongside Katie Wilkinson (Southampton) and Bethan Roe (Charlton).

BRISTOL CITY

Top for the past five weeks, and with 'keeper Fran Bentley having kept five clean sheets during the opening phase of the season, the Robins also won their recent, Continental Cup opener with a convincing, 4-0 win, at home to Crystal Palace.

That arrived at the start of the month, at the Robins High Performance Centre as Olivia Clark was afforded her first start in goal by manager Lauren Smith as a first-half brace from Abi Harrison saw control asserted at the half; Chloe Mustaki was seen to add a third late in the game before a spectacular fourth was added at the death when Emily Syme hit a first-time strike, from fully 25 yards.

October would also see the Robins put three past both Sheffield United and Crystal Palace, and two past Charlton Athletic, the latter they'll face late November in their next, Continental Cup outing; the Robins will be, without question, looking to extend that advantage at the top as they aim to win their first piece of major silverware.

LONDON CITY

Having lost their season opener, the capitals Lionesses are unbeaten in their last six outings in the league, winning four and drawing two, whilst also enjoying a 2-2 draw with WSL side, West Ham United, in their opening game of the Conti Cup.

As with the leaders, the Lionesses have also kept five clean sheets thus far, one of which arrived in the convincing, 5-0 win, away to bottom club Coventry United as Sarah Ewens bagged a hat-trick alongside further efforts from Atlanta Primus and Grace Neville, the five coming within fifty-two minutes.

With the win over Coventry, it would mark a fiftieth appearance for the club for Primus, the Jamaican having joined the club in September 2020, and saying after the win, and goal, against the divisions' bottom blub that: "(I'm) delighted to make my 50th appearance for the club and to top it off with a goal and three points makes it even more special.

"A lot of hard work has got me to this point and I'm grateful for those who have supported me throughout this journey so far!"

Late November meanwhile will see them host Brighton & Hove Albion in their next match in the Conti Cup, whilst looking to make inroads on that lead put together by the front-runners.

SOUTHAMPTON

The Saints, joint-second, have had a similar start to the Lionesses, losing their first outing before winning four and drawing two of the next six outings, although they'll have been somewhat despondent having crashed to a 2-0 defeat away to Coventry in the Conti Cup.

They did follow that with three, consecutive, 1-0 wins, although they'll be wanting much more, especially if they're too put together a serious title challenge, Ella Pusey, a product of Hampshire's FA Centre of Excellence, having scored two of those three.

Now, with just a few games in November, the Saints will be clamouring for maximum points in the league, as well as getting something from their Conti Cup clash at home to WSL side, Reading, at the end of it.

CRYSTAL PALACE

There's been a mixed start for the Eagles, winning four and losing three of their seven outings to date, two of those losses coming in the last three outings, as well as the earlier defeat in Bristol in the Conti Cup.

In fact, Bristol have beaten the crest-fallen Eagles twice in October, following up the 4-0 cup trouncing, with a 3-0 score in the league, it was a bad month indeed, one which, having conceded nine without netting, somehow edged a win in the north-east, when at Durham, on 30 October.

That three points alone was against the odds, the hosts having had more possession, corners, free kicks, shots etc, compared to the London-based side, however, Anna Filbey's goal, on the half-volley, just before the interval, and a Fran Kitching penalty save, was enough to get the points.

With only two pints splitting them, and London rivals Charlton, November's clash, at Hayes Lane, could prove pivotal. *(NEXT MONTH WILL SEE AN INTERVIEW WITH PALACE MIDFIELDER, LEIGH NICOL).*

CHARLTON ATHLETIC

The Addicks have not won in their last three outings in the league, whilst also falling to Lewes in the Conti Cup, the highlight being a 2-2 draw at home to Blackburn mid-month thanks to second half goals from Emily Simpkins (penalty) and Melissa Johnson, this after they'd gone two down inside the opening twenty-five minutes.

Defeat at home to Bristol, in their last outing, did however provide hope for the Addicks boss, Karen Hills, she saying afterwards that: "I thought they were a very good side and probably deserved it more than us today because I thought they were better in the areas that we need to be better in," and ahead to the match against Durham: "It's going to be a long trip, but the group needs to stick together.

"We're going to work hard as what we did last week if not more. We're a team and we win, we lose, and we draw together."

But then, having lost to Bristol in the league, the Addicks also have the Robins in the Conti Cup at the end of November, a tough outing.

BIRMINGHAM CITY

The mid-table Blues are as close to the top as they are to the bottom of the Championship, although they've played a game less than the rest.

Their Conti Cup clash, at the start of month, was an exciting win for the West Midlands hosts, when hosting WSL side, Brighton; Libby Smith afforded the Championship side an interval lead, netting midway through the first.

Jade Pennock, who set up Smith for the opener, added the second, before the visitors pulled a goal back through Lee Geum-Min; minutes later, the hosts' two-goal advantage was restored when Lucy Quinn netted just after the hour mark, again set-up by Pennock, with Danielle Carter getting the Seagulls' second late on.

The Blues' November though, it'll see them on the road for their three matches, at top two sides, London and Bristol, in the league, then away to West Ham in the Conti Cup.

LEWES

Having won their last two league games, and defeated visitors Charlton in the Conti Cup, the Rooks have enjoyed a rich vein of form of late, especially having drawn their opening four matches of the season.

Scott Booth's side, although losing to Durham, followed up their Conti Cup victory with victories over Charlton, again, in the league, and away to Coventry, albeit narrowly in both; Ellie Hack and Paula Howells netted in the former, whilst Emily Kraft netted the only goal of the game in the latter.

Howells' strike against Charlton, seeing her strike go in off the crossbar, ruled out more spectacular goals, although she may need to shake her memory up somewhat, saying after that victory: "I can't even remember it! I'll need to watch it back.

"All I know is it was my right foot and that very rarely happens. I'm delighted with it though. I thought I was a tap-in player these days but obviously I'm not done with the worldies!"

BLACKBURN ROVERS

The Lancashire side are presently fifth bottom in the Championship having won just two of their seven games this season, although they unbeaten in their last three outings; the Conti Cup meanwhile, that's a different story after they were swept aside by both Leicester City, and Manchester City, the latter taking a 6-0 result.

A 2-2 draw away to Charlton, goals coming from Millie Chandarana and Saffron Jordan, was followed up by a 3-2 win at home to Coventry, Farah Crompton's brace helping the hosts to three points, after Jordan's early opener, in mid-October.

Away to London City, at the end of the month, Blackburn would hold the high-fliers to a tough, goalless draw, affording hope of a turn in fortunes, with games against Sunderland and Southampton to come in the league, before a trip to Merseyside, and Liverpool Women, in the Conti Cup.

SHEFFIELD UNITED

Following a little, upwards spurt, the Blades have been on a downward spiral of late, and are currently on a four match, winless streak (five in all competitions), including losing their last three, which has seen them plummet to fourth bottom.

A 3-3 draw, at the start of October, when away to Durham, in the Conti Cup, afforded signs of what the Blades are capable of, Georgia Walters netting in her first start for the club, she adding a second after the restart, heading home a cross from Bex Rayner.

It would be midfielder, Rayner, who added the hosts' third, on the half-volley, with ten minutes remaining; that result, the euphoria, was quickly deflated in the ensuing

outings however, the Blades falling to defeats, in the league, against Bristol, Southampton, and Birmingham.

The remainder of 2022 is pivotal to both their Championship survival, and any luck in the Conti Cup, where they have Everton (h), Aston Villa (h), and Manchester United (a), to play.

DURHAM

Speaking of the Red Devils, didn't Durham do well against their WSL opponents in the Conti Cup, and this despite erratic league form.

Third bottom in the Championship, albeit with a game following the postponement of the game with Birmingham, the north-east side are in a sequence of win one, lose one, but, it's in the Conti Cup that success is being witnessed.

At the start of October Durham, having drawn 3-3 with Championship rivals, Sheff. United, won 5-3 on penalties, Beth Hepple netting two and Rio Hardy the other; meanwhile, at the end of the month, goals from Jess Clarke and Sarah Robson gained a 2-2 draw against the WSL side.

Twice coming from behind, Durham's second, via Robson, arrived deep into stoppage time, before winning on penalties, in front of a sell-out crowd at Maiden Castle – the winning spot-kick coming from Bridget Galloway, whilst home 'keeper, Naoisha McAloon, saved two in the shoot-out.

Durham have a great chance in November to pick up points, in both competitions, with games against Charlton and Coventry to come in the league, alongside a trip to Aston Villa in the Conti Cup.

SUNDERLAND

The second-bottom Black Cats are enduring a tough season to date, winning just one of their seven games, claiming a 2-0 success at fourth-top Crystal Palace, goals coming from Emily Scarr and Katy Watson.

That victory arrived after the Black Cats narrowly fell to a lone-goal defeat to visitors Liverpool, in the Conti Cup; recent exploits though have come at a cost, 24-year-old defender Faye Mullen suffering an ACL (anterior cruciate ligament) injury, which has since ruled her out for the remainder of the season.

COVENTRY UNITED

It's a tough season for the Warwickshire club, bottom of the table, zero points, seven straight losses in the league, including an 8-0 defeat to the Blades and a 5-0 reverse against the Lionesses, damage limitation quickly springs to mind.

With November's games having already begun, it's set to be a bust month for those in the Championship, with both league, and Conti Cup outings aplenty, alongside those often, international call-ups of which there's been several.

Sam Mallia/SPP

Bristol City vs Crystal Palace

Sports Press Photo

Bristol City continued their undefeated start to the season when they beat Crystal Palace 3-0 at the Robins High Performance Centre.

After having two goals disallowed during the first half, Shania Hayles gave the home side the lead in the 41st minute. Emily Syme scored their second in the 48th minute, and Abi Harrison added the third four minutes later. Ffion Morgan saw her shot hit the crossbar later in the second half for The Robins as they had chances to win by more.

Having beaten Palace 4-0 in the Conti Cup recently, Bristol City had the first chance in this game withing the first 30 seconds of the start when Ffion Morgan was just unable to get onto Harrison's cross across goal. The home side did have the ball in the net in the 14th minute but Harrison's effort was ruled out for offside. Crystal Palace had their first opportunity a minute later when Blanchard cut in but sent her effort well over.

Harrison was unable to convert a cross in the 18th minute, and Fran Kitching made a fantastic save from close-range to deny Morgan five minutes later. In the 24th minute, Syme saw her header deflected wide. Palace were having the occasional chance and in the 26th minute a dangerous cross from Blanchard was cleared.

Kitching made another good save in the 28th minute from Morgan, and Bristol City found the net again three minutes later but it was disallowed after referee Amy Fearn spotted an offence from a corner. In the 40th minute, Elise Hughes was just unable to get her head on a Fliss Gibbons cross for the away side.

The home side took the lead four minutes before half time. Kitching got her hands on Hayles' low shot but was unable to stop the ball from crossing the line.

Anna Filbey made a superb clearance off the line a minute later to deny Harrison. Palace broke down the other end which ended with Chloe Arthur putting the chance over. The Robins had a barrage of chances just before the break but were denied by saves from Kitching and blocks by Palace players.

The rain that had started during the first half had got heavier after half time. Three minutes into the second half and the hosts made it 2-0 when Syme's first time strike from the edge of the area found the corner of the net.

Bristol City made it 3-0 in the 52nd minute. Morgan put a cross in which was headed in at the far post by Harrison.

Hayles had a good chance to score City's fourth in the 56th minute but shot wide when one on one with the goalkeeper. A minute later and Morgan saw her strike from 25-yards hit the crossbar and bounce away. Aimee Palmer then put a free kick from 35-yards out over. On the hour mark, Harrison was unable to get a touch on Morgan's low cross across goal.

The visitors did have the odd chance but Paige Bailey-Gayle couldn't get past Bristol City goalkeeper Fran Bentley, and Gibbons was stopped by a good tackle after running through.

Harrison saw her shot from 12-yards saved in the 79th minute, and Jodie Hutton's dipping effort went over two minutes later for the hosts. Kitching made another save to deny Morgan in the 82nd minute. Morgan had another effort from close range saved five minutes later. Palace had the final chance of the match but Hughes put her effort wide.

Bristol City

Bentley, Cataldo, Layzell, Bruce (Wilde 90'), Powell, Palmer (c) (Woolley 78'), Syme, Mustaki (C.Bull 69'), Morgan (Boddy 90'), Harrison, Hayles (Hutton 69')

Unused substitutes: Clark, J.Bull, Teisar

Goals: Hayles 41', Syme 48', Harrison 52'

Crystal Palace

Kitching, Doran, Everett, Filbey, Waldie, Haines (c) (Barton 89'), Blanchard (Bailey-Gayle 62'), Guyatt (Olding 76'), Arthur (Peplow 62'), Gibbons (Sharpe 77'), Hughes

Unused substitutes: Negri, Johnson, Reilly, Noble

Booked: Waldie 46', Peplow 66'

Referee: Amy Fearn

Attendance: 671

Libbey signs full-time contract at Sunderland

Steph Libbey has signed a full-time contract as Sunderland's assistant head coach.

Libbey joins manager Melanie Reay on a full-time contract after Reay signed one during the summer.

Libbey said "I'm delighted to sign full-time here.

"It's been something I've been working towards for a long time on and off the pitch, ensuring I'm ready for that transition into a full-time capacity".

Player of the Month awarded to Lionesses star

London City Lionesses' Harley Bennett has won the Women's Championship Player of the Month for September.

Bennett won the award after a vote on leagues Twitter account.

The defender thanked every one that voted for her via her social media accounts.

Hills wins Manager award

Karen Hills has won the Women's Championship Manager of the Month award for September.

Hills lead Charlton Athletic to two wins out of two during the month with victories over Birmingham City and Sunderland.

Hills said "It's an achievement, not for myself but for the group.

"If it wasn't for the players doing what they do on the pitch then we wouldn't be in this position.

"I am pleased to pick up the award on behalf of all my staff and players".

Women's football on the big stage

Blackburn Rovers, Bristol City and Crystal Palace have all announced they will play Women's Championship games at the club's main stadiums on 20th November.

Blackburn take on high flying Southampton at Ewood Park.

Top of the table Bristol City will play Birmingham City at Ashton Gate.

Palace play a South East London derby against Charlton Athletic at Selhurst Park.

Check the club's websites/social media for ticket details.

Stephen Flynn/SPP

Periods and pregnancy still taboo

Sport and exercise experts from Staffordshire University are calling for better education around periods and pregnancy in women's football.

New research carried out at women's football clubs across six European countries shows that education around the menstrual cycle, hormonal contraception and pregnancy is severely lacking.

The study, led by academics from Staffordshire University, involved more than 1,100 players, coaches and managers from grassroots to elite level clubs in Bulgaria, England, Finland, France, Poland and Spain.

Dr Jacky Forsyth, Associate Professor of Exercise Physiology, explained: "The topic of ovarian hormones and their effects on training and performance, in addition to pregnancy and postpartum, seems to have received scant consideration.

"In sport, these topics also come with varying degrees of stigma and silence, as well as being a barrier to gender equality.

"Despite some good practices in individual clubs across different countries, there was limited knowledge and understanding of how training, performance and health are affected. Knowledge was generally left up to the individual without support from governing bodies or coach education providers."

69% of all participants said that educational provision on menstrual cycle was 'not at all' provided at their clubs and while some clubs tracked players' menstrual cycle this was varied and inconsistent.

Approaching coaches about menstrual cycle was identified as difficult for some players with one barrier being that 'the female game is still predominantly coached by males' and that 'males won't understand'. Because of this, some players supported each other, keeping it 'between us girls' rather than approaching their coaches.

Similarly, 77% of respondents reported no educational provision on hormonal contraception and 64% reported no educational provision on pregnancy. Furthermore, only 5% knew of club policies on pregnancy, maternity leave, motherhood and caring responsibilities/childcare.

Co-author Dr Alex Blackett said: "These findings shine a light on the fact that football training and education is still geared towards the men's games. The development of women's football seems to be surface level at the moment and underneath it all there's still a lot more that needs to be done."

The team at Staffordshire University will now work directly with football clubs in the UK to put some of their findings into practice and E-WinS project partners are producing toolkits which will be freely available online.

In 2022, Chelsea F.C. Women became the first football club in the world to tailor training to players' menstrual cycles and the England women's manager Sarina Wiegman introduced menstrual tracking apps ahead of the team's victory at the 2022 European Women's Football Championship.

More recently, a number of teams announced a switch to coloured shorts with their home kit because of player concerns about wearing white during their periods.

Dr Forsyth added: "Something as simple as tracking players' menstrual cycles can make a huge difference. For instance, performance may be optimised at certain phases of the menstrual cycle and training could be adapted in order to avoid injury and muscle soreness.

"Coaches should be knowledgeable about issues that are specific to women and my hope is this will be incorporated into the FA's coaching awards because it is clearly needed."

Menstrual cycle, hormonal contraception and pregnancy in women's football: perceptions of players, coaches and managers is published in the Sport in Society journal.

	Club	MP	W	D	L	GF	GA	GD	Pts
1	Bristol City	7	6	1	0	13	2	11	19
2	London City	8	5	2	1	17	6	11	17
3	Southampton	8	5	2	1	11	6	5	17
4	Charlton	8	4	1	3	16	13	3	13
5	Crystal Palace	7	4	0	3	9	8	1	12
6	Blackburn	8	3	2	3	9	12	-3	11
7	Birmingham	7	3	1	3	11	10	1	10
8	Lewes	7	2	4	1	8	7	1	10
9	Sheffield	7	2	1	4	14	9	5	7
10	Durham	7	2	1	4	7	11	-4	7
11	Sunderland	8	1	1	6	5	13	-8	4
12	Coventry	8	0	0	8	4	27	-23	0

Table correct as of November 7, 2022

THE FA

NATIONAL LEAGUE

Gillingham Women announce take-over

Gillingham Women have announced that they have a new chairman and owner.

