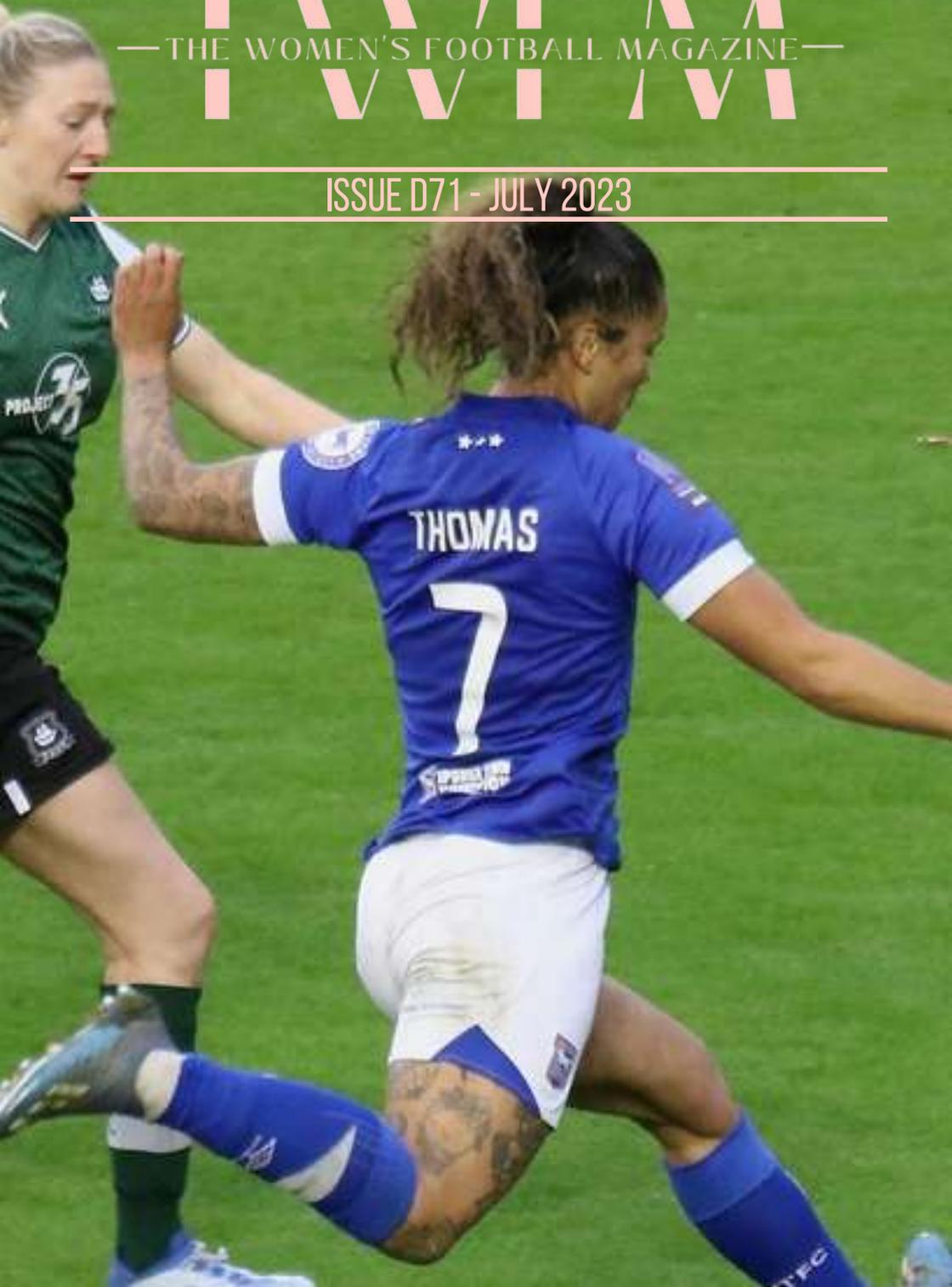


TWFFM

—THE WOMEN'S FOOTBALL MAGAZINE—

TWFFM

ISSUE D71 - JULY 2023



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Company number: 12839197



The Women's Football Magazine is a monthly, digital publication which celebrates women's football in the UK from grassroots to the home nations. Helen has been editing the magazine for five years. In that time she won Sports Journalist of the Year 2019 and has been nominated twice for EVA Business Woman of the Year. She is a mother, wife and an avid Blackpool supporter.