The future of the club was in the balance on the eve of the season, with with owner and chairman Josh Oatham stating in August he feared "for the club's existence" if a new buyer wasn't found.

After a two month process, it has been announced that business manager Kevin Hake will be the new owner and chairman.

Hake is already the manager-chairman of Chatham Town men's team.

It means they will now also play their home games at Chatham's Bauvill Stadium as Hake takes the reins from Oatham who had been in sole charge for the past two years after Gillingham Football Club's decision to no longer fund the women's section. Oatham will, however, continue to manage Gillingham Women's first-team.

They sit seventh in the Southern Premier League.

All Chatham Town season ticket holders will get free entry to Gillingham Women fixtures at the Bauvill Stadium.

Hake wrote in a a statement: "I couldn't sit back and allow Kent's highest-placed women's team that sits in the third tier of English football struggle.

"With the success of the Lionesses' in the summer, and seeing how this galvanised a community spirit, this resonated with me. I'm excited to have the opportunity to become the club's new chairman and can't wait to get started.

"What Josh has achieved with, not only this club, but also for wider female football participation in Kent, is nothing short of fantastic and epitomises everything I strive for. I thank him for everything and he will always be a big part of this club.

"As a show of my appreciation, I'm delighted that he's accepted the invitation to become our club president.

"I'm thrilled to announce that, after a series of talks with Josh, he's also agreed to remain in charge as manager of the first-team. This will provide a fabulous platform for stability and continuity as we look to continue building on the team's successes over the recent seasons.

"I would like to extend a warm welcome to Gillingham Women FC's players, volunteers and supporters who can rest easy in the knowledge that their club is in safe hands. The club will continue to compete at the highest level and use the Bauvill Stadium as their new home.

"I'm keen on inclusivity and this will allow the local community to watch Gillingham Women FC in Chatham. I'll be embarking on some exciting community initiatives that will encourage everyone to support Josh and our fantastic group of players.

"Now's the time to get behind your local team and get to know the players! Further details will be released across a variety of social media platforms in the forthcoming days."

Oatham added: "On a personal note, I am really proud of the incredible journey we have been on together during my time as Chairman. I would like to thank everyone, players, staff, volunteers and sponsors, past and present, who have helped to ensure that this club remained in existence and went on to achieve one of our best ever seasons in teh FA Women's National League Southern Premier Division. This club will forever have a special place in my heart."

Simon Says

Laura Walker has been playing football for as long as she can remember, it's ingrained in every part of her life. Whether it is playing for Chorley Women or as a Sports Lecturer at Salford City College, she is usually found with a football or talking about it.

Simon O'Neill sat down and chatted to her about her career so far.

At what age were you first interested in football?
I've been interested in football as long as I can remember. I found a picture at my parents house not too long ago with a ball at my feet when I was about one so I guess it started pretty early.

Who were your football idols as when young
The exposure to women's football was I was kid just wasn't there so my role models growing up were all men. David Beckham and Zinedine Zidane were the main two players I looked at as to how they played the game.

How did you find your preferred position?
I have evolved as a footballer over the years, I used to be a winger in my youth but then moved to the middle of the pitch when I was about 27. It allowed me to get on the ball more and I was fortunate that I had a coach that saw potential for me in a different position and wasn't afraid to take a risk on me to let me develop over a few seasons in a new role.

As you progressed through your age groups in football, when did you realise that you had the talent to play in a high level?
I guess when I started to be selected to play for clubs and then colleges and Universities at a higher level I realised that i had talent and potential, but it just seemed all part of the natural process of progression so It didn't seem like a big deal or anything to shout about at the time.

Has your role as a sports lecturer helped you in your football career?
Without doubt, staying up to date with what is current in our sport has been helpful, with regards to things like how my body responds to exercise, sports nutrition and injury treatment methods for example. But for me its to understand how younger people work, how I as a senior player can help them and I see things my students go through and the experiences they have had in sport so far, and I look to implement anything that I think will benefit our younger players at the club

Do your current students know you are a football player at a high level?
Yes, they do, they ask me every Monday morning how my match went the day before, they can usual tell as soon as they walk in by the look on my face! It's nice that they take an interest, as I do in their sporting achievements outside of college.

With teaching being such a busy schedule, how do you fit in the training at Chorley?
We train twice a week, on what are also my busiest teaching days. Sometimes I get to nip home for 30mins in-between work and training, other times I have to go straight from work. Its tough but I know what I signed up for and I love training, so I won't complain. I take two meals with me to work on a Tuesday and Thursday to make sure I am fuelled for training and don't have a mid session crash!

What are the training sessions like at Chorley (without giving away any secrets)?
Training is great. With regards to organisation and planning, its some of the best I've had. Each session has a purpose, each session is geared towards the upcoming game on a Sunday and is usually at a good tempo, players are expected to work hard but also do that with a smile on their face.

Are there any ambitions to play in the WSL and do you think Chorley are capable of reaching this level?
For me, no, I am at the wrong end of the career timeline for any ambitions to play in the WSL. As for the club, it would be an amazing achievement for my club to get there, but to be honest, without some major investment, that is a pipe dream. You have to have so much money and backing to even make the step up to the next level, infrastructure has to be in place that doesn't even exist in our local area so there would have to be some major changes regardless of how well we would perform on the pitch.

If you can offer girls any advice on football what would it be?
Work hard in training, work hard outside of training, believe in your own ability, listen to your coaches and be thankful for the opportunity to play as its not always been there for girls and women.

Four teams remain unbeaten

At the time of writing, just four teams - Burnley, Oxford United, Hashtag United and Cardiff City - were still unbeaten in League games.

Burnley lie third in the Northern Premier Division with 22 points from ten games, but four draws are significant in the fact they trail leaders Wolverhampton Wanderers by three points. Burnley won 3-1 at Wolves and drew 1-1 at home to second place Nottingham Forest, but both the top duo have dropped points in just one other game. Millie Ravening and Evie Priestley account for the vast majority of Burnley's goals.

Oxford United went top of the Southern Premier Division, forging a two point lead over Watford and Portsmouth. Oxford have been involved in three 1-1 scorelines, including their clash with Watford, while they won their other six games without conceding a goal, including a 2-0 home success over Portsmouth.

Hashtag United top Division One South East with 19 points from seven games, three points ahead of second place Norwich City. Hashtag are clear top scorers with 31 goals, a 13-2 home victory over Chesham being a significant factor.

Eight different players netted for Hashtag that day with Brooke Cairns scoring four times. With 11 different players finding the back of the net and Cairns the top scorer with just five, Hashtag have not been reliant on just one or two players for goals.

Cardiff City, with seven wins from seven, are the only team with a 100% record in the FAWNL. They top Division One South East by two points from Exeter City whom they have already beaten handsomely (5-0). Cardiff's 39 goals for is only matched by Stourbridge, while they boast the joint best defensive record with just two goals conceded (AFC Wimbledon the other team).

Cori Williams has scored eight goals with both Chloe Lloyd and Ellie Sergeant just one behind. At the opposite end of the table, Larkhall Athletic gained their first points with a 4-1 home victory over AFC St Austell who remain bottom on zero points along with Maidenhead United.

Experience proves important

While the English Lionesses have been at the forefront of a campaign to ensure one legacy of their Euros triumph was for all girls to be able to access playing football at school, it is refreshing to note that two players with a wealth of experience are still going strong in the FAWNL. Both play for teams battling it out at the top end of the Southern Premier Division.

Helen Ward is in her second spell with Watford and has a wealth of WSL experience as well as over 100 caps for Wales. Meanwhile, Oxford United's Shelley Provan (nee Cox) made her debut for Southampton before the turn of the last century and after playing for several clubs in the FAWNL as well as a brief spell with Doncaster Rovers in the WSL, helped Southampton FC Women to last season's Southern Premier Division title.

New records set in East Midlands derby

The Nottingham Forest v Derby County fixture on Sunday October 16 set a new FAWNL Northern Premier Division attendance record with 5,082 at The City Ground to witness a 2-0 home win. Both last season's fixtures between the pair were played at the men's stadia with 4,443 at Forest and 3,552 at County.

Sophie Domingo, a Derby player last season, became the latest to feature for both the East Midlands teams. Notable names to have done so previously include Ellie Gilliatt, Precious Hamilton and Kelly Kennaugh (nee Finley). Gilliatt an dHamilton are no longer at Derby and combined with Domingo, that trio accounted for 28 of Derby's 48 League goals as they finished runners up.

Late Barker goal secures victory

Just how important Katie Barker's stoppage time winner for Newcastle United at home to Barnsley will prove at the end of the season remains to be seen.

Barnsley goalkeeper Serena "Bean" Clarke almost ensured a vital point for the visitors who are much improved this term after spending too much of last season in the relegation zone.

Newcastle's win put them second in the table, behind Leeds United on goal difference with the pair on 16 points from 8 games. Both Durham Cestria (14 points) and Barnsley (13 points) have a game in hand.

Potentially, this promises to be the most closely fought title race in the six divisions. Durham won 2-1 at home Newcastle who have beaten Barnsley, themselves 2-0 home winners over Leeds who were unable to complete the quartet of home rule when they hosted Durham on November 6, losing 1-0.

Wymondham Town forced to withdraw

After struggling to raise a squad following an exodus of last season's squad (including some to neighbouring Norwich City) Wymondham United eventually got their season up and running, but sadly after playing a few games, they had to reluctantly call it a day.

The FAWNL suffered its first casualty of the season when Wymondham Town had to unfortunately withdraw from Division One South East. Having lost all four games (with a 23-1 goals deficit) and struggling to raise a team following promotion from the Eastern Regional League, it was a decision which was reluctantly taken, but the club will continue.

With the current economic situation being far from favourable, one has to wonder if Wymondham (a dozen miles south west of Norwich) will be the only casualty, or will others follow? At the end of October, with teams having played approximately one third of their fixtures, four FAWNL teams had yet to gain a point. Hounslow (also Division One South East) and the Division One South West trio of AFC St Austell, Larkhall Athletic and Maidenhead United. Losing week in week out and having players become disillusioned and leaving has proved a Catch-22 situation for teams at various levels over the years.

Stourbridge impressing

After losing 2-0 at Sheffield on their FAWNL debut, Stourbridge then reeled off eight successive wins to put themselves nine points clear at the top of the Division One Midlands table for what is the most impressive introduction since the re-structuring of the League to embrace the former Combination Leagues.

That run included a 10-1 home win over Long Eaton United whose goal by Ella Brennan was the first by a visiting player in over a year. In a re-arranged game against Sheffield, the visitors went ahead, Stourbridge levelled, but then an injury to Zoe Clarke who landed on her head caused the game to be abandoned.

Fortunately the ambulance arrived within half an hour and Clarke's injury was not as bad as first feared. Footballing injuries are not always so quickly attended to and there was a reported wait of several hours for an ambulance to arrive earlier this season.

Long Eaton struggling

For Long Eaton, fourth last term, this season is proving a nightmare.

Apart from a 2-1 home win over Leafield Athletic, they conceded at least five in each of their other seven League games and after eight games had 53 goals in their goals against column, almost double last season's tally of 27 for 22 league games.

FANWNL
2022/23 Tables

Northern Premier Division

		P	W	D	L	GD	Pts
1	Wolverhampton Wanderers	10	8	1	1	21	25
2	Nottingham Forest	9	7	1	1	20	22
3	Burnley	10	6	4	0	14	22
4	Huddersfield Town	9	5	2	2	6	17
5	Derby County	9	4	1	4	6	13
6	Stoke City	10	4	1	5	-7	13
7	AFC Fylde	10	3	5	3	-3	11
8	Boldmere St. Michaels	9	4	0	6	-9	9
9	AFC Fylde	9	3	3	4	-9	9
10	West Bromwich Albion	10	3	3	5	-9	9
11	Brighouse Town	10	1	4	5	-5	7
12	Loughborough Lightning	9	0	1	8	-25	1

Southern Premier Division

		P	W	D	L	GD	Pts
1	Watford	8	6	1	1	19	19
2	Portsmouth	10	6	1	3	13	19
3	Oxford United	8	5	3	0	14	18
4	Ipswich Town	7	4	1	2	5	13
5	Billericay Town	9	4	1	4	-1	13
6	Cheltenham Town	8	4	1	3	-6	13
7	Gillingham	7	3	1	3	-1	10
8	London Bees	8	3	1	4	-7	10
9	Bridgwater United	9	2	3	4	-2	9
10	Milton Keynes Dons	6	2	1	3	-2	7
11	Plymouth Argyle	9	2	0	7	-11	6
12	Crawley Wasps	9	0	2	7	-21	2

Tables correct as of November 7, 2022

The FA Women's National League

FANWNL
2022/23 Tables

Division One North

		P	W	D	L	GD	Pts
1	Newcastle United	9	6	1	2	7	19
2	Durham Cestria	8	5	2	1	10	17
3	Leeds United	9	5	1	3	8	16
4	Barnsley	8	5	1	2	8	16
5	Stockport County	9	4	2	3	0	14
6	Middlesbrough	9	4	0	5	-4	12
7	York City	8	3	2	3	3	11
8	Hull City	7	3	1	3	3	10
9	Norton & Stockton Ancients	9	2	4	3	-1	10
10	Merseyrail	9	1	4	4	-11	7
11	Bradford City	9	2	0	7	-11	6
12	Chorley	8	1	2	5	-12	5

Division One Midlands

		P	W	D	L	GD	Pts
1	Stourbridge	9	8	0	1	35	24
2	Sporting Khalsa	8	5	1	2	9	16
3	Doncaster Rovers Belles	7	5	0	2	8	15
4	Solihull Moors	7	4	2	1	13	14
5	Leafield Athletic	7	3	3	1	6	12
6	Peterborough United	8	3	2	3	3	11
7	Sheffield	7	3	0	4	-2	9
8	Leek Town	8	2	2	4	-6	8
9	Lincoln City	8	2	1	5	-6	7
10	Wem Town	8	2	1	5	-14	7
11	Northampton Town	7	1	2	4	0	5
12	Long Eaton United	8	1	0	7	-46	3

Tables correct as of November 7, 2022

The FA Women's National League

FANWNL
2022/23 Tables

Division One South East

		P	W	D	L	GD	Pts
1	Hashtag United	7	6	1	0	26	19
2	Norwich City	7	5	1	1	13	16
3	AFC Wimbledon	6	4	1	1	9	13
4	London Seaward	7	4	1	2	0	13
5	Queens Park Rangers	8	3	2	3	6	11
6	Cambridge United	7	2	2	3	0	8
7	Ashford Town	7	2	1	4	1	7
8	Chesham United	5	2	0	3	-10	6
9	Actonians	5	1	1	3	-2	4
10	Cambridge City	7	1	0	6	-9	3
11	Hounslow	4	0	0	4	-34	0
X	Wymondham Town	X	X	X	X	X	X

Division One South West

		P	W	D	L	GD	Pts
1	Cardiff City	7	7	0	0	37	21
2	Exeter City	8	6	1	1	17	19
3	AFC Bournemouth	9	5	1	3	17	16
4	Southampton Women	8	5	0	3	3	15
5	Selsey	6	4	0	2	9	12
6	Swindon Town	6	4	0	2	3	12
7	Moneyfields	6	3	2	1	6	11
8	Portishead Town	7	3	0	4	-6	9
9	Keynsham Town	7	2	0	5	-23	6
10	Larkhall Athletic	9	1	0	8	-17	3
11	Maidenhead United	4	0	0	4	-17	0
12	AFC St Austell	7	0	0	7	-29	0

Tables correct as of November 7, 2022

The FA Women's National League

GRASSROOTS FOOTBALL

Hear them roar:
Pride at preparing future footballing Lionesses

Some of the Future Lionesses may now come from Northamptonshire thanks to the FA's new, county-wide development programme for Elite female footballers and a successful 3 year license to run an ETC in the County.

The FA Emerging Talent Centre's (ETC) were launched in July, with the aim to increase the number of young female players engaged in Football Association programmes across England by the end of the 2023-24 season.

Northamptonshire's ETC is hosted by Northampton Town FC Community Trust in partnership with University of Northampton (UON) and supported by the Northamptonshire Football Association.

Female ETC players from across the County, will have access to the same top-level support and development opportunities as their male peers.

This will cover everything they need to help support them to reach their full potential in the game, with access to quality and experienced Northampton Town FC Community Trust coaches, state-of-the-art training facilities and the chance to learn and develop in the ETC programme in addition to playing grass roots football.

They will also have professional advice, testing and training at the University's Waterside campus, thanks to the partnership between the skilled University staff and will be developed on the pitch thanks the coaching programme set out by the NTFC Community Trust coaching staff.

Thanks to the holistic approach to the player development encouraged by the ETC programme players will also be educated and supported off the pitch. Informed by up-to-the-minute, research and led by members of the UON Sports Science team, this will include sessions on sport psychology to help players develop resilience and deal with performing under pressure.

There will also be top tips about good nutrition, both for the player's and their parents and guardians to foster greater understanding about the importance of good food.

Each ETC member will also have access to strength, conditioning and performance testing, pitch side injury support, and even the opportunity to receive further injury rehabilitation support in the University's Sports Rehabilitation and Conditioning Clinic at Waterside, with injury advice and treatment plans.

The first group of players have been recruited through a trial period. Last week they were officially welcomed with their families to an induction event at UON's Waterside campus, with talks about the programme and a tour of the UON facilities they'll have access to.

Scott Bradley, Subject Lead for Science at University of Northampton, was on-hand to talk about the sport psychology side of UON support. He said: "The Lionesses' triumph at the Women's Euro's this summer focused international attention on female football at a time when women's sporting excellence is very much the norm rather than the exception.

"Now, the need is to ensure future generations of women's football are supported from the grass roots up. The FA's Emerging Talent Centre programme looks set to do just this, and we are very proud about our part in helping support the development of these budding Lionesses."

Charlene Ward-Greef (Women & Girls Development Officer) from Northampton Town Football Club's Community Trust, added: "We are so proud of the development of female football at NTFC CT. We have more female footballers attending sessions and programmes across the trust and this has no doubt been inspired by not only the lionesses on a national level but also the Northampton Town FC Women.

"We aim to provide a place in football for females of all abilities across Northamptonshire, we are excited to be a vital part of the FA's Talent Pathway with the ETC here in Northampton."

Leigh Gill: I want every girl to have the chance to try football

By Helen Rowe-Willcocks

Manchester were at the heart of the European Championships with the opening game at Old Trafford and then games held at the Manchester City Academy Stadium and Manchester Football Association is not going to miss the opportunity to make a difference for women's and girls' football in the area.

The European Championships 2022 legacy is well underway with targets already being smashed but instead of saying that will do, the team at the local FA are adding new legacies to their plan.

We sat down with Leigh Gell, Women's Football Recreation Officer to find out what they have been doing since the tournament.

Firstly, if you could please introduce yourself and give us a bit of information about what your role entails.

My name is Leigh, I work at Manchester FA. I look after all women's and girls' football that falls under our boundaries. Predominantly that is mainly playing opportunities but it is also things like workforce opportunities such as coaching refereeing, volunteering in the game.

There is a lot of talk about the legacy of the Euros, what are Manchester FA doing to help promote the legacy?

We had a legacy plan which started two years prior to the tournament starting. We have been looking at the progress of the plan. There were five key areas of the game from school, college, university levels but also looking at recreational football.

We saw a big gap in the women's and girls landscape in recreational opportunities to play football. Women could go and play in formalised Sunday leagues playing eleven aside but a lot of these women are part of the missed generation, they weren't able to play football at school. We wanted to correct that wrong and allow them to play for fun in a safe environment.

We created a recreational league which now has over 500 people playing in Greater Manchester.

We also wanted to target traditionally under-represented communities and show them they can play football.

In the schools the pre-legacy plan we had the opportunity to go until 2024 for our targets but we have now reworked the plan to go to 2025.

We reached our female participation figure by 2024 already but we did not look at that and think 'job done' we wanted to push that even further. We want to grow it even further.

Looking at schools, have you been finding that there are more girls' teams than previously?

I think the big thing is that more girls see football and they know that they can play football. Some of this is about the girls stepping up and asking teachers if they can play. It's simple to do but it's a lot for a young girl to stand up and say that.

We have more and more girls that are playing outside of school, they will then go into school and the boys take over the lunch time pitch.

The girls are now saying that they want it to. Part of that comes from the tournament. If they didn't see the Lionesses in the spotlight as they were, they wouldn't have seen this. There is also a lot more teachers reaching out to us and the FA to see how they can create opportunities for the girls.

The FA have recently set up a tool to help teachers set up sessions for girls. It's about linking the school teams up to clubs and getting them that pathway to be able to play.

What do you think is the biggest challenge for your role at the moment?

For us the challenge is about facilities. We are not blessed with the weather so grass pitches don't work all-year-round. We do see games getting called off especially in December and January.

Some of our teams and clubs want to grow even further but they don't have the capacity or space to do that right now.

Previously a lot of that has been on workforce but what has been really nice is that because of the work we invested during the legacy, that is not as big of an issue as it was previously.

We had a Snickers bursary programme where we awarded 22 coaches qualifications. They are now actively coaching in the community.

We also run a young female coaching development training programme. We had 10 on the

The programme last season and we have 25 this season.

For the first time it feels like coaches is not the number one barrier for setting up new teams.

It now falls on facilities.

There is a considerable amount of money going into facilities development. The sad thing is that you cannot just build a 3G overnight. It does take time and it is very expensive. There is a long term commitment there.

The football foundation has also put in a fact that with new 3G pitches there has to be a percentage that is open to women and girls. I think this tries to protect those historical clubs who have long-standing agreements with schools and providers. They essentially have block bookings which prevent anyone else getting on the pitch.

The more that we see older, historical clubs opening up to women's football, they might have sites which creates more space.

Do you find that there is still a difficulty for women's and girls teams to be able to get access to pitches at premium times?

It is still an issue. With the newer facilities that have that 3G agreement in place, they have to provide it. I also think it is a problem across the whole of the grassroots game. They can't access the pitches, because other clubs have the connections.

I also think there are a lot of school sites that have 3Gs but they are not open to the communities. That is more what the local FA's and governments are trying to work on. We want to open these sites up. We mapped out 3Gs we have, we could cater to the demand we have but it is just a case of unlocking them.

We need to look how we can work with schools to see how we can get the local communities to be able to play on those sites and I think it all ties together.

The more girls are wanting to play in school, the more the headteachers will see that opening the pitches to the community will also benefit their students so I hope it will work.

On a personal level, you play football as well. Have you seen a difference in your team and interest in the club?

I play for Bury which is Tier 6. We are relatively new club. I feel really valued at the club. We are on the same board as the men's team and a lot of the men's fans come and watch that.

I never thought that I would have people who have no direct relationship with the players, coming to watch and support. We are fortunate enough to be given tickets to watch the men, so we go and support them and they come and support us. When we go to the games, the fans know who we are and it is something I never expected.

It really feels like a community, it does not feel like there are two separate teams.

I have had so many emails from women and parents asking where I can play football. I love emails like that. The football world can be a glass bubble, there are so many opportunities when you get in but if you don't know about the local FA or what opportunities there are and where to find them, then you won't know they are there. I love showing people that they can be part of the game too.

Just from results that have been published so far, there has been obvious increases in attendance at WSL games, record sales at England games and then there is a massive increase in the opposite end of the scale at grassroots. Do you think it will work all the way through the pyramid? The National League is sat in the middle of the big plan but are they going to get the benefit of what they need to keep going?

I think the FA's development plan of professionalising the National League and the work which is going into that, it will trickle down.

We are seeing huge attendances at WSL games. To see sell-outs at grounds that have always been easy to get to before, now we are actually having to plan in advance to go to games.

The great thing about the Championship and the National League is that it is really low cost. We at Manchester FA, do not have a National League club right now. We are hoping one of the teams get promoted this season. We have a team that were recently relegated.

More people are going to watch these games, people love watching football. It's a great atmosphere and I do believe it will go down to the National League.

What would be the biggest thing you want to achieve by the end of the legacy programme in 2025?

Through a big picture, I would love to see football on the curriculum at schools for girls. I want to see that every girl has the opportunity to try football. I love football. I don't expect every girl to love it but just to have the opportunity to play and try it in school and then they know whether they like it or not.

I would also love for teachers to be able to know where to direct children to where they can play outside. That's what I would like it to look like by 2025.

I started playing by accident but how good would it be if children are given the opportunity to try not just football but any sport and they can find their passion and their love.

Every girl should find a sport they love, there are so many out there to chose from.

euro

The FA marks one year of its 'Football Your Way' plan

The Football Association [The FA] has marked the first anniversary of its Football Your Way plan by hosting a multi-team camp today, Friday 14th October, at St. George's Park with England players from across the Senior Men's Deaf, Partially Sighted and Cerebral Palsy squads, and the Senior Women's Deaf team.

Launched in October 2021, the landmark disability Football Your Way plan heralded an increased commitment from The FA with ambitions set to raise the profile of disability football and change the perceptions and social barriers to support more disabled people to play football by 2024.

In line with the goal of providing world-class coaching and support services for England para teams, St George's Park hosted over 20 England senior para camps throughout the 2021/22 season. The home of England football also proudly supported the formation of the new England Women's Blind team in May 2022, which saw the number of national para teams increased to seven with more to follow.

Activity at an elite level is mirrored with more provisions at a grassroots level, to drive an increase in the number of disabled people taking part in football across schools, clubs and the community for fun or competition.

The plan aims to increase participation by 50% by June 2024, by offering 2,800 opportunities to play for disabled people of all ages across all disability football formats. The figures are currently on track with 2,107 opportunities, a 13% increase on our baseline of 1,859.

Work is also being undertaken on the re-vamp of the Coaching Disabled Footballers learning offer and we will support the launch of the new e-module and Face to Face Continuing Professional Development module next year. Throughout the club network, a new toolkit and training workshop is being designed to support England Football Accredited Clubs to become more inclusive of disabled people on and off the field.

Research has also been carried out to identify how best to further embed disability provisions across existing community programmes including Weetabix Wildcats for 5 to 11-year-old girls and Snickers Protein Just Play which provides sessions for males and females aged 16-year-olds and upwards.

Across inclusion school networks new schemes have

been piloted, with the introduction of a Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) Disney Inspired Shooting Stars club resource which aims to engage disabled children in extra-curricular activity along with a SEND Disney Inspired Shooting Stars Festival resource designed to encourage a positive introduction to competition for disabled children in schools.

Additionally, the new Project B1 initiative was piloted, a beginner friendly version of blind football to help secondary schools engage more visually impaired and blind young people in football and enable them to have a positive experience of competition.

Baroness Sue Campbell, The FA's Director of Women's Football, and the organisation's strategic lead for disability football, said: "We are very proud of the steps taken over the last year to unlock the growth and visibility of para football, work that could only be done by a hugely dedicated and talented team here at The FA.

"Through the Football Your Way plan, it's our ambition to ensure anyone can be involved in the game, no matter whether they play for the pure enjoyment or have aspirations of one day playing for their country.

"This plan has so much to offer the hugely passionate and talented community of people living with a disability and I'm excited to see it continue to progress over the coming years."

Avery Dennison goes for goal supporting women's and non-binary grassroots football

Avery Dennison (NYSE:AVY), a global leader in innovation and materials science, branding, and manufacturing, has announced a partnership to support women's and non-binary people's football at a grassroots level.

Embelex™ is Avery Dennison's solution for on-garment branding that provides digitally -connected and sustainable options for personalization is kicking off a collaborative project supporting both Manchester Laces and South London Laces football teams. This partnership contributes to Avery Dennison's mission to support universal access to sport for under-served communities.

The partnership stems from shared Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DE&I) values, including teamwork, diversity, courage and integrity, and helps to promote and further women's and non-binary people's football with the view to provide more opportunities in their communities. Avery Dennison has also involved creative partners, Stadio, a football-focused podcast, and VERSUS, a website and publishing platform, to help amplify and support this shared vision.

In addition to the sponsorship fee, Avery Dennison has worked with the Laces teams and partner organizations to design new Home and Away Kits for both teams, featuring premium Embelex trims. Both clubs will have shirts for sale on their websites to further support and raise money for their respective organizations.

Avery Dennison will also donate the front-of-shirt sponsor logo space to Stadio (Manchester Laces) and VER-SUS (South London Laces) since they have authentic connections to these communities. Meanwhile, Avery Dennison Embelex branding will be featured on the shirt sleeves.

Founded in April 2021, Manchester Laces was established as a club devoted to providing a safe space for people of all abilities, backgrounds and life experiences. In just over a year, their membership has grown to encompass over 300 regular participants for training sessions, small-sided games, full membership training and club games.

Similarly, South London Laces was founded in 2016 as a casual game at a youth centre for women and non-binary people to come together and play futsal, a football-based game played on a smaller hard court pitch. What began as a small pilot program has

blossomed into a fully-fledged club, operating three training sessions per week in South London boroughs. South London Laces now regularly turn out an impressive 80+ players at their weekly training sessions.

Jeremy Bauer, global commercial director, Embelex, Avery Dennison RBIS, shared his thoughts on the partnership: “England’s victory in the Euros this summer has elevated women’s football and thrust it into the spotlight like never before, thanks to the inspiring hard work of the Lionesses.”

“Avery Dennison recognises the benefits of grassroots football – it aligns closely with our own values and shows that Avery Dennison is far more than a trims supplier. It’s a huge honour for us to be supporting both the Manchester Laces and South London Laces teams.”

“These inspiring groups of people emulate what it means to be brave, persistent and work together as a team. We hope our partnership with Stadio and VERSUS will continue to promote the important work the Laces teams are doing, and encourage many more to get involved in football and other team sports.”

Helen Hardy, Founder of Manchester Laces, says: “Manchester Laces is the first inclusive space for women, non -binary and transgender people in Manchester. So when Avery Dennison approached us about working together it made total sense to us. It’s fantastic that two organisations with aligned values are working together on a project that means so much to so many people.

“The club is delighted to have had such a huge input in the project from designing the kits to giving our players a starring role in photo shoots and video content. The ongoing support from Avery Dennison will change the lives of people in Manchester, offering them a safe and empowering space to play the beautiful game as well as supporting the growth of the women's game as a whole.”

“Partnering with an organization that is passionate about the same values as us is a non-negotiable, and the generous investments from Avery Dennison, to support the clubs, both on an operational level and with our new kit design, makes such a difference to an organization like ours. In these new kits, the sense of togetherness has never felt so strong.”

CUP COMPETITIONS

The 2022/23 Vitality FA Cup

By Paul Donegan

Third Round Qualifying

The third round qualifying was played over two weekends, after heavy rain and waterlogged pitches meant some games on the day the round was meant to be played, Sunday 23rd October, were called off.

These were rearranged and played the following Sunday. The clubs from the FA Women's National League Division Ones sides entered the cup in this round. The winning sides got £4,000 whilst the losers received £1,000.

Here are the results.

Newcastle Town 0-11 **Stourbridge**

Swindon Town 10 v 0 Paulton Rovers

York City 3 v 0 Ponteland United

Darwen 3 v 1 Bury AFC

Chester Le Street Town 1 v 1 Cheadle Town Stingers **(Cheadle Town Stingers won 4-3 on penalties)**

South Shields 1 v 5 **Leeds United**

Redcar Town 3 v 2 Ossett United

Wakefield 1 v 5 **Hull City**

Hull United 0 v 1 **Consett**

Bolton Wanderers 2 v 2 Penrith **(Penrith won 4-1 on penalties)**

West Didsbury & Chorlton 1 v 3 **FC United of Manchester**

Brighouse Sports 0 v 7 **Merseyrail**

Middlesbrough 12 v 0 Darlington

Alnwick Town 3 v 1 Chorley

Stockport County 3 v 1 Altofts

Curzon Ashton 1 v 1 Norton & Stockton Ancients **(Norton & Stockton Ancients won 4-2 on penalties)**

Blackburn Community 0 v 6 **Barnsley**

Fleetwood Town 3 v 0 CLS Amazons

Bradford City 2 v 0 Preston North End

Durham Cestria 6 v 0 Mossley Hill

Accrington Stanley 3 v 3 Tranmere Rovers **(Tranmere Rovers 4-3 on penalties)**

Wallesend 2 v 0 Morley Town

Redditch Borough 1 v 3 **Coventry Sphinx**

Market Rasen Town 0 v 8 **Shrewsbury Town**

Lincoln City 1 v 3 **Sheffield**

Doncaster Rovers Belles 7 v 1 Leicester City Ladies

Crewe Alexandra 8 v 0 Sherwood

Sutton Coldfield Town 1 v 1 Shifnal Town **(Sutton Coldfield Town won 5-4 on penalties)**

Dornfield Town 1 v 0 Kettering Town

Asfordby 2 v 0 Skegness Town

Worcester City 2 v 1 Solihull Sporting

Basford United 1 v 2 **Sedgley & Gornal United**

Peterborough United 3 v 1 Mansfield Town

Solihull Moors 7 v 0 Arnold Eagles

Sporting Khalsa 3 v 0 Leek Town

Lye Town 6 v 0 Knowle

Fakenham Town 3 v 4 **Hackney Women's**

Royston Town 12 v 1 Sprowston

Harlow Town 1 v 1 Bowers & Pitsea **(Bowers & Pitsea won 5-4 on penalties)**

Wroxham 0 v 3 **Enfield Town**

Abingdon United 2 v 2 Southampton Women's **(Southampton won 5-4 on penalties)**

Ashford United 4 v 0 Headstone Manor

Millwall Lionesses 7 v 0 Long Crendon

Wycombe Wanderers 3 v 4 **Aylesford**

Chesham United 5 v 0 Penn & Tylers Green

Dulwich Hamlet 3 v 0 Winchester City

Ascot United 5 v 0 AFC Acorns v 3 Farsley Celtic

Woking 0 v 5 **Dartford**

Moneyfields 2 v 0 Hastings United

AFC Stoneham 1 v 1 Eversley & California **(AFC Stoneham won 3-2 on penalties)**

Actonians 4 v 1 Ashford Town Middx

Abingdon Town 6 v 2 Badshot Lea

Sticker 1 v 7 **Portishead Town**

Eastleigh 9 v 1 Signal Box Oak Villa

Warminster Town 3 v 2 Bristol Rovers

Barnstaple Town 0 v 7 **Pucklechurch Sports**

Frampton Rangers 1 v 0 AFC St Austell

Keynsham Town 3 v 1 Larkhall Athletic

Marine Academy Plymouth 0 v 2 **Bishops Lydeard**

Downend Flyers 0 v 10 **Cardiff City**

AFC Bournemouth 5 v 1 Forest Green Rovers

Saltash United 0 v 12 **Exeter City**

Torquay United 5 v 2 Royal Wootton Bassett Town

Liskeard Athletic 11 v 2 Stockwood Wanderers

Bournemouth Sports 6 v 0 AEK Boco

Fulham 3 v 2 Maidenhead United

Norwich City 4 v 1 Cambridge United

Herne Bay 1 v 2 **Sutton United**

Dorking Wanderers 0 v 1 **Selsey**

Warrington Wolves 7 v 3 Farsley Celtic

Lincoln United 7 v 0 Northampton Town

Long Eaton United 0 v 6 **Leafield Athletic**

Wem Town 1 v 0 Chesterfield

Burton Albion 2 v 4 **Lichfield City**

Oughtibridge War Memorial 7 v 1 Nottingham Trent University

Harpenden Town 0 v 2 **Needham Market**

London Seaward 8 v 0 St Ives Town

Colney Heath 1 v 0 Cambridge City

Bedford 0 v 7 **Hashtag United**

Luton Town 4 v 1 AFC Sudbury

Queens Park Rangers 1 v 7 **AFC Wimbledon**

Hounslow 1 v 8 **Clapton Community**

Richmond Park 1 v 8 **Worthing**

AFC Whyteleafe 0 v 3 **Ebbsfleet United**

Poole Town 0 v 2 **Weymouth**

First Round

The first round is due to take place on Sunday 13th November.