Editor's Note

Welcome to our July 2023 Digital Edition

Can you believe the Women's World Cup is nearly here? Teams are setting down in Australia and New Zealand and it's time to get excited - and plan how you can get away with watching games at work (or go to work super tired if the time difference doesn't quite work! Make sure you check out our WWC print issue which features incredible interviews and everything you need to know about the tournament. We also have a FREE wall chart which you can download to fill in all the results. Moving away from the international scene and clubs have been very busy already with transfers and departures and I for one am gutted about Megan Rapinoe announcing she will retire at the end of the NWSL season. She has been one of those players who has always been on the scene for me and love her or hate her, she will be missed both on and off the pitch - not that I think it will be the last we see of her! I hope you enjoy the issue and roll on the 20 July!

Helen Rowe-Willcocks
Editor-in-chief

Before the Boom

By Chris Roberts



When I think of footballing twins the first to pop into my head are the former Manchester United twins Rafael and Fabio da Silva. Rafael had the more successful spell at United playing 109 times between 2008-2015, winning three Premier League Winners medals in that time. Fabio would also receive one for the 2010-11 Premier League season, but in his 6-year spell between 2008-2014 he made only 22 appearances for the club, spending most of his time on loan at QPR.

The most successful twins you would argue are the De Boer brothers. Both won the Champions League with Ajax, along with many other trophies in their trophy laden spell there. Before both twin brothers went to play for Spanish giants FC Barcelona and Scottish giants Rangers. All this whilst both being regular starters for the Dutch national team.

For those who like a bit of football trivia, other honourable mentions are: Vasili and Aleksei Berezutski (CSKA Moscow and Russia) Hamit Altintop (Bayern Munich and Real Madrid) and Halil Altintop (FC Schalke and Eintracht Frankfurt) both playing for the Turkish national team together.

What most people don't know is that there was a pair of footballing twins who played for both Merseyside clubs Liverpool and Everton. Both played for Everton in an FA Cup final, with one being a former captain of Liverpool. Some reading this may be thinking back to a time long ago maybe just pre/post WWII. But both retired in 2018. The reason you may not know who they're, is that they represented both clubs Women's teams. Their names are (Both formerly Jones), and

unfortunately for them their amazing achievements in football won't make them household names, as their careers came before the boom of the WSL (Women's Super League). Both now are mothers and Primary School teachers, both missing out on the opportunity rightly that is being given to many professional Women's footballers we see today.

Both did feature in the WSL but this was prior to its formation as a professional league for the 2018/19 season. Since then, England Lionesses success at Euro 2022, being roared on by a record crowd of 87,192 people, has catapulted women's football into becoming one of the fastest growing sports in the world. The captain that night Leah Williamson is said to reportedly earn £200,000 per year from her club Arsenal. Whilst, BBC analysis says the average WSL

player earns £47,000 per year. This is a huge improvement for all young girls who inspire to become a professional footballer, but still pails into insignificance when you compare the England male captains wage Harry Kane, who earns the same as Williamson in a week. One consolation is that both Male and Female England players are paid the same fee of £2,000 per game and have since 2020.

The WSL started out in April 2011. Beginning as an eight-team tournament, largely made up of semi-professional teams and players, and it replaced the previous FA Women's Premier League National Division. But, in 2018, the WSL became a professional league for the first time and expanded to 11 full-time teams. Since then, the WSL has kept its professional status. As a result, clubs must allow players to have at least 16 hours on their contract each week and every club must have an academy to help develop young, talented players.