The FA Women's National League Premier Division sides enter in this round. The winners in this round will receive £6,000 whilst the sides that lose get £1,500. Consett and Mulbarton Wanderers are the only two tier seven sides that have made it to the first round.

Here is the draw.

Fleetwood Town v Liverpool Feds

Middlesbrough v Bradford City

FC United of Manchester v Merseyrail

Doncaster Rovers Belles v Huddersfield Town

Leeds United v Brighouse Town

Hull City v Newcastle United

Cheadle Town Stingers v York City

Alnwick Town v AFC Fylde

Tranmere Rovers v Burnley

West Bromwich Albion v Crewe Alexandra

Sporting Khalsa v Boldmere St Michaels

Oughtibridge War Memorial v Nottingham Forest

Asfordby v Lichfield City

Lincoln United v Dronfield Town

Shrewsbury Town v Wolverhampton Wanderers

Loughborough Lightning v Sheffield

Lye Town v Wem Town

Stoke City v Derby County

Milton Keynes Dons v Mulbarton Wanderers

Luton Town v Ipswich Town

Watford v Fulham

Clapton Community v Ashford United

Abingdon Town v Portsmouth

Moneyfields v Crawley Wasps

Ebbsfleet United v Southampton Women's

Dartford v Ascot United

Selsey v AFC Wimbledon

Oxford United v Chesham United

Worthing v Sutton United

Hackney Women's v London Bees

Bournemouth Sports v Pucklechurch Sports

Portishead Town v Eastleigh

Exeter City v AFC Bournemouth

Cardiff City v Bridgwater United

Weymouth v Keynsham Town

Bishops Lydeard v Liskeard Athletic

Warminster Town v Torquay United

Plymouth Argyle v Cheltenham Town

Norton & Stockton Ancients v Durham Cestria

Consett v Warrington Wolves

Stockport County v Penrith

Darwen v Barnsley

Wallsend v Redcar Town

Worcester City v Coventry Sphinx

Peterborough United v Stourbridge

Sedgley & Gornal United v Solihull Moors

Sutton Coldfield Town v Leafield Athletic

Billiericay Town v King's Lynn Town

Royston Town v London Seaward

Colney Heath v Hashtag United

AFC Stoneham v Actonians

Millwall Lionesses v Gillingham

Swindon Town v Frampton Rangers

Bowers & Pitsea v Needham Market

Norwich City v Enfield Town

Aylesford v Dulwich Hamlet

Liam Asman/SPP

Chelmsford City 2-2 **Harpenden Town** (HT win pens)

Hitchin Town WO **Hitchin Belles** (Away win walkover)

Cheshunt 5-0 Bedford

Wootton Blue Cross 3-5 **Colney Heath**

Headstone Manor 8-0 Frontiers

Wodson Park 0-7 **Luton Town**

Royston Town 9-1 Hertford Town

Harlow Town WO Garston (Homw win walkover)

Bromley 0-9 **Millwall Lionesses**

Islington Borough 0-4 **Dartford**

Hackney 3-0 Bexhill United

Sittingbourne 1-3 **Clapton Community**

Enfield Town WO Edgware & Kingsbury (Home win walkover)

Tunbridge Wells Foresters 1-7 **Dulwich Hamlet**

Cray Valley PM 2-6 **Herne Bay**

Ashford United 15-0 Borough Green

Aylesford 3-1 Welling United

Hastings United 2-1 Haringey Borough

Abingdon Town 3-3 Oxford City (Abingdon Town won pens)

Caversham United 1-3 **Eversley & California**

Tilehurst Panthers 1-2 **Long Crendon**

Wycombe Wanderers 3-2 Sport London e Benfica

Abingdon United 5-0 Brentford

Watford Ladies Development 0-1 **Penn & Tylers Green**

Milton United 1-3 **Ascot United**

Richmond Park 2-0 Steyning Town

Woking 6-0 Seaford Town

AFC Acorns 1-0 Saltdean United

Leatherhead 0-6 **Woking**

AFC Portchester 2-3 **Badshot Lea**

Widbrook Town 2-7 **Poole Town**

Sherborne Town 1-1 **Winchester City Flyers** (WCF won pens)

AFC Stoneham 3-2 Rushmoor Community

Shaftesbury 1-3 **Warminster Town**

Fleet Town 0-4 **Weymouth**

Pagham 0-12 **Bournemouth Sports**

Middlezoy Rovers 0-6 **Royal Wootton Bassett Town**

AEK Boco 3-0 Bishops Cleeve

Tuffley Rovers 0-2 **Paulton Rovers**

Bristol & West 0-13 **Bristol Rovers**

Penn Mill 1-5 **Pucklechurch Sports**

SGS Olveston United 2-4 **Stockwood Wanderers**

Forest Green Rovers 8-0 Weston Super Mare

FC Chippenham WO **Downend Flyers** (Away win walkover)

Helston Athletic 0-1 **Marine Academy Plymouth**

Feniton 1-9 **Torquay United**

Bradninch 0-14 **Bishops Lydeard**

Sticker 2-1 Ilminster Town

Bodmin 2-5 **Saltash United**

Seaton 1-5 **Liskeard Athletic**

Marine 3-4 **Bury AFC**

Walsall 0-4 **Solihull Sporting**

Activate 1-3 **Barnstaple Town**

Redditch United 0-4 **Redditch Borough**

Bowers & Pitsea 3-2 Stevenage

Ebbsfleet United 4-3 Barking

Newhaven 0-5 **Fulham**

United Services Portsmouth 0-2 **Eastleigh In The Community**

Ashmount Leigh 0-3 **Sutton United**

Third Round Qualifying

The third round qualifying matches are due to take place on Sunday 23rd October. The 48 sides in the FA Women's National League Division Ones enter at this stage.

Arsenal dominate under the lights at the Emirates

Dylan Clinton/SPP

By Rosie Hall

On an uncharacteristically balmy October night in North London, Arsenal Women extended their unbeaten run in the Women's Champions League as they beat Zurich 3-1 under the lights at the Emirates Stadium.

After beating reigning European champions Lyon 5-1 with a fantastic performance in their opening Group C game the week before, expectations for the Gunners were high. While this game against Zurich wasn't quite as thrilling - Arsenal got the job done.

Jonas Eidevall made several changes to the side that beat Liverpool 2-0 in the league, with Jordan Nobbs, Jen Beattie and Kaylan Marckese among the players who started.

It was a slightly more restrained crowd than some anticipated; less than 6,000 people were in attendance at the Emirates, which usually accommodates crowds 10 times the size. This didn't take anything away from the atmosphere, though, with cheers of "Arsenal FC, are by far the greatest team" erupting around the East Stand shortly after kick off.

While the Gunners completely dominated the first half, it took 38 minutes to take the lead. Jordan Nobbs scored a brilliant goal on the volley to convert Steph Catley's precision perfect cross from a corner.

When the stalemate was broken, Arsenal's second didn't take long to come. A stunning header by new summer signing Lina Hurtig gave Eidevall's side a very comfortable 2-0 lead just before half-time.

The second half was a little more heated. Zurich were scrappy, challenging with purpose and doing whatever they could to get back in the game.

In the 76th minute, Zurich's Seraina Piubel showed excellent control and composure in front of goal as she scored in stunning fashion, running straight over to the sidelines to celebrate with her teammates and staff.

It didn't take long for Arsenal to regain the upper hand of the game however, with an almost instantaneous response thanks to the Swedish duo Stina Blackstenius and Lina Hurting. Stina forced a save from Zurich's Lourdes Romero with a powerful shot, but Hurtig was there once again to tap in the rebound. Giving her a brace and claiming her second goal at Arsenal.

Overall, both teams put in a great performance, but it was the home side that truly dominated. While Arsenal perhaps didn't quite show the same vigour and flair as they did against the European champions Lyon the week before, they got the job done. After two matches played, Arsenal sit comfortably at the top of their group.

Stand out players were Kim Little, who rarely paused for breath and showed incredible pace, creativity and determination for the ball. CB duo Jen Beattie and Lotte Wubben-Moy were also crucial in the game, both putting in a fantastic shift at the back. It would be hard not to praise Lina Hurtig too, for two brilliant goals that marked her very first for the club. Jordan Nobbs received POTM on the day.

"I'm happy with the result," Jonas Eidevall said in a post-match interview. "But we've only played two games, there's nothing won yet."

Women's Champions League Results

October 2022

Group Stage - Matchday 1

Zurich 0 - 2 Juventus

Lyon 1 - 5 Arsenal

Bayern 2 - 1 Rosengard

Barcelona 9 - 0 Benfica

Vllaznia 0 - 2 Real Madrid

Paris 0 - 1 Chelsea

Wolfsburg 4 - 0 St Polten

Roma 1 - 0 Slavia Praha

Group Stage - Matchday 2

Real Madrid 0 - 0 Paris

St Polten 3 - 4 Roma

Chelsea 8 - 0 Vllaznia

Slavia Praha 0 - 2 Wolfsburg

Juventus 1 - 1 Lyon

Rosengard 1 - 4 Barcelona

Arsenal 3 - 1 Zurich

Benfica 2 - 3 Bayern

GROUP A

	Team	MP	W	D	L	GD	Pts
1	Chelsea	2	2	0	0	9	6
2	Real Madrid	2	1	1	0	2	4
3	PSG	2	0	1	1	-1	1
4	Vllaznia	2	0	0	2	-10	0

GROUP B

	Team	MP	W	D	L	GD	Pts
1	Wolfsburg	2	2	0	0	6	6
2	Roma	2	2	0	0	2	6
3	Slavia Praha	2	0	0	2	-3	0
4	St Poulton	2	0	0	2	-5	0

GROUP C

	Team	MP	W	D	L	GD	Pts
1	Arsenal	2	2	0	0	6	6
2	Juventus	2	1	1	0	2	4
3	Lyon	2	0	1	1	-4	1
4	Zurich	2	0	0	2	-4	0

GROUP D

	Team	MP	W	D	L	GD	Pts
1	Barcelona	2	2	0	0	12	6
2	Bayern	2	2	0	0	2	6
3	Rosengard	2	0	0	2	-4	0
4	Benfica	2	0	0	2	-10	0

Chelsea vs Vllaznia

Pedro Soares/SPP

By Paul Donegan

Chelsea produced a dominant performance and emphatic win as they beat Albanian champions Vllaznia 8-0 in the UEFA Women's Champions League at Kingsmeadow. Sam Kerr scored four, Pernille Harder got a hat-trick and Katerina Svitkova got the other as Chelsea made it two wins out of two in this season's Champions League.

There was a great atmosphere with over 400 Vllaznia fans in the ground supporting their side. It was Chelsea who had the first chance of the game though in the 2nd minute when after a bit of a scramble, Sophie Ingle's shot was deflected of target. Both Niamh Charles and Johanna Rytting Kaneryd saw efforts saved in the early stages.

Kerr gave Chelsea the lead in the 11th minute when she was played through by Harder and finished from about 6-yards.

A Chelsea corner caused Vllaznia problems in the 18th minute. Guro Reiten put a long range shot over in the 24th minute as the hosts looked to extend their lead. Harder played a nice ball through to Kerr four minutes later but the offside flag had gone up.

The chances continued to come for Chelsea but Harder shot over in the 31st minute. The Dane then headed over a minute later. Reiten skipped passed a defender but her shot was deflected wide in the 34th minute.

Chelsea did score a second in the 37th minute. Reiten's cross took a slight deflection into the path of Kerr who finished from close-range.

Two minutes later and the home side scored a third. Reiten, who was excellent throughout on her 100th appearance for the club, with the assist again when her low cross found Harder who put the ball into the back of the net from 6-yards.

Reiten played a nice through ball to Kerr in the 41st minute but Kaylin Williams-Mosier got there first to claim. Jessie Fleming put a chance just wide a minute later, again Reiten providing the cross. Kerr had the ball in the net again a minute before half time but the offside flag was up this time to deny her.

Chelsea started the second half in the same way by creating chances to extend their lead. Fleming shot over in the 50th minute, and Rytting Kaneryd was unable to control the ball and saw her effort go wide two minutes later. Fleming put another shot over in the 54th minute from 25 -yards out.

It was 4-0 in the 57th minute when Reiten swung in a corner and both Kerr and Eriksson went for the ball, with the final touch looking like it came off Kerr's head to complete her hat-trick.

Eriksson header over a free kick shortly after, before Kerr scored her fourth and Chelsea's fifth in the 60th minute. Reiten got her fourth assist of the evening as she played the ball across and the Australian finished from about 8-yards. The backflip celebration followed, and Kerr became the first player to score four goals in a UEFA Women's Champions League group stage game.

Harder had a chance in the 68th minute but shot over from 25-yards. Beth England was denied by Williams-Mosier a minute later as Chelsea looked to add more.

They did score a sixth in the 72nd minute. England saw her header from a corner pushed away by Williams-Mosier but Harder was there to put the rebound in and score her second of the game.

Harder headed over in the 76th minute, and two minutes later Chelsea did make it 7-0 when two substitutes combined. Alsu Abdullina's cross was headed in by Svitkova for her first goal for the club after joining from West Ham during the summer.

The Vllaznia fans, who had been singing and chanting throughout, started letting off some flares in the final 10 minutes and there was a slight delay after two of these had been thrown onto the pitch.

Megi Doci had an effort for the visitors in the 87th minute but her free kick from 30 or so yards went wide.

Chelsea scored an eighth in the 88th minute when Harder completed her hat-trick from 6-yards after Svitkova's initial shot had been saved by substitute goalkeeper Viona Rexhepi.

England had two chances in additional time, first heading over then seeing her shot hit the outside of the post. The final whistle went shortly after to signal the end of the match and a high scoring win for Chelsea.

Chelsea general manager Paul Green described it as a 'great perfomance' when speaking to the press afterwards. He described Guro Reiten as "the assist queen" and "gives quality down the left side". About Sam Kerr, he said "she is a natural goalscorer" and that "getting four tonight will give her a lot of confidence and hopefully take into the weekend".

Durham impress on penalties

By Helen Rowe-Willcocks

It was penalties all-round in one of the Continental Tyres Groups as teams in the two northern groups battled it out once again.

Group A and B played their second matches on Wednesday, October 26 with four games in total.

We have a look at how the results panned out.

Group A

Durham 2-2 Manchester United
Durham win 3-1 on penalties

Durham secured a memorable penalty victory over Manchester United after coming from behind twice.

Jade Moore put the Red Devils ahead on 22 minutes but in first half injury time Jessica Clarke levelled the scoring.

Moore's arched volley was a moment of brilliance for United after the hosts failed to clear the ball.

Going behind spurred on the hosts with Maria Farrugia coming close just after.

On the stroke of half time Clarke slid the ball into the back of the net from Beth Hepple's free-kick.

After a couple of early second-half chances, it was Boe Risa who found the back of the net from the corner of the box just after the hour mark.

Durham once again did not give in but left to injury time once more before Sarah Robson bagged the equaliser.

And so to penalties it went – Hepple, Hardy and Galloway all netted while McAloon denied Millie Turner and Maya Le Tissier after Katie Zelem fired wide, meaning Durham claimed the bonus point.

Everton 1-1 Aston Villa
Everton win 4-2 on pens

Everton and Aston Villa shared the spoils before the hosts bagged the extra point in a penalty shoot out.

Tash Harding opened the scoring for the visitors, her first for the club, before Aggie Beever-Jones levelled in the second half.

It was Villa who started the stronger side with Kenza Dali dragging an effort wide after just two minutes.

Neither team good break the deadlock in the first half and Villa carried on dominating after the break.

Harding raced past two Everton defenders before beating the on-rushing Emily Ramsey to find the back of the net in her first start in Villa colours.

Just over ten minutes later, Everton found their equaliser.

Beever-Jones dodged past Anna Leat before slotting the ball in the back of the net.

Neither side could find a winner so the game went to penalties to see which team would bag an extra point.

Sarah Mayling and Harding converted their respective kicks, but

Lucy Graham, Stenevik and Hanna Bennison all netted from the spot to put Everton in control of the shootout.

Anna Patten and Laura Blindkilde Brown saw their efforts saved as Villa had to settle for a solitary point on their travels.

Group A		MP	W	D	L	GD	Pts
1	Durham	2	0	2	0	0	2
2	Manchester United	2	0	2	0	0	2
3	Aston Villa	2	0	2	0	0	2
4	Sheffield United	1	0	1	0	0	1
5	Everton	1	0	1	0	0	1

Group B

Leicester 0-4 Liverpool

Liverpool made it two wins out of two in their group stages games with a dominant performance over fellow Women's Super League side Leicester City.