For both Vicky and Kelly, they were faced with the difficult decision whether to continue their dream of being professional footballers

or follow their other career path of becoming Primary school teachers in 2018. Although the average wage for players is now around £47,000, that wasn't the case back then and being able to live/survive meant that decision was forced out of their hands.

Kelly said this about the decision, "Everton had just won the Spring Series League - a smaller league to allow the change of season times. I had just won player's player and managers player. I was probably playing some of my best football of my career. Everton decided to turn professional and there wasn't any scope for part time players. I was offered a 1-year contract at the same time as I had just qualified as a teacher. The contract offered to me just wasn't enough to support me - in terms of living and paying my mortgage." Vicky remembers this decision similarly as being about the 'bigger picture'. "The club went professional and my time at the club had come to an end. I had other options from clubs, but I think I needed to take a step back and look at the bigger picture. Sometimes decisions are taken out of your hands, and you just need to accept that and

and appreciate the experiences I gained from playing football."

The experiences they gained from football are the dreams of any young girl or boy. Representing two of the biggest clubs in England being one, even more so when one of them is the club you have supported your whole life, Liverpool. For Vicky to then become captain of the club she grew up supporting an achievement people can only think of in their wildest dreams.

When I asked Vicky what she was proudest of she said, "I have several, playing in an FA cup final, captaining Liverpool and representing Great Britain at the World University Games - I am proud of everything I got to experience." Doing this with your twin sister in tandem is something that makes both their stories even more special. Kelly discussed how proud she was to play in an FA Cup final, "playing in the FA cup final - it was the only game that was televised when I was little so to me that was the biggest game in women's football, so to play in the final fantastic regardless of the result, makes me so proud."

This is something I vividly remember as a child, often this was spent on a Sunday with my Grandad watching football on TV. The game would be played live on either BBC1 or BBC2, with it being won to my memory on most occasions by Arsenal and the formidable Kelly Smith (MBE). Smith was also part of the Arsenal team that defeated the sisters in their 2014 FA Cup final appearance, scoring the first goal in a 2-0 win for the record holders Arsenal (14-time winners). Smith was the flag bearer for the women's football I remember as a small child, but even for her, the national game in England couldn't fulfil her dreams of playing the sport she loved professionally, instead having to make her name in the professional leagues in America.

Much like a film I loved as a child 'Bend it like Beckham' the only way for young girls to seek football as a profession was to somehow manage to make it to America and the Women's United Soccer Association (WUSA) often via a university degree.

I asked both that despite all they achieved did this feel like a profession or a hobby

still. Vicky said, "Very much a hobby, it always was as I worked a full-time job and coached on the evenings I didn't train as well as coaching at the weekends. It started off training twice a week and progressed to training with the club four weekdays and sometimes even Saturday sessions before travelling the same day for an overnight stay for an away game. It never was a profession as I was never full time." To hear how much both had to put into their training as well as playing, whilst this was on a part time basis shows how poorly women were treated.

If you compare this to male semi-professional footballers, they're not expected to train more than two evenings a week on top of games and their day jobs. Kelly agreed with Vicky," It definitely felt like a hobby - from playing open age at 15 to stopping just as the WSL turned professional it never felt like a profession.

Even when we started to be paid and were playing/training 5 times a week. I think as we grew up, professional football was not something that even entered our minds. We played because we enjoyed

it and it felt more like a privilege the more, we got to train. It never felt like a profession as I had always had two or three things on the go at the same time."

The 'privilege' Kelly refers to is down to their treatment by the clubs they represented. It's apparent from both, that their treatment by Everton was much 'better' compared to that of Liverpool. Kelly talks about their time at Liverpool, "At Liverpool we trained two or three times a week at the boy's academy in Kirkby.

We were very much still part time at this point. Training would be indoor or outdoor based on what was available. If there was a men's staff game inside, it meant we had to go outside. We had to wait outside the training facility on arrival as we were not allowed around until a particular time. We rarely saw or encountered the men's team, as we were training at the boy's academy and in the evenings. Gym facility wise we used local gyms not the clubs on site facilities."

This being similar to how Vicky remembers they were treated, "Some



evenings if there was a staff game on the indoor pitch (which we used) we would have to wait as they took priority over the women's team. I think once or twice the club were invited to have a squad picture when the team at the beginning of the year." At Everton Vicky remembers the treatment being like that of their time at Liverpool, it being a 'privilege.' "When I joined Everton we trained at Finch Farm, but it was very similar to Liverpool, we waited in the gym until the boys (junior teams) were finished with their training sessions. We trained late in the evening's most times leaving just before half 9, 10 in the evenings."

Kelly noted that over time though the treatment they received

at Everton did begin to improve towards the Women's team. "We could use the men's gym, but only when all the boys had finished. We would travel to games using Ellison's coaches - the same coaches used as the men. We were also allowed to start using the canteen at Finch Farm, the one used for the academy, for pre-match food before away games. During school half-terms we could go in sometimes during the day to train. The connection between the men and women's team improved year on year, as we started to be allowed to use the facilities for more match analysis and meeting before training."

Whereas I mentioned earlier Kelly Smith (MBE) and

women having to travel to the US to achieve their dreams, since becoming a professional league in 2018, the WSL has attracted some of the biggest names in professional women's football. The ability to offer full-time contracts to players has helped teams attract more talented players into the league. Top international players like Vivienne Miedema and Magdalena Errikson have stayed to play in the WSL. In the past, top players like this have often transferred to teams in the US league, the NWSL. In the 2020/21 season, this trend continued and many top players from the US joined English teams. Alex Morgan joined Tottenham, Christen Press joined Manchester United and Sam Mewis joined Manchester City. Further top players, like two-time UEFA Player of the Year Pernille Harder (Chelsea), have also joined the WSL, which has increased interest in the WSL.

Research by Sky Sports and the Women's Sport Trust has shown that the WSL was the main driving force in viewing time for women's sport with 16m unique viewers during the 2022 calendar year. It was a record year

for domestic women's sport, with 37.6m watching it in 2022, beating the previous high of 32.9m in 2021. Further research by Two Circles has revealed that crowds in the WSL are up a staggering 267% on last season, driven by a strategy of playing big games in larger stadiums which is filtering down throughout the league. The average crowd in the WSL stood at 6,961 at the end of January 2023, more than two and a half times last season's average of 1,898. The total attendance throughout the league exceeded the quarter of a million mark after just 40 matches this season surpassing the total attendance for the whole of the previous campaign in a third of the time. This has been spurred on by the success of England's Lionesses in 2022 and the clubs the women represent realising the importance they can play in growing the women's game.

Both Vicky and Kelly played at Anfield and Goodison during their career, but this year has seen both women's derby matches be staged at the grounds to record attendances. From my role as a schoolteacher I know this has been helped by free tickets being made available

to local children, giving them an opportunity to visit Anfield and Goodison for the first time in their lives. Something that more often than enough may not be possible due to how expensive it is to watch the men's teams, on top of the difficulty in actually finding a ticket to buy. What this has created is a new wave of fans for both Merseyside clubs, often young children accompanied by adults, for the affordable opportunity to support their favourite teams.

Something that without this, will only be possible through a TV screen. I asked both Kelly and Vicky could they remember a female player they both looked up to as a child. To which they both replied, "No, we only ever saw women's football once a year on tele and that was for the FA Cup final, our hero was Robbie Fowler."

Although it's sad to know they both didn't have a woman they could both look up to as a child and set out to achieve what they had done themselves, it makes me happy to know that this is beginning to change for lots of girls I teach. In the school I teach I now often see girls

walking round with the latest Liverpool kit on, but instead of the usual 'Salah 11' or 'Diaz 23' I see on most of the boys tops. Most of the girls now don the name 'Kearns 7', that the name of Missy Bo Kearns, a scouser herself and at 22 living her dream, playing professionally for the club she grew up supporting. Not only that but becoming a role model and hero for many girls across the city.