The visitors bagged three goals before the break to put them into a comfortable position in the second half before substitute Katie Stengal added the final goal.

Liverpool found their opener just shy of the quarter-hour mark.

Missy Bo Kearns sent the ball screaming past Demi Lambourne from the edge of the box.

Kearns was in the mix again for Liverpool's second.

The midfielder's delivery was redirected by Rhiannon Roberts into the back of the net.

With just minutes of injury time left, Northern Ireland star Rachel Furness secured the third with a beautiful long-distance strike.

Stengel was brought on at half time for Melissa Lawley and after a quiet start to the second half found the goal once again.

The striker created shooting space with a driving run into Leicester territory and picked out the corner with a low strike off her left foot.

Matt Beard's side remain unbeaten at the top of Group B.

Manchester City 6-0 Blackburn Rovers

Manchester City opened their defence of their Continental Tyres Cup trophy with an impressive performance against Championship side Blackburn Rovers.

City lifted the trophy back in February after beating Chelsea 3-1 at Plough Lane.

There were a number of debuts at the Academy Stadium for City with Sandy MacIver, Annie Hutchings, Gracie Prior, Lois Marley-Paraskevas and Emma Siddall playing.

Despite the scoreline, Blackburn Rovers defended solidly throughout the game but the deadlock was broken on 16 minutes.

Hayley Raso drove into the box and found the bottom corner to secure her first goal of the season in her maiden start of the campaign.

Captain Steph Houghton came close to adding a second on her 215th appearance for the club, but Alex Brooks made an impressive save to deny her.

With just minutes left of the first half, Julie Blakstad was brought down inside the six-yard box.

Mary Fowler stepped up to do the honours and doubled the hosts' lead.

It didn't take City longer to grab another before the break as Vicky Losada's head got on the end of Esme Morgan's cross.

The second half began in similar fashion to the first, with City enjoying the majority of possession but waiting patiently to strike at the Blackburn goal.

The visitors came close to getting one back when Millie Chandarana broke free but the City defence proved too much of a challenge.

Fowler doubled her tally for the night flicking a low shot past Brooks.

With just ten minutes left of the game Taylor was brought on and made an immediate impact.

One of her first touches found Blakstad who was there to net the fifth of the night.

The Norwegian was then on hand to grab the final goal of the game with a close-range finish.

Group B		MP	W	D	L	GD	Pts
1	Liverpool	2	2	0	0	5	6
2	Manchester City	1	1	0	0	6	3
3	Leicester City	2	1	0	1	-1	3
4	Sunderland	1	0	0	1	-1	0
5	Blackburn Rovers	2	0	0	2	-9	0

Upcoming Games
November, 26-27

Group A

Aston Villa vs Durham

Sheffield United vs Everton

Group B

Manchester City vs Sunderland

Liverpool vs Blackburn Rovers

Group C

London City Lionesses vs Brighton & Hove Albion

West Ham vs Birmingham City

Group D

Crystal Palace vs Lewes

Charlton vs Bristol City

Group E

Southampton vs Reading

Tottenham vs Coventry United

HOME NATIONS

It's never to early to get excited for WWC

Daniela Pochelli/SPP

By Frankie Scott

Last month saw the draw for the World Cup, taking place in Australia and New Zealand next July to August.

And oh, boy, how are excited are we?

Following the Lionesses' Euros win, we are amongst the favourites to lift the trophy – and excitement is starting to build as our first three matches are ready to be written into our diaries.

Our first match will be on 22nd July 2023 with either Chile, Senegal, or Haiti – all of whom must qualify through the playoffs to find out who has a World Cup spot.

Our second game will be against Denmark on 28th July – undoubtedly our toughest opponent in the group stage, but still a winnable game. Their biggest threat will be Pernille Harder, Chelsea's attacker, who has performed consistently for her club, and has twice won the UEFA Women's Player of the Year.

Our final game will be with Chile, who failed to qualify for the 2015 World Cup, and were eliminated in the group stage of the 2019 World Cup.

If we win Group D – which, let's be honest, is what we are all anticipating – we will play second place from Group B in the first knockout round. This will be either Australia, Republic of Ireland, Nigeria, or Canada. The two favourites in that group are hosts Australia, who boast Chelsea's top player Sam Kerr, and Canada.

Should we come second in Group D, we will face the first-place team from Group B – either way, it will be a tough game, but one that we will be favourites for.

In the meantime, we have two friendlies coming up this month – which means two opportunities for Sarina Wiegman to experiment in, and two opportunities for players to stake their claim in the squad. We face Japan on 11th November and Norway on 15th November.

I am already counting down the days…

Lionesses: Past and Present

Pedro Soares/SPP

By Clare McEwen

Wembley was buzzing for the England versus USA friendly on Friday, October 7, and Lionesses past were as much a part of the night as Lionesses present.

Before kick-off, focus went from the stars of today, to the stars that paved the way, as The Football Association (FA) marked 50 years of the Lionesses.

Amongst the carnival atmosphere of the post-Euros celebrations, over 100 former Lionesses were welcomed pitch side. Alongside marking Jill Scott's England caps by presenting her with a framed number 161 shirt, and displaying the magnificent Women's Euros trophy, Wembley celebrated the determination, courage and perseverance of the past Lionesses who helped create these moments.

The original Lionesses, who played the very first official international against Scotland in 1972, had not previously been fully recognised by the FA. Although the ban was lifted in 1971, the governing body had never awarded them their international caps. This omission was corrected 50 years later in front of a 76,893 Wembley crowd. It was a beautiful moment.

Sheila Parker, the 1972 captain, and her team, excitedly received their caps from Jill Scott, proudly waving them for the crowd. In return, Scott thanked them for "paving the way". The emotion was palpable – I doubt I was alone in shedding a tear!

The ex-Lionesses paraded around the pitch at half time: waving, smiling, and soaking up a fantastic Wembley atmosphere. A list of Lionesses past and present was displayed on the big screens and in the programme – showcasing the women who "paved the way" for the current generation of trophy winners.

The First Official International

Scotland hosted that international opener in 1972 at Ravenscraig Stadium, Greenock, on November 18. Scotland raced into a two-goal lead thanks to Mary Carr and Rose Reilly (the second going straight in from a corner) before Sylvia Gore scored England's first goal to make it 2-1 at half-time.

After the break, England scored two more through Lynda Hale and Jeannie Allott to win the inaugural match 3-2.

Momentum continued through the 1970s and the Lionesses played many friendlies before official international competitions arrived in the 1980s.

Women's Euros: A Brief History

The catchily named "European Competition for Women's Football" was first held in 1984. The 16 teams were split into four groups. England reached the two-legged final with Sweden, losing the first leg 1-0, but winning the second with a Linda Curl goal. They went on to lose on penalties, finishing the first Euros as Runner's up.

England topped their group in Norway in 1987 but finished fourth after again being beaten by Sweden, this time 3-2 in the semi-finals.

Changes in the format meant that a qualifying competition was introduced from 1989. The Lionesses didn't qualify for the next three tournaments, but in 1995 they made good progress. They beat Iceland 4-2 in the quarter finals but were halted by

Germany in the semi-finals (6-2). The Lionesses finished an impressive third.

Another format change in 1997 saw an eight-team final tournament introduced. England once more failed to qualify and were further disappointed in 2001 when they finished bottom of their group.

England played host to the 2005 tournament and the Lionesses had high hopes. Record crowds and record TV audiences watched, but the Lionesses could only finish bottom of their group.

They bounced back from their home tournament disappointment though and reached the 2009 final. Germany showed their class, winning convincingly 6-2, but this was a fantastic run for the Lionesses.

Karen Carney and Kelly Smith scored in the final, and goals came from Eni Aluko, Fara Williams, Jill Scott, and Faye White throughout the tournament.

More disappointment followed in 2013 when they failed to get out of the group. A return to form in 2017 saw them reach the semi-finals. They were halted by the eventual winners, The Netherlands – under the guidance of Sarina Wiegman.

Wiegman then switched teams and we all know how the 2022 competition ended!

FIFA Women's World Cup: A Brief History

England didn't qualify for the first World Cup in 1991 but reached the quarter-finals of the 12-team 1995 edition. They bowed out with a 3-0 loss to Germany, but had wins against Canada and Nigeria.

Huge viewing figures, plenty of goals, and the rise of an exceptional USA team marked the 1999 tournament (now featuring 16 teams). It was one to forget for the Lionesses with only one win on the board. They failed to qualify at all in 2003.

Draws against Japan and Germany and a strong win against Argentina (6-1) in 2007, saw England bounce back from recent World Cup disappointment. The USA stopped their run at the quarter-final stage.

The Lionesses topped their group in 2011, beating the eventual winners, Japan, 2-0 on the way. They faced France in the quarter-finals, but a 1-0 lead wasn't enough. France equalised and went on to win 4-3 on penalties.

The Lionesses progressed from the group in 2015, beat Norway 2-1 in the round of 16, and Canada 2-1 in the quarters. A heart-breaking stoppage time own goal would see them bow out against Japan in the semi-finals. They re-grouped to beat Germany in the play-off to come third, thanks to a Fara Williams penalty in extra time.

Their last World Cup outing in 2019 saw them through to the semi-finals. A tightly fought semi against USA ended in heartbreak for the Lionesses. They finished the tournament fourth unable to clinch the bronze medal. Ellen White finished with six goals, narrowly missing out on the Golden Boot.

Past, Present and Future

During most of the last 50 years, women have continued to fight for their right to play.

The fight isn't yet over, but thanks to Lionesses, past and present, things are beginning to change. The Lionesses of 1972 had to wait a long time to receive official recognition (and their caps), but they were always an important part of the games' history; a history that has led to a dazzling present and an exciting future.

Pedro Soares/SPP

What have the Lionesses been up to?

Charlotte Stacey/On Her Side

By Clare McEwen

Before the Euros, many of the Lionesses were only known to fans of women's football. Since their historic win, they have become household names in the UK and beyond. And alongside this new celebrity comes opportunity.

There is no doubt they continue to be amazing ambassadors for their sport: raising the profile of the women's game, encouraging girls to play, and campaigning for a safe and inclusive future.

But they are also taking full advantage of opportunities away from the pitch to have some fun.

The Lionesses have racked up plenty of off-the-ball activities since lifting the Euros trophy, so this is the highlight reel rather than an exhaustive list of their extra-curriculars.

Many Lionesses have had the opportunity to dress up for photo shoots and tell their stories to top magazines and newspapers. They've all had to fight against the stereotypes to get to the top of their game, and it's great that they get to inspire future generations with their individual stories. It's also great to dress up and strike a pose for the camera!

Lucy Bronze, Ellen White and Keira Walsh have featured in OK! Magazine; Beth Mead was the cover story for The Times Magazine; Mary Earps told her side of things in The Sunday Times Magazine; Jill Scott has been interviewed by The Guardian; and Rachel Daly and Fran Kirby have spoken to The Telegraph.

Jill Scott hasn't stopped since retiring and doesn't look like slowing down any time soon. She's recently been confirmed as a contestant on "I'm a Celebrity…". I can't think of anyone who is going to be more entertaining in the jungle! She's also made her debut as a presenter on Sky Sports (alongside Karen Carney and Kelly Smith); she's started the London Marathon with Leah Williamson and Ellen White; and given out drinks to runners with Anthony Joshua; all alongside taking on more barista duties at her co-owned coffee shop.

Beth Mead has won almost every accolade in Women's football this season but has still found time for off-pitch activities. Top of Beth's list must be getting her book to the publishers–"Lioness: My Journey to Glory" is out on Thursday, November 10.

Lauren Hemp has made a cameo appearance in Hollyoaks and been on A Question of Sport. Lucy Bronze has unveiled the Lego version of the Women's Euros Trophy: made up of 2944 bricks and taking 25 hours to build (fortunately, she didn't have to build it!). It's currently displayed in The National Football Museum in Manchester as part of the "Crossing the Line: the Story of Women's Football" exhibition.

Millie Bright, Leah Williamson and Jill Scott presented the "Returning Drama" award at the recent National Television Awards; Ella Toone and Alessia Russo have been on The Big Breakfast; and Chloe Kelly has been on The Jonathan Ross Show.

To top it all off, the Lionesses have been awarded the "Inspiration Award" at the 2022 Pride of Britain Awards - and rightly so!

England to face Brazil at Wembley

England Lionesses will fact Brazil in the first ever Women's Finalissima at Wembley Stadium this April.

The 2022 European champions are set to face the Copa America Femenina winners, marking another highlight in the growth of women's football in this country.

The clash is set to place on April 6 2023 and will give both sides the chance to lift another trophy before heading to the World Cup in Australia and New Zealand a few months later.

Wiegman's side are set to face Japan and Norway next month in friendlies as they prepare for another major tournament.

England began their preparations for the 2019 World Cup with a sold-out clash against Brazil in Middlesbrough in October 2018. Then, 30,000 fans watched Fran Kirby score the only goal of the match in a predominantly one-sided affair in which the winning margin arguably should have been bigger.

Sarina Wiegman's side will be looking to head into the 2022 World Cup with similar momentum as they bid to eclipse a fourth-place finish in the 2019 World Cup held in France.

Wiegman announces final 2022 squad

Sarina Wiegman has announced her final squad for 2022 as England prepare to face Japan and Norway.

The 25-player group will take on their fellow 2023 FIFA Women's World Cup finalists at the Pinatar Arena football centre in Murcia.

The fixtures see Japan up first on Friday November 11 (7pm GMT), followed by a meeting with Norway on Tuesday November 15 (7pm GMT).

Included in the squad are uncapped young duo Maya Le Tissier and Katie Robinson while Alessia Russo returns after missing the October camp with injury.

Captain Leah Williamson is still absent having also sat out last month's 2-1 defeat of the United States at Wembley Stadium and 0-0 draw with Czech Republic in Brighton. Niamh Charles and Jordan Nobbs also come back into contention.

"These will again be two good challenging games for us which is just what we want and need at this stage," said Wiegman.

"We will come up against one team in Norway that we know plenty about and who are building again under Hege [Riise]. However, before then we have a tough match against a Japan, who are bringing a different style of play which is a good preparation for the World Cup.

"We are hoping the conditions in Spain will help us to maximise our training as every session counts, along with the matches of course, in helping us to be ready for the World Cup.

"We cannot waste a minute and I am looking forward to getting back on the grass. We have some new players to look at as we know we have so much competition for places coming through."

There has been a lot of press surrounding Hannah Hampton who has not been appearing for England or Aston Villa since September.

Speculation had been ripe about her behaviour but a statement from the goalkeeper appeared to dismiss those.

She said: "I've been suffering with an ongoing medical issue for a while and it's time to address it with a small procedure.

"I will be out for a few weeks now as I recover with the support of everyone at the club."

Wiegman commented on the ongoing situation saying: "I haven't spoken to her myself. We made a plan, she is at the club and taking care of that."

Squad

Goalkeepers:
Mary Earps (Manchester United), Sandy MacIver (Manchester City), Ellie Roebuck (Manchester City)

Defenders:
Millie Bright (Chelsea), Lucy Bronze (Barcelona), Niamh Charles (Chelsea), Rachel Daly (Aston Villa), Alex Greenwood (Manchester City), Maya Le Tissier (Manchester United), Esme Morgan (Manchester City), Lotte Wubben-Moy (Arsenal)

Midfielders:
Fran Kirby (Chelsea), Jordan Nobbs (Arsenal), Georgia Stanway (Bayern Munich), Ella Toone (Manchester United), Keira Walsh (Barcelona), Katie Zelem (Manchester United)

Forwards:
Lauren Hemp (Manchester City), Lauren James (Chelsea), Chloe Kelly (Manchester City), Beth Mead (Arsenal), Nikita Parris (Manchester United), Katie Robinson (Brighton & Hove Albion), Alessia Russo (Manchester United), Ebony Salmon (Houston Dash)

Celebrate the Lionesses' success in brand new Top Trumps pack

Top Trumps has been a much loved game for over 50 years and is the UK's #1 card game*. Over the years, Top Trumps has launched hundreds of titles on various topics, all over the world and in different languages.

Now to celebrate the Lionesses' success in becoming the winners of the the Euros in 2022, Top Trumps is launching a pack with 30 female football players and featuring the likes of Steph Houghton, Demi Stokes and Ellie Roebuck.

In this brand new pack (that is due to launch in November 2022), football fans can learn more about these England players and play against each other to become the Top Trump!

As with all Top Trumps packs, the cards contain stats about all the footballers and the categories are Date of Birth, Height, Appearances, Goals, Trophies and Top Trumps Rating.

Find out how many clean sheets Mary Earps has had, how many trophies Lucy Bronze has won and how many goals Leah Williamson has scored, in this brand new pack.

Women's European Football Champions launches in November 2022 and will be available on Amazon (RRP £8).

Young Lionesses in final action of 2022

Mo Morley has named her 24-player squad for the WU23s final games of 2022.

The side will play Netherlands at Walsall before traveling to Rome to face Italy.

Meanwhile, Emma Coates and Gemma Davies are taking a development squad covering two age groups to Portugal next week with the players meeting up on Sunday 6 November.

Coates will lead an WU19 selection participating in the Algarve Cup. They begin by facing Norway on Wednesday 9 November at Stadium Vila Real de Santo Antonio (17.00 KO CET). The team will then return to the same stadium a few days later for a fixture against the Netherlands on Monday 14 November (14.00 KO CET).

Davies' WU18 side will also feature at the Stadium Vila Real de Santo Antonio when Portugal host them following the U19 match on Wednesday 9 November (20.00 KO CET).

Head of Women's Technical, Kay Cossington said "It is great at every level we are getting the opportunity to face strong opposition.

"We want our players to test themselves when they come away with the national team, whatever the age group.

"As was set out from the reintroduction of the Under-23 squad last year you can see a real pathway for younger players to showcase their talent and stake a claim for the senior squad.

"We are seeing more and more young players getting opportunities to progress and experiences like this are only going to continue that positive trend."

FIFA WOMEN'S WORLD CUP 2023

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Martinez Losa 'proud' of players despite WWC play-off defeat

Pedro Martinez Losa told his players he was 'proud' of them after their 1-0 defeat to Republic of Ireland.

Scotland's 1-0 loss at Hampden Park meant the side would not being going to the Women's World Cup in Australia and New Zealand next summer.

The hosts missed an early opportunity to take the lead after a penalty was awarded for handball. However, Caroline Weir was unable to find the net as Republic of Ireland goalkeeper Courtney Brosnan dived to her left to save well.

Amber Barrett's second half goal was enough to seal victory for Ireland.

Speaking after the match, Martinez Losa said: "We're extremely disappointed and sad. I have seen the work that we have put and the motivation that the players had.

"We did everything we could to try and win today but the small details matter and today they were on the other side.

"We had our chances, starting from the penalty. One action decided the game. We tried until the end.

"I am proud of them. There is no words which can compensate the pain that is in the dressing room, the disappointment. It is a part of life, sometime life puts you in a place you don't want to be but we will come back stronger.

"It is difficult to digest in this moment, we need to take some time.

"You learn from everything you do. The more we progress, the more challenging it will be. We will pick up every individual in this group and we will come back together."

Alex Todd/SPP

Scottish FA extends adidas partnership

The Scottish FA has extended its partnership with adidas until 2028.

The extension to the current partnership will see adidas' role as the Scottish FA's official kit supplier continue into its 18th year.

Adidas' innovative kit designs featured in the recent 2023 FIFA Women's World Cup play-offs, which saw consecutive competitive record crowds at the home of Scottish football, Hampden Park.

Chris Rawlings, Scottish FA Chief Commercial Officer: "The renewal of our long-term partnership with adidas is another positive step in what has been a positive year for the Scottish FA.

"For over a decade now, the Scottish FA and adidas have collaborated to produce innovative kit for Scotland supporters to proudly sport the colours of their national teams.

"We are proud of our association with adidas and we look forward to continuing the partnership over the coming years."

Chris Walsh, Vice President of brand at adidas North Europe said: "We are delighted to extend the fantastic partnership we have with the Scottish FA that dates back to 2010.

"This is an exciting time for both the Scottish FA & adidas, we are looking forward to how the partnership can grow further both on and off the field of play."

Homeless Charity links up with BIFFA SWFL

Scottish Women's Football is delighted to announce a new charity partnership with Simon Community Scotland.

Working alongside the Scottish Women's Football League's title partner Biffa, Simon Community Scotland will become the official charity partner to the Biffa SWFL, the regional grassroots leagues.

The partnership will see Scottish Women's Football highlighting and supporting the services that Simon Community Scotland provides in Scotland, whilst raising awareness of the support available to those in need through the organisation.

Commenting, Scottish Women's Football CEO Aileen Campbell said: "Women's football champions equality, and I am proud we have supported Simon Community Scotland's work to eliminate period poverty. This partnership takes that further, recognising the important links our SWFL clubs have with the communities they are the heart of.

"I hope through this relationship we can highlight the causes of homelessness and that no-one is immune from it, as well as pointing anyone at risk to the support that is available."

Lorraine McGrath, CEO at Simon Community Scotland, said: "Many of our services are specially designed to support the needs of women experiencing homelessness and I am confident that our partnership will help shine a light on the challenges faced by women and the support required.

"This partnership launches at a time when our support is needed more than ever."

SHAAP extend partnership to support youth game

Partnership of Royal Colleges and alcohol experts, Scottish Health Action on Alcohol Problems (SHAAP), have renewed their partnership with Scottish Women's Football for the 2022/23 season.

The renewal will see the new National Academy Programme renamed the SHAAP National Academy Programme – the elite competitive league with top clubs designed to nurture the best talent in the country.

Scottish Women's Football chair Vivienne MacLaren said: "Scottish Women's Football takes the health and welfare of our players extremely seriously, and I'm proud of our stance when it comes to avoiding sponsorship from alcohol or gambling brands."

Dr Alastair MacGilchrist, SHAAP Chair said: "Sport should be associated with and inspire good health and team spirit, and should not be used as a marketing tool for harmful products. SHAAP are pleased to support Scottish Women's Football, given their stance on rejecting alcohol sponsorship."

SWPL Cup: Semi-final results

Spartans vs Rangers

Rangers are into their first-ever Scottish Women's Premier League Cup final after beating Spartans 4-0.

Chelsea Cornet opened the scoring after seven minutes and Kayla McCoy got her first goal in the competition this season, slotting home a penalty before half-time.

In the second half Rangers continued their goalscoring exploits as Jenny Danielson and Lizzie Arnot also got on the score sheet.

Glasgow City vs Hibernian

Hibernian overcame their rivals Glasgow City to head to the final at Tynecastle Park on December 11.

Krystyna Freda opened the scoring against her formers side and doubled the scoreline with 15 minutes remaining.

Glasgow City came back to make it 2-1 thanks to Mairead Fulton but it was too late to make impact.

Cymru to face Finland in Spain

Gemma Grainger's Cymru will take on Finland in an international challenge match on Saturday, November 12.

The game will take place at the Pinatar Arena in Spain.

The two sides last met in the 2018 Cyprus Cup, where a Kayleigh Green goal secured the 1-0 win for Cymru.

The time away in Spain will be an opportunity to reflect on the recent 2023 FIFA Women's World Cup qualifying campaign, where a last-minute loss in extra time to Switzerland in the Play-Off final stopped Cymru's path to reach a major tournament for the first time.

The match will also start Cymru's preparations for the UEFA Women's EURO 2025 qualifying campaign, with the draw for the Qualifying Round due to take place in early 2023.

Cymru Manager Gemma Grainger said: "The camp is another opportunity to take a step forward in our development as a team.

"It gives us a chance to come together and review the World Cup qualification campaign, along with playing against another nation that competed in the European Championships in the summer."

Squad

Natasha Harding has been left out of the team for personal reasons whilst Tottenham defender Esther Morgan and Leicester midfielder Hannah Cain remain sidelined with long-term injuries.

Speaking about Harding, Grainger said: ""I want all players to be available for selection, but with the current situation, it is in the best interests of the player for her not to be here."

Helen Ward, the top goalscorer, is included despite hinting at retirement.

Laura O'Sullivan, Olivia Clark, Safia Middleton-Patel, Rhiannon Roberts, Josie Green, Hayley Ladd, Gemma Evans, Rachel Rowe, Lily Woodham, Sophie Ingle, Anna Filbey, Angharad James, Georgia Walters, Charlie Estcourt, Jess Fishlock, Carrie Jones, Ffion Morgan, Megan Wynne, Elise Hughes, Kayleigh Green, Helen Ward, Ceri Holland, Maria Francis-Jones, Chloe Williams, Morgan Rogers, Chloe Bull

Cymru squad announced for Uefa WU17 Euro qualifiers

The 2022/23 Uefa WUEuro qualifiers get underway in November.

Nia Davies has selected 20 players to travel to Israel for the tournament's first round.

League B

- Israel (hosts)
- Cymru
- Montenegro

Cymru start the campaign in League B Group 5 and have been drawn alongside the hosts and Montenegro.

The first match against Montenegro will take place on Sunday 30 October (KO 9:30GMT) before facing Israel on Wednesday 2nd November (KO 13:00GMT).

Several players selected play for the FAW's Girls Academy sides and for sides in the Adran Leagues system.

The teams in League B (including sides relegated from League A in 2021/22 round 2) compete for promotion to League A in six groups.

The six group winners and the runners-up with the best record against the teams first and third in their section will be promoted. League A round 2 next spring (drawn on 7 December) will decide the seven teams joining Estonia in the 2023 finals running from 14 to 26 May.

Cymru WU17:

Cerys Phillips (Chelsea), Ameliah Yarwood (Forest Green Rovers), Mayzee Davies (Manchester United), Casi Evans (FAW North Academy), Emily Loudon (FAW North Academy), Amy Richardson (Everton), Casi Gregson (FAW South Academy), Lauren Davies (FAW South Academy), Sophie Rawling (FAW North Academy), Evie Hughes (Cardiff City Women), Elena Cole (FAW South Academy), Ruby Day (Bristol City), Keira O'Keefe (FAW South Academy), Amelie Curtis (Birmingham City), Ania Denham (FAW North Academy), Mared Griffiths (FAW North Academy), Chloe McMahon (Bristol City), Maddison Perrott (Bristol City), Olivia Francis (Pontypridd United), Charlotte Salisbury-Williams (Wolverhampton Wanderers).

Gemma Lewis appointed FAW's first women's and girls' pathway manager

Words: FAW Cymru

The Football Association of Wales has appointed Gemma Lewis as its first Women's and Girls' Pathway Manager.

Lewis, who represented Cymru during her playing career, joins the FAW having overseen considerable success by leading the Future Ferns programme for the New Zealand Football Federation and overseeing all youth age groups. During her time in the role, Lewis helped many players successfully progress into the New Zealand national team.

She was also part of the FIFA Women's World Cup in France as a member of the Football Ferns' coaching staff and most recently guided New Zealand to the FIFA U20 World Cup.

During her time with the FAW, Lewis will be responsible for ensuring there is a seamless transition of youth players into the national senior squad, embedding the Welsh Way and working closely with the Senior Talent Identification Manager to identify young, talented Welsh-eligible players.

FAW Chief Football Officer, David Adams, said: "Gemma Lewis was the outstanding candidate in our search to secure a lead for our Women's and Girls' Player Pathway Manager.

"We are delighted to welcome Gemma to the FAW family, as this position will enable further alignment of high-performance services into our female national youth teams.

"It will create greater synergy between our exciting Girls' Academy program in the north and south, which feeds into our international female teams at U15s, U16s, U17s and U19s level."

James Whitehead/SPP

FAW Women's Cup draw

The draw for the quarter final of the FAW Women's Cup was conducted at FAW HQ on Monday October 31.

Eight clubs have booked their place in this stage of the competition, which is the first round in which the draw will be open in the 2022-23 edition.

FAW Women's Cup draw:

Cardiff Wanderers v Briton Ferry Llansawel

Cardiff Met v Llandudno

Cardiff City v Abergavenny

Wrexham AFC v Aberystwyth Town

Ties will be played on Sunday 11th December 2022

Fishlock engagement

Wales most-capped player Jess Fishlock has announced she is engaged.

Sharing two pictures on social Fishlock and fiancée Tziarra King—fellow OL Reign footballer—wrote: "For Life."

The post shows Fishlock with her new fiancé, American footballer and fellow OL Reign teammate, holding up a card that says "You're en-gay-ged!".

In 2018, the Wales football star received an MBE for "services to football and the LGBT community". She was also named Stonewall Sports Champion in 2020.

NC Courage footballer Carson Pickett wrote: "Omg!!! Congrats, Ahh this is incredible."

Sending massive congratulations to Fishlock and King.

Tisdale's Tidbits

By Zoë Tisdale

With Cliftonville Ladies being crowned champions for the first time ever in their club history, I look back at the North Belfast club and how they have risen to the dizzy heights of Irish Premiership Champions 2022.

Cliftonville Ladies were roughly formed in 2006, although no one is quite sure as such was the lack of interest in the women's game back then.

A red revolution began though on the back of the pandemic, when the women's premiership was granted elite status, this was the turning point for Cliftonville.

Former manager of the women's team and head of Women's Football at Solitude, Martin Douglas stepped in to coach the women along with Brendan Lynch and John McGrady in the last few games of the 2020 season.

The board then backed the plan to replicate the model from the men's section into the women's section. The club hasn't looked back since.

Standards were set high, how players trained, what they wore, how they conducted themselves on and off the pitch, all these things were set in place.

There was a now a certain ethos and culture at the club. Coaching was of the highest standard which included former player, Clare Carson, who retired from playing in 2020.

Glentoran ladies who have been so dominant continued to be, winning back-to-back titles in 2020 and 21 but Cliftonville were getting closer when they were narrowly pipped to the post by Glentoran in 2021.

That hurt stayed with Cliftonville and rebuilding continued.

An extensive recruitment programme began, attracting players like Louise McDaniel.

Having spent time in England and Scotland, she returned home and was so impressed with the running of Cliftonville that she decided to sign.

Another factor was the growth and success of the NI international team, many of whom play for Clintonville.

Marissa Callaghan, who has been at the club for 20 years, alongside additional signings in 2021 such as Danielle Maxwell, Vickey Carleton, Abbie Magee, Kirsty and Caitlin McGuiness and Kelsie Burrows. provided genuine quality in the squad, and soon there was the real basis of a developing team.

Another integral part of their success has been the development of the youth at the club. Toni -Leigh Finnegan, Rachel Norney and Grace McKimm to name but a few, are young players who are developing massively under the regime, and are benefitting hugely from playing alongside such quality and experienced players.

With the players in place, and a new determination to drive the team forward, Cliftonville also took advantage of a crucial factor, and that was the consistency of their facilities.

With the club having a 4G pitch, the women's team had access to the exact same facilities as the men, thus not only allowing for a feeling of equality and inclusion, but also providing them with surface to develop an attacking style of play, that has proved to be irresistible throughout the season

So, recruiting well, a strong management team, strengthening the squad and the hurt that was felt along with a team who not only are close friends on the pitch but are also good friends off it has meant that Cliftonville eventually have found the right recipe for success and my guessing is that this won't be the last Premiership trophy they will be lifting.

Northern Ireland to face Italy in friendly

Northern Ireland will face Italy in their final match of 2022.

The friendly will end a memorable year for Kenny Shiels' side after their history-making performances at the Women's European Championships in the summer.

The game will be held at Seaview Stadium in Belfast—the home of the Crusaders on Tuesday, November 15.

Italy have recently qualified for next summers FIFA Women's World Cup in Australia and New Zealand.

Boss Shiels said: "We will relish the challenge against our Italian counterparts.

"The stronger the opposition, the more valuable an experience it will be for our players.

Cliftonville win league

Cliftonville have won the Women's Premiership for the first time with a 2-1 win over Crusaders Strikers.

Knowing a win would secure the title, Marissa Callaghan netted a second-half penalty but Megan Ingram responded.

However, Vicky Carleton headed home a late winner to secure the three points.

Nearest rivals Glentoran, who needed a win to keep the race alive, drew 2-2 with Linfield.

Elsewhere, Cora Chambers scored a hat-trick as Sion Swifts beat Mid Ulster 5-1. Eimear McGarrity pulled a goal back for Mid Ulster after Chambers had netted twice, and the young striker completed her hat-trick as Tara O'Connor-Farren and Caoirse Doherty also netted.

Lisburn beat Derry City at the Bluebell Stadium in a two -goal victory as Vivienne McCormack opening the scoring with 15 minutes remaining before an Orlaith Cooper own goal doubled the advantage.

Women's Premiership results : Wednesday, 26 October

Section A:

Crusaders Strikers 1-2 Cliftonville

Glentoran 2-2 Linfield

Section B:

Lisburn 2-0 Derry City

Mid Ulster 1-5 Sion Swifts

Electric Ireland Women's Challenge Cup final

Glentoran have made it four in a row in the Electric Ireland Women's Challenge Cup after they beat Sion Swifts at the National Football Stadium at Windsor Park.

Two first half goals were enough for Glentoran to secure the victory despite Sion getting a late goal pushing them to go for the equaliser.

The win means Glentoran have made it 10 wins out of 11 in the Irish Cup finals after they added the County Antrim shield earlier in the season.

Jessica Foy opened the scoring in the first half with a well-executed free-kick into the top left corner from just outside the right side of the area.

Barely five minutes later, Sarah Tweedie found Joely Andrews on a run and delivered a pass which perfectly found the back of the net to double their lead.

Sion didn't give up and came close to pull one back on 40 minutes buy Aimee Neal's header was flicked over the top of the crossbar.

Then, with two minutes remaining, the Co. Tyrone side set up a grandstand finish after Naomi McLaughlin clipped the ball forward for substitute Tara O'Connor-Farren to control and send a brilliant finish past the Glentoran keeper.

However, it wasn't enough to spark a late leveller as Glentoran held on to claim yet another piece of silverware.

INTERNATIONAL TOURNAMENTS

Spain retain U17 World Cup

Daniela Pochelli/SPP

By Jamie Davies

Spain won the FIFA U17 Women's World Cup last month after a 1-0 win over Colombia in the final.

It looked to be a stalemate finale between the South Americans and the Europeans until the 82nd minute where an own goal from Colombia's Ana Maria Guzman Zapata awarded Spain their second ever crown at a Women's Under-17 World Cup.

The win over Colombia secured Spain's back to back triumph of U17 World Cups after winning the last one four years ago in Uruguay where they beat Mexico (2-1).

2022 has proved to be a successful year for the Spanish women's national team as it all begun in August when their U20s side won their first ever World Cup in Costa Rica. A few weeks ago, Spanish player Alexia Putellas picked up her second straight FIFA Ballon d'Or and now the U17 squad have added to that with world glory.

The FIFA President, Gianni Infantino, was in attendance for the final which was taking place at the DY Patil Stadium in Mumbai, India.

As well as Infantino, an attendance of nearly 25,000 were there to spectate on Spain's late dramatic win over Colombia.

The final did not really get going until the 21st minute when Spain struck the target first as a 30 yard right footed shot by Cristina Libran was tipped over the bar by Colombia's goalkeeper of Luisa Agudelo.