The reason this has happened is due to the increased TV exposure for women's football but also the fact that Liverpool themselves are now realising they need to cater for the dreams of young girls too. Kearns is now used in all kit launches with fellow scouser Trent Alexander-Arnold and other top names, from both the male and female teams.

Kearns' performances for her childhood club recently saw her become the first Liverpool Women's player to receive a mural in her honour in the city. The mural, which adorns the side of a house on Tancred Road in Anfield, depicts Kearns kissing the Women's Championship trophy as a young fan watches on.

Commissioned by Liverpool FC Women Supporters Club and paid for by the Welcome Back Fund. "It was massive," Kearns said, reflecting on the honour. "It's a big shock for me so I'm over the moon. I still don't think it's sunk in so I'm made up."

I asked both Kelly and Vicky how they felt to see the women's game grow to the level it has, for some it would be a bitter feeling, knowing they weren't afforded the same opportunities. But after working with both for so long I know that all they care is that opportunities are now there for young girls we teach to achieve their dreams and have role models to look up to. Kelly said, "It's nice to see the game

growing each year and it's great for young girls growing up to see what they can achieve, as that wasn't there when we were young. I'd love to still be playing at the level now." Which Vicky agreed with.

"It's fantastic, any young female player can turn the tv on and aspire to be a professional player and know that it is possible."

The WSL and women's football continues to grow year on year and former England international Karen Carney's government-commissioned inquiry into the future of women's football offers a chance to continue to grow the female game even more.

The inquiry will focus on building the game up from its foundations, as Carney announced Ian Wright, Hope Powell and the head of the NFL in Europe, Brett Gosper, as part of an expert panel offering guidance. Wright, the former Arsenal and England striker, said he was "ready to go" to ensure "what Karen, Kelly Smith, Hope Powell and the generation of women and girls including our Euros winners went through never happens again. We can build this right from the bottom to the very top." I can only echo what Wright himself says and add Vicky Usher and Kelly O'Neill to those he listed above.





BARCLAYS WOMEN'S SUPER LEAGUE

Venus and Wub- ben-Moy team up

As part of Venus' ongoing commitment to normalise what real skin in sport looks like and remove the barrier of women feeling skin-conscious to encourage greater participation by women and girls, the razor brand is launching the next wave of its #MoveYourSkin campaign with partner, Lotte Wubben-Moy, who is fast paving her way as a voice for change in the women's game.

Venus' #MoveYourSkin campaign launched last summer to help tackle the issue of skin-consciousness, which has been identified as a major barrier in sport for women. In fact, more than a third* of UK women say they don't want to participate in sport because they worry about the way their skin looks, according to Venus' research.

Extending its efforts and continuing the commitment, this year Venus is unveiling a mobile exhibit showcasing what the brand is calling "up close and comfortable" images to celebrate



real skin in action. It comes ahead of another big summer for women's sport, and a new nationwide media campaign from the brand for #MoveYourSkin, featuring the Lioness and Arsenal WFC player, which launches in a few weeks.

The gallery, unveiled by Lotte, has been installed in the football cage the England Women's International grew up playing in near her family home in Bow, and proudly displays powerful images and personal skin-stories of real women thriving in moments of sport.

It comes as nearly half of UK women (47%)* admit they would feel more confident in their own skin if they were exposed to more relatable images of women playing sport. According to the findings, other skin-confidence concerns for UK women include being overweight (28%), wrinkles (20%) cellulite (18%) and stretch marks (14%) - which are proudly celebrated and showcased within the exhibit.

The new imagery of real skin in

motion has been shot by female photographer Lauren Macabee, and will sit alongside impactful photos from the 2022 campaign from sports photographer, Amy Maidment. It also features behind-the-scenes photos of Lotte from Venus' upcoming Move Your Skin media campaign featuring the footballer as it takes the message even broader this summer.