Seven minutes later had Colombia throw in their first real chance as it all started from a corner in the near side. The delivery into the six yard box would be punched away by Spain's goal stopper, Sofia Fuente, then moments later at the receiving end of the clearance Natalia Hernandez placed a volley just over the target while the goalkeeper was off her lines. Spain were able to breathe again knowing they were inches off going behind in a World Cup final.

The momentum stuck with Colombia over 11 minutes before the half time break, Linda Caicedo picked up a low ball pass from the right hand side before fancying a shot at goal that did rattle Fuente as she didn't catch the ball originally but recovered to avoid any problems with the rebounded efforts from her opponents.

Caicedo continued to get busy up front for Colombia as she ran in for a loose ball on its way into Spain's penalty area, she would outpace her opponent but lost the ball to Fuente where the team in yellow called for a penalty. The referee, Katia Garcia, ignored the claims and no penalty was given.

The score line was goal less at the break as Colombia looked the more likely to break the deadlock but instead it was Spain that would beat them to it just two minutes into the second half. Jone Amezaga ran down the right wing to then cross a low ball across the face of the goal to find her team mate Libran who tapped the ball in at close range. The Spain players started to celebrate the breakthrough, but not long after the referee disallowed the goal after a VAR check due to a handball in build up to the goal from Libran.

14 minutes from time and Colombia were very close to opening the scoring when substitute Karla Viancha went up for a loose ball in the air against Fuente. Both players collided but the last ditch header from Viancha directed the ball into the side netting. Fuente timed getting contact with the ball just right as if she was a second later, a penalty could have been awarded.

Spain's next attack with just over eight minutes left on the clock would start with a run down the right wing followed by a cross into the penalty area. Spain's substitute of Laia Martret miss kicked the delivery but luck was on her side when her shot deflected off Ana Guzman in the six-yard box and then the ball slowly rolled across the line.

The Spaniards took the lead thanks to the fortune of a deflection that would classify as an own goal for young Guzman. Stefania Perlaza tried to clear it in time but she just wasn't quick enough. The winning goal was decided by milliseconds.

Colombia were not done yet as a free kick shortly after the goal started with a long ball into the box as two shots at goal were both blocked by the captain of Marina Artero.

Exactly two seconds before the 90 and Spain missed out on the opportunity to put the game to bed as Martret hit the post.

That proved to be the last goal chance in the game as Spain finished up as the victors.

Women's World Cup Draw puts everything into place

By Jamie Davies

Last month, New Zealand hosted the 2023 FIFA Women's World Cup draw as the competing nations found out whom they would face at the finals.

Every football draw event is always full of excitement with many asking the question of 'who will get who?' as at least 29 participant representatives attended the ceremony at the Aotea Centre in Auckland on the evening of Saturday
October 22nd.

Familiar faces attended the draw including England Manager Sarina Wiegman, ex-World Cup winning manager of Jill Ellis and let's not forget Arsenal legend Ian Wright who was one of the draw members on stage.

Wright's enthusiasm and influence in the world of women's football over the last couple of decades was great to see a figure like him to be part of the draw.

His role was to determine either which group position each nation would get in groups E or F. He had no responsibility in England's involvement of the draw as the Lionesses were drawn into Group D.

Hosting the draw included Carli Lloyd who we all know was part of the USWNT team that had won the last two World Cups in Canada 2015 and France 2019. Lloyd certainly enjoyed talking about her recent nation's success as being the most successful country in the history of the Women's World Cup.

Going into the draw, all 32 participants were arranged into four different pots which all came down to the latest FIFA women's world rankings days before the date of the draw.

29 teams had cemented their places for next summer's finals but there are still three places to be determined. The final three places will not be decided until the inter-confederation play-offs take place on February 18th-23rd in New Zealand. 10 teams will compete for only the three spots left available.

Pots

Pot 1	
New Zealand	Australia
USA (1)	Sweden (2)
Germany (3)	England (4)
France (5)	Spain (6)

Pot 2	
Canada (7)	Netherlands (8)
Brazil (9)	Japan (11)
Norway (12)	Italy (14)
China (15)	South Korea (17)

Pot 3	
Denmark (18)	Switzerland (21)
Ireland (24)	Colombia (27)
Argentina (29)	Vietnam (34)
Costa Rica (37)	Jamaica (43)

Pot 4	
Nigeria (45)	Philippines (53)
South Africa (54)	Morocco (76)
Zambia (81)	PO A winner
PO B winner	PO C winner

The rule of the pots meant teams in the same pot could not be in the same group and would be separated. Even though there were more UEFA teams in the draw, none of the eight groups could have more than two UEFA nations in it.

There was a chance of England being drawn in with neighbors Republic of Ireland who were experiencing their first ever Women's World Cup draw, as their play-off victory secured their first ever appearance at the finals.

New Zealand were scripted to be the first team drawn as they were promised to kick off the tournament in the opening match when it all starts at Eden Park in Auckland on July 20th.

The Draw

After over an hour of nerve whacking tension inside the venue, everyone spectating in New Zealand and around the world learnt who they were going to face in the groups and possibly the knockout stages (if they are to advance).

Here is the group draw in great detail...

Group A
New Zealand
Norway
Philippines
Switzerland

Group B
Australia
Ireland
Nigeria
Canada

Group C
Spain
Costa Rica
Zambia
Japan

Group D
England
Play-off Group B winners
Denmark
China

Group E
USA
Vietnam
Netherlands
Play-off Group A winners

Group F
France
Jamaica
Brazil
Play-off Group C winners

Group G
Sweden
South Africa
Italy
Argentina

Group H
Germany
Morocco
Colombia
South Korea

Draw Highlights

The main highlight of the draw has got to be the repeat of the 2019 Women's World Cup final of the USA versus the Netherlands in group E.

The moment Netherlands were put into the same as the world champions, straight away the presenters (including Carli Lloyd) and the audiences gasped while realizing that there was an opportunity for the Dutch to aim at revenge over the Americans.

Netherlands, who were managed by England's Sarina Wiegman at the time, fell short to Jill Ellis' USA in Lyon to accept being runners-up just two years after winning the UEFA Women's Euros.

The game ended 2-0 to the USA as Megan Rapinoe opened the scoring from the penalty spot followed by a game ending goal by Rose Lavelle 21 minutes from time.

Co-hosts Australia were given quite a challenging opening stages to their home World Cup campaign in group B as they will face Canada, Nigeria and Republic of Ireland. Some are describing group B as the 'group of death' and possibly the hardest group the Matildas have been given.

Canada are currently the Olympic champions after striking gold at last year's Tokyo games. The Canadians also beat Australia not once but twice recently in back-to-back games in September even though the maple leafs had an understrength squad.

Bev Priestmann's side are the highest -ranked opponent (seventh) Australia could have drawn from their pot.

The Republic of Ireland were the third-highest ranked team in their pot (24th), but beat Australia last year.

Finally Nigeria who complete the group are the most successful African nation in women's football and are not a force to be messed with as this is a team that features Barcelona's Asisat Oshoala up front.

England's World Cup Dream

The success of last summer with England will of course create a new standard of expectancy for Wiegman and her team to continue this glory run of bidding for major international trophies.

Plus the recent friendly win over the world champions at Wembley Stadium just shows that the Lionesses could arguably be the best team in the world right now.

After the recent draw, the team now know what possible routes are available to them if they are going to go all the way next summer and become world champions for the first time in their history.

England's group D is not one to be comfortable with as this includes this year's Asian Cup winners of China and Denmark that has a host of experienced names like Pernille Harder.

Their play-off winner opponent will of course not be known until next year but it could possibly be either Chile, Senegal or Haiti. Whoever comes out of that will be expected to be the easier opponent.

England's start to the tournament is against the play-off winner on July 22nd in Brisbane followed by Denmark in Sydney six days later. They then wrap up the group stages against China in Adelaide on August 1st.

A top two finish in the group will get them into the last 16 against one of the teams of group B, so that could be hosts Australia, Canada, Nigeria or Ireland. Having their group linked up with the 'group of death' is a tough one for England but this is the World Cup at the end of the day.

An exciting challenge ahead for the Lionesses down-under.

Heartbreak for Wales and Scotland in World Cup Play-offs

Alex Todd/SPP

By Jamie Davies

Both Wales and Scotland missed out on a Women's World Cup spot after losing their play-off games last month.

A last minute extra time winner from Switzerland's Fabienne Humm caused utter heartbreak for the Wales national team as their bid to reach their first ever World Cup finals was dashed away.

For Scotland it was a home defeat to neighbours Republic of Ireland at Hampden Park as the only goal in the game from Amber Barrett in the 72nd minute was enough to upset the hosts, who had hoped to qualify for a second straight World Cup after 2019.

The wins for Switzerland and Republic of Ireland guaranteed them a spot at next summer's World Cup as they earnt enough points for the two automatic spots in the play-offs.

For Portugal however, even though they beat Iceland in extra time they did not have enough points for the top two spots in the three-team table. Instead, they will have to settle for February's Inter-confederation play-offs that will take place in New Zealand.

Portugal will await for whoever wins in group A's semi-final between Cameroon and Thailand since they have been automatically placed in the play-off final. That World Cup spot decider will be played on February 22nd in Hamilton.

Switzerland and Ireland of course entered last month's Women's World Cup draw in New Zealand. Ireland were placed in group B as some are calling it 'the group of death' with hosts Australia, Canada and Nigeria. The Swiss will be in group A along with co-hosts New Zealand, Norway and Philippines.

The dream target of reaching a major international tournament looked very possible for the red dragons when they beat Bosnia and Herzegovina in round one in Cardiff. They had to wait until extra time to find the winning goal thanks to Jess Fishlock who found the target after going behind the Bosnia defence when collecting a free kick delivery into the 18-yard box from the right wing. Fishlock was unmarked and timed the run perfectly to volley the ball into the top left corner of the net, it just had to be from the most capped player for Wales.

The last hurdle was then a trip to Zurich where the hosts of Switzerland were waiting. An away match against a team that reached the quarterfinals at the last World Cup had the Swiss as match favourites to advance. However, the script took a twist just 19 minutes in as Rhiannon Roberts tapped in the opening goal after receiving a flick header in the six-yard box – it was a dream start for the visitors.

Seconds before half time and Switzerland had responded as Ramona Bachmann struck the roof of the Wales net from inside the penalty area. Wales would have to go again but as the game went into extra time, it looked as though Gemma Grainger's tactics were for her team to defend until the very end and force the game into a penalty shootout. The plan nearly worked but in the last kick of extra time, the hosts made a breakthrough when Geraldine Reuteler created a low ball cross from the left wing only to be squeezed in on the near post by Humm to end Wales' World Cup dreams for another four years.

Scotland also had to win in round one before a round two play-off to determine a World Cup finals spot.

They were up against a very well experienced Austria side who are known for being a difficult team to crack down and to score past. That proved to be the case as the only goal in the tie was on the 92nd minute in extra time, a header from a corner by Abigail Harrison put them ahead and was enough to beat the Austrians in front of a home crowd at Hampden Park.

They would stay put in Glasgow a few days later to host Ireland in hopes of another evening win under the floodlights. The repeat request was denied by the visitors around 18 minutes before the 90 as Barrett completed a through ball pass down the middle to then slot it home with her right foot.

Scotland couldn't respond in time which ended a night to forget for both home nations.

Arnold Clark Cup opponents announced

The Arnold Clark Cup is coming back once again in the new year and the countries competing have been announced.

England won the inaugural event back in February and will compete once again the second edition of the tournament.

The tournament organisers took to social media over a 48 hour period to announce who England will face with the three competitors all making their debuts.

South Korea, Belgium and Italy will all be coming to England to play in the tournament.

Italy are the highest ranked in the Fifa World Rankings (after England) at 14th, with South Korea 17th and Belgium 20th.

Whilst Italy and South Korea have secured their place in the 2023 Women's World Cup in Australia and France, Belgium were knocked out by Portugal in the first round of play-offs.

When will the matches be played?

The games will be held between February 16 –22, 2023 during the international window.

It has not been announced yet which venues will host games but last year they were played at the Riverside Stadium, Middlesbrough, Carrow Road in Norwich and Molineux Stadium in Wolverhampton.

2022 standings

Team	W	D	L	GD	Pts
England	1	2	0	2	5
Spain	1	2	0	1	5
Canada	1	1	1	0	4
Germany	0	1	2	-3	1

Last year, England won their final game against Germany 3-1 with Ellen White, Millie Bright and Fran Kirby getting the goals.

2022 Golden Boot

Millie Bright and Alexia Putellas shared the golden boot with two goals each.

Spain's Athenea del Castillo won Player of the Tournament.

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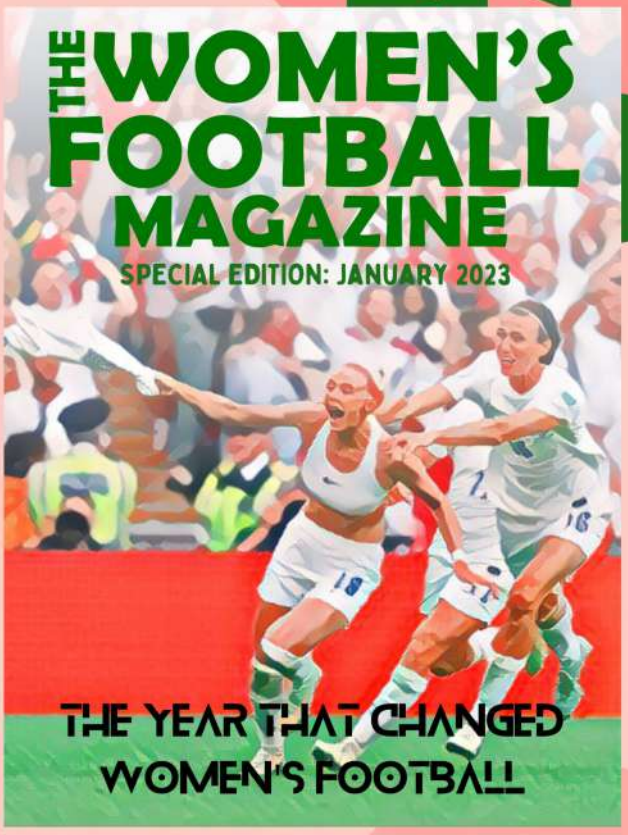

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AROUND THE WORLD

Portland Thorns reign supreme

Sports Press Photo

By Peter Mann

A record-breaking play-offs in the season's National Women's Soccer League run-in set the tone for none other than the Portland Thorns to add another piece of silverware to their trophy cabinet.

Having won the Championship in 2013 and 2017, the Thorns added their third with a 2-0 win over Kansas City Current, at the Audi Field, Washington DC, on October 30, thanks to goals from 22-year-old Sophia Smith, and an own-goal (Addisyn Merrick).

Prior to the seasonal showpiece, taking its place on Prime Time TV, the Current had to navigate the full lottery of the play-offs, defeating first Houston Dash (2-1) in the quarter-finals, then the NWSL Shield winners, OL Reign (2-0) in the semis.

On the other side of the draw, San Diego Wave defeated Chicago Red Stars 2-1 in extra-time, before losing to Portland Thorns, by the same score-line, in the semis; it was the attendances that lit up the league's status however.

The 2022 NWSL Play-Offs set the largest attendances in the leagues short, yet exciting history, as popularity continues to grow; and, with all four play-off attendances topping the 20,000 mark, atmosphere was certainly created.

A league record, 26, 215 attendance, was set in the quarterofinal match-up between the Wave, and Red Stars, Ballon D'Or nominee, Alex Morgan, netting an extra-time winner for the Wave in a game which would actually see the Red Stars have more possession, produce more passes, and have more corners.

Regarding the other three, play-off matches, the semi-final between the Thorns and the Wave would see 22,635 in attendance, the other semi, between Reign and Current, saw 21, 491, whilst the second quarter-final match, between the Dash, and eventual runners-up, the Current, be in front of 21, 284.

The final itself, in front of 17, 624, meanwhile bore witness to a dominant, Thorns performance, one which was capped, as early as the fourth minute, thanks to final MVP, and the youngest scorer in an NWSL final, Sophia Smith, following a defensive slip-up.

The Thorns striker was played through the centre of defence, one which couldn't handle her, leaving her one-on-one with Adrianna Franch, who Smith casually rounded and slotted home; credit to the Current, they had their chances, but failed to capitalise, including one from Kate Del Fava, who saw hers bounce over the crossbar.

The second goal arrived early in the second period with the Thorns splitting their opposition open in just four passes before a final cross into the box, from Yazmeen Ryan caused mass confusion in defence, and, with the ball slipping beneath Franch, Addisyn Merrick was on-hand to supply the final touch, and with it an own-goal.

Chances still flowed, mainly for the Thorns, as they went on to become the first, three-time NWSL Championship winners, their eighth trophy in their ten year existence.

As for those Ballon D'Or nominees, three of the final twenty, won by Barcelona's Alexis Patellas, were American – ninth place was taken by a Brazilian-born American, who plies her trade in France, Lyon's Antonia Maciano; thirteenth was Orlando Pride/San Diego Wave player, Alex Morgan; and in eighteenth, an individual named Trinity Rodman, of the Washington Spirit, the 20-year-old daughter of NBA legend, Dennis Rodman.

The NWSL end-of-season awards meanwhile would see Sophia Smith, who else, take home the league MVP, Alex Morgan won the Golden Boot having netted fifteen times, Kailen Sheridan is the Goalkeeper of the Year, and Naomi Girma claimed both the Defender, and the Rookie of the Year awards.

The San Diego Wave also added the Coach of the Year award, making it five for them overall (and three in the team of the year), English-born Casey Stoney, increasing her stock at the forefront of the women's game; Stoney, a former Arsenal and Liverpool defender, played over 100 times for England before turning to management, fully, in 2018, with Manchester United, arriving in San Diego in 2021.

MASTERCARD NWSL TEAM OF THE YEAR 2022 – Kailen Sheridan (Goalkeeper of the Year; San Diego Wave), Alana Cook (OL Reign), Naomi Girma (Defender & Rookie of the Year, San Diego Wave), Sofia Huerta (OL Reign), Carson Pickett (North Carolina Courage), Sam

Irish celebrations marred by controversy

Hugh de Paor/SPP

By Peter Mann

Qualification for a tournament, irrespective of what that may be, should ultimately be a joyous occasion; when said tournament is your country going to the World Cup finals for the first time, unbridled joy should be at the forefront.

Now, spare a thought for Vera Pauw and her Republic of Ireland side, and the situation in which they found themselves following a successful qualification campaign for the 2023 Women's World Cup in Australia/New Zealand.

A 1-0 victory over rivals Scotland, in Glasgow, on Tuesday 11 October, courtesy of a goal from Amber Barrett, in the 72 minute, certainly sparked joyous scenes among the Irish – on the field, on the touchline, in the stands, and back home.

However, it was to be amidst the post-game celebrations, in the Irish dressing room, where the plot most certainly thickened, and with it, mass controversy, and numerous investigations.

Those celebrations, captured on video as it happens so often in this, the modern, digital age, would see the Green Army providing a rendition of a song entitled 'Ooh, ah, up the Ra' – this however, is something which is often used in a declaration of support for the Irish Republican Army (IRA). As far as stirring up a hornets nest goes, this became a rather wild one, and quite quickly.

The FAI (Football Association of Ireland) and Coach Pauw, along with players Aine O'Gorman and Chloe Mustaki, were fast seen to be issuing apologies, whilst the player who'd uploaded the afore-mentioned video the night before was "devastated and crying in her room."

The said statements read as follows, from the FAI, on the Wednesday (12 October) morning, apologising "for any offense caused by the song sung by players in the Ireland dressing room after the FIFA Women's World Cup qualification play-off win over Scotland at Hampden Park on Tuesday night."

Whilst Vera Pauw, who has been involved in the beautiful game since the seventies, and has managed, among others, both Scotland, and her home nation, the Netherlands, added: "We apologise from the bottom of our hearts to anyone who has been offended by the context of the post-match celebrations after we had just qualified for the World Cup.

"We will review this with the players and remind them of their responsibilities in this respect.

"I have spoken with the players this morning (12 October) and we are sorry collectively for any hurt caused, there can be no excuse for that."

The nature of those celebrations, of the use of that particular song, brought forth commentary from a number of outlets, individuals including Doug Beattie (Ulster Unionist Party, UUP Leader), Michelle O'Neill (Sinn Fein vice president), and Austin Stack (son of a prison officer killed by the IRA).

As for UEFA themselves, European football's governing body have since opened an investigation into the incident, the following, initial statement, having been released: "In accordance with Article 31(4) of the UEFA Disciplinary Regulations, a UEFA Ethics and Regulatory Inspector will investigate potential inappropriate behaviour by players of the Republic of Ireland Women's team in the aftermath of the 2023 FIFA Women's World Cup qualifiers play-off second round match played against Scotland on 11 October 2022."

In addition to all of that, Scottish Police have opened their own investigations into the incident; however, from a footballing perspective, how did the Republic of Ireland Women get to this point, qualifying for their first ever, World Cup finals.

It's been over a year, just, since the qualification process began for the Irish, losing 1-0 at home to Sweden, on 21 October 2021, the only loss of their qualification campaign, before going on to win 2-1 away to Finland in their next outing.

In finishing second, to Sweden, the Irish would be seen to win five and draw two, of their eight games, including putting twenty past a beleaguered Georgia, over the two meetings – Megan Connolly meanwhile would be seen to score Ireland's first qualifying goal, nine minutes into the victory over Finland.

Meanwhile, either side of the 1-1 draw with Sweden, Georgia were well-and-truly put to the sword, winning 11-0 at home, and 9-0 away; 'keeper Courtney Brosnan bagging a pair of clean sheets, whilst the goals, they were shared about as Denise O'Sullivan scored three in the first game, Katie McCabe matched O'Sullivan with the same in the second (added to her brace in the first), with Louise Quinn also helping herself to two goals.

The group stage finished with a 1-0 win over Slovakia, before the trip to Hampden Park, and that play-off success, Ireland qualifying alongside fellow play-off winners, Switzerland, and Portugal.

Ireland's (5-4-1) line-up for that date with destiny was that of –

Courtney Brosnan; Louise Quinn, Niamh Fahey, Megan Campbell, Diane Caldwell, Jamie Finn; Denise O'Sullivan, Katie McCabe, Lily Agg, Aine O'Gorman; Heather Payne (Amber Barrett, 62)

The story in question though, overshadowing what should, and is, a joyous occasion, could rumble on somewhat, UEFA dependant; Pauw meanwhile, is aware of the consequences, and the damage, already cause.

"We did something wrong," the Dutch-born manager recently stated.

"As soon as you hurt one person, you've done something wrong.

"But the players didn't mean anything……

"We are always there to be role models for others.

"Such a shame that this happened because nobody meant anything with it….

"There is a UEFA investigation, which is correct, because there was a claim in it, and we need to face what's coming.

"But let me be clear, there's no excuses and I hope that we've learned from it that you can sing the song your team is embracing, but you have to know your background."

The Republic of Ireland's reward for qualification, as investigations rumble on in the background, is spot in Group B, alongside the co-hosts, Australia (face on 20 July, Sydney), as well as Canada (25 July, Perth), and Nigeria (31 July, Brisbane) – a tough group indeed.

Torrecilla discusses cancer diagnosis

In the hard-hitting and emotional film, Virginia talks in depth about her cancer diagnosis in the spring of 2020. This began with a series of headaches and neck pain which encouraged her to undergo a scan - doctors discovered it was a brain tumour.

Virginia said: "They told me I would have to undergo 30 round of radiotherapy and 15 round of chemo. The first thing I thought was: Am I dying?"

Virginia also talks about facing her biggest challenge to date - whilst making progress with her cancer recovery, on June 3, 2021, Virginia and her mother were in a car accident which subsequently left her mother paralyzed from the waist down.

Virginia shared: "I felt like it was all my fault. If I could turn back time, I would go through cancer not just give, but seven or ten times if it meant my mum could walk again today."

Following the crash, Virginia almost quit football but was encouraged by her parents to follow her dreams. She said: "It was really difficult to see my Mum in a wheelchair. I told them that I wanted to quit football. And do you know what they said? They said no. That if I quit football, it would kill them. And I then realised that I had to keep going to achieve my dreams, and especially theirs, which was to be the Virginia I was before."

Six months later, Virginia returned to the game she loves and reminisces in the documentary about being selected for the Atletico de Madrid squad again. On January 23, she featured as a substitute in the SuperCup final against FC Barcelona and didn't expect to play but was delighted to make her emotional return on the 85th minute.

Torrecilla was given a standing ovation from both set of fans before being welcomed back by Barcelona captain and friend, Alexia Putellas – she also received the captain's armband from team-mate, Amanda Sampedro.

Virginia remembers: "The moment I stepped up to the sideline, Alexia came over and gave me a hug. She said 'I'm so happy that you're back.' And when I got a Messi-style embrace - they chanted my name, the rival team applauded me, me teammates were hugging me. When Amanda gave me the captain's armband, I had goosebumps."

Home Nations players around the world

Sven Beyrich/SPP

By Jamie Davies

Welcome to our latest version of keeping up to date with our homegrown players who are representing teams overseas.

October was a mix of club and international football for most players as the World Cup qualifications took place including the play-offs.

Many of the players out to represent the countries of their births hoping to be wearing their shirt in proudness come next summer when the tournament takes place in Australia and New Zealand between July 20th and August 20th.

Let's take a look at how some of the local faces have been getting on since we last checked up on them in our last magazine.

Jess Fishlock – Wales and OL Reign

October was a bittersweet period for Jess Fishlock.

It started so well in Wales' play-off campaign when Fishlock herself scored the winning goal in extra time to beat Bosnia and Herzegovina.

The win helped the red dragons advance to the final stage of the play-offs away to Switzerland.

The most capped player for Wales witnessed her team go ahead within the opening 20 minutes in Zurich but Switzerland turned it around and won the match with literally the last kick in extra time to break Welsh hearts.

Fishlock returned to her club, OL Reign, in the United States to start in a 0-2 home defeat to Kansas City in the NWSL. However, OL Reign finished at the top of the table by a single point ahead of Portland Thorns.

Caroline Weir – Scotland and Real Madrid

A very similar path to Fishlock as Caroline Weir was hoping to get Scotland into a second straight appearance at a Women's World Cup finals.

It was the perfect start to their play-off campaign when an extra time winner against Austria at Hampden Park came from Abigail Harrison. All of that glorious drama happening before they were to play another home fixture, this time with Republic of Ireland.

Scotland of course had the home advantage as Weir was yet again in the starting line-up but her side could not repeat what they did a few nights before. Ireland found the winning goal 18 minutes before the final whistle from Amber Barrett that stunned the home crowd in Glasgow.

However, days later and Weir looked to have forgotten about what had happened by scoring a brace for Real Madrid in a very comfortable 7-0 win over Alaves in Primera Division.

Georgia Stanway – England and Bayern Munich

The England and Bayern Munich midfielder had a great start to October when being part of the Lionesses team that beat the world champions, USA, in an international friendly at Wembley Stadium on October 7th.

Stanway scored the winning goal by slotting the ball home from the penalty spot to have the game finish at 2-1. It was quite the statement to the world of football that night as England are one of the main contenders to win the World Cup next year.

Just before the end of last month, Stanway embraced Champions League football under the lights as she secured a brace for Bayern in their away win at Benfica.

The last 10 minutes of the match was a dramatic one as Stanway's late duo of goals on the 83rd and 90th minute turned the score line around from 2-1 to 2-3.

A memorable evening and we forgot to mention Stanway's goals in Portugal were her first goals for the German giants.

Andrea Vilchez/SPP

Irish National League brings the excitement on final day

By Aisling Hannon

One of the most thrilling conclusions to a domestic season came on the closing weekend of October in the Republic of Ireland.

The Women's National League comprises of ten teams from around the country, with the season running in line with the men's league – starting in March and finishing in November. Founded in 2011, it is the only women's top-level league in the country and Wexford Youths currently hold the crown for most titles with four trophies under their belt.

A multitude of players from the WNL have represented Ireland on the international stage and the league can certainly be a stepping stone to a higher level of football, for example the Women's Super League and beyond. One of the biggest names to come out of the league in recent years is Peamount United's Stephanie Roche who was runner-up for the FIFA Puskas Award in 2014. Her incredible technical volley scored in Wexford's Ferrycarrig Park that year secured her the honour with a 33% vote, falling just shy of Columbian James Rodriguez' strike against Uruguay at the 2014 World Cup in Brazil.

Dubliner Roche spread her wings and racked up 58 appearances for the national side while securing game time with Houston Dash, Sunderland and ASPTT Albi in France before returning to Peamount in 2020 where she continues to play a vital role.

The WNL is an intensely competitive league, with each game renowned for being edgy and unpredictable. Of course, there are certain teams who are dominant year-on-year, but this season threw up quite the surprise in Athlone Town. The County Westmeath team showed a true togetherness throughout the season, with a consistent approach to climbing up the table. Their previous two attempts left them in seventh place after entering the league in 2020, but their manager Tommy Hewitt played an integral role in uncovering the talent within the team.

Following yet another battling season, the finale came down to the wire. South-east side Wexford would play Dubliners Shelbourne, with Athlone also in contention after their unexpected season of success.

The points tally was so tight that if Wexford won, the title was theirs. If Shelbourne won, the title was theirs. If the teams drew, and Athlone were to draw or lose, it was Shelbourne's title. If the teams drew and Athlone won their game against Bohemians, then Athlone would need to play a final play-off with Shelbourne to decide the ultimate winner.

A vibrant crowd of 929 people came to support both Wexford and Shelbourne in what was a colossal attendance. Women's football in Ireland is not yet at the level it hopes to be, however with the backing of the national broadcaster TG4, who were airing this particular game, combined with the excitement over the nation recently qualifying for their first World Cup – things are set to look up for women's sport in the country.

The game itself was as tense as expected in the first half – with chances being missed, nerves setting in and frustrations on show. The first goal came just before half time when the visitors took a hard-fought lead thanks to Jessie Stapleton's tap-in.

The Dubliners continued in their quest to collect their second consecutive league title when they came out fighting in the second half. Megan Smyth-Lynch, Abbi Larkin and Alex Kavanagh all netted throughout the remaining 45 minutes to leave Ferrycarrig Park with a comfortable 4-0 win and another title under their belts.

Meanwhile in Athlone, their 2-1 away win to Dublin side Bohemians was not enough to secure them a highly anticipated title, but they can be incredibly proud of their performances throughout this campaign.

Shelbourne manager Noel King spoke gracefully of his team after the game, saying:

"They're a great bunch of players who manage themselves, they look after themselves and they are as professional as any professional – even though they are amateur. They're a joy to work with."

To have such an exciting end to a league season is seismic for women's football in Ireland. The crowd reflected this; overtaking Wexford's attendance record for the men's team this season which stood at 818 in a derby draw against neighbours Waterford FC. Attendances across the board in Ireland are a hot topic, with an evident struggle to get people through the gates on a Friday night or Saturday evening. There are many factors; the dominance and easy access to the English Premier League, a leading interest in other sports such as rugby and Gaelic games, and a scarcity of backing from governing bodies. It was, however, incredible to see such support for the WNL and 2023 is sure to be an even more thrilling season.

Strikes cause disruption in Liga F

By Joe Berridge

A referee strike caused the opening round of matches to be postponed, the league has found a new title sponsor and the situation involving the national team seems no closer to a happy resolution but football is (finally) being played, goals are being scored and Barcelona are still winning all the time.

As Liga F approaches the quarter stage of the season it seems a fair time to start judging where teams are, who looks good, the struggling sides and what's to come in the next few weeks.

The Top:

There's no surprise to see Jonatan Giráldez' Barcelona side leading the way with a perfect 7 wins from 7, 25 goals scored and just 2 conceded. There might be no sign of Barça's domestic dominance coming to an end but there are signs that a team from outside the usual suspects could be challenging for "best of the rest", or at least giving themselves a chance at a maiden Champions League berth. Headed by María Pry, Madrid CFF sit in 3rd place with a lone defeat coming against the leaders. Sandwiched by local giants Real (2nd, on goal difference) and Atletico (two points behind in 4th), with the Granotes of Levante in 5th it's been a fantastic start for a team whose current best finish is 7th, set last season.

The Bottom:

If the top of the table is headed by a side with a perfect record then in the interest of balance the bottom placed side probably should be one sat on an imperfect record and unfortunately for Liga F newcomers Alhama that's the case, the Murcia side still pointless though 7 games. Joining Alhama in the relegation zone, and on just one point, are Alaves who recently disposed of manager Mikel Crespo as they look to climb up the table. Just outside the bottom two, Real Betis & Villarreal will be looking over their shoulders, each picking up a solitary win and draw, with 5 defeats each to start the season.

In Between:

A win and a draw either side of a loss to Champions League chasing Atletico Madrid has carried Athletic Club (Bilbao) slightly further away from the relegation zone after a shaky start. Granadilla extended their run to 7 consecutive top 10 finishes last season but find themselves in 11th in the early stages of this campaign. Whilst Sevilla, Levante Las Planas & Huelva find themselves in 8th, 9th & 10th, there is a gap opening up to Valencia (7th) & Real Sociedad (6th).

Who Has Impressed:

Brazil and Atletico Madrid forward Ludmila sits alone as the league's top goalscorer through the early stages of the season, hitting 6 goals in 7 games, already matching her total for the entire 2021-22 season. With a career high of 15 league goals set in 2020-21, it's safe to say her sights will be set on surpassing that mark and helping Atletico back towards the Champions League after missing out in recent years.

Ludmila's national team teammate Geyse Ferreira has already adapted well to life at Barcelona after swapping Madrid CFF for the Catalan super side in the summer and is hot on the heels of Ludmila, as well as Nahikari Garcia (Real Madrid), Amaiur (Real Sociedad) & Alba Redondo (Levante) in the race for the Golden Boot.

At the other end of the pitch it feels right to give recognition to the performance of Barcelona's Gemma Font, even with a more than stellar defence in front of her it's never easy for a "second choice" goalkeeper to come into a team. Conceding just 1 goal in 4 games during Sandra Paños' injured spell, it's a fine example of the depth Barça have and a testament to how Font has played, to the degree that there's a real question over who should be first choice now.

Upcoming:

Looking at the fixtures for the next few weeks there's an obvious one that'll jump out to everyone...El Clásico, the unstoppable Barcelona travel to their eternal rivals, and fellow unbeaten side, Real Madrid this Sunday (at press time) in what's sure to be another thrilling encounter as Real look to finally overcome the biggest hurdle.

Elsewhere in November there's meetings of the Valencian & Basque Derbies between Levante & Valencia and Athletic Bilbao & Real Sociedad respectively on the 19th, the Seville Derby between Sevilla and Real Betis a day later and other big clashes such as Atletico Madrid hosting Barcelona on the 27th, along with Madrid CFF's attempts to keep up their current pace and Alhama's search for points.

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THE WOMEN'S FOOTBALL MAGAZINE

Leah Taylor