Commenting on her involvement in the campaign, Wubben-Moy, said: "Football should be open to everyone but we all know it's not, so when we have an opportunity to break down a barrier, we have to take it. Venus has transformed it. And now, I'm surrounded by powerful images of girls and women, to inspire the next generation to get involved in sport and not let skin consciousness hold them back.

"Being part of a team boosts your confidence and empowers you to celebrate differences and being unique. That's something that all girls deserve to find."

Hera announces Daly as Ambassador

HERA, the renowned British street fashion brand, is thrilled to announce the appointment of Rachel Daly, England Lioness and Aston Villa Player, as its new ambassador.

The partnership will see the Lioness collaborate with the team on captivating campaigns, bringing the brand vision to life as well as showcasing her distinctive style off the pitch. Excitingly, a limited edition design collaboration is currently in the works, set to launch later this Summer.

The first campaign the Lioness will work on is HERA's latest campaign, 'Meet the Waymakers' where the brand will shine a spotlight on inspiring individuals and their unique journeys. The ongoing campaign will be brought to life through a video series where chosen individuals - The Waymakers - look behind the scenes into who they are as an individual, their journey including highs and lows as w

well as any important learnings.

Discussing the Ambassador role, Rachel Daly, England Lioness and Aston Villa footballer says: "I am thrilled to announce that I am now an ambassador for HERA. The brand's style resonates with me off the pitch, and I am inspired by the new direction they are

taking. I cannot wait to see our partnership flourish and share our exciting plans with our communities,"

Daly continues: "Although I love the clothing, it was more for me than that."

"Being part of a team all my life is something that I have valued every single day and that's exactly how I felt when I joined the HERA team. The core values HERA encompasses were something I knew I wanted to be part of."



Meet The Waymakers Campaign

The campaign has kicked off with Rachael sitting down and talking about her journey as a footballer.

From juggling a full time job with training, to women who have inspired her along the way.

Talking about her journey as a footballer, Daly says: "I was told, you can't live off being a footballer.

Whatever, I'll prove you wrong...

"Football was largely deemed as a men's game for a long time. Growing up I had to work as well as having a job at training. I'd finish training and had to race home, get to bed and be in again the next morning and then train in the evening again.

"The women that paved the way for my generation, they

went to war for us in football.

"I think they don't get enough credit. They fought tooth and nail to help to get us to a very privileged position in terms of exposure and payments.

"The way the women's game is now is in such a good place; it's only going to get better and better for the younger generation.

"I want to inspire people, especially the next generation coming up. I want to be that role model they look up to."

Speaking on the ongoing partnership between the brand and Lioness, Georgia Streeton, HERA's Chief Brand Officer says: "We are delighted to welcome Rachel Daly as the ambassador for HERA. With her personal style, commitment to her community, and her remarkable journey.

"Rachel perfectly embodies our brand's mission.

"Through this partnership, we aim to shed light on Rachel's off-pitch persona, her influence on generations, and her aspirations for the future."



Best Goalkeepers 2023/24

By Abbie Smith



Mary Earps

United's number 1 kept 14 clean sheets in 22 games, bringing home the WSL Golden Glove and leading her side to a respectable 2nd place finish. As England look to bring home the World Cup trophy this summer, there is no doubt that Earps will play a big part in this campaign. She is the catalyst for success in every team she plays in, leading from between the sticks and making an impact on and off the ball. An all-rounder, Earps can feed the ball out quickly from the back to blindside opponents before repositioning herself on her line to fend off a counter. She is cool, calm, and collected, three reasons why she is one of the world's best goalkeepers.

Manuela Zinsberger

10 of Arsenal's 11 clean sheets came from Zinsberger, reinforcing Jonas Eidevall's decision to keep her as his team's first choice shot stopper. Considering the state of Arsenal's injury-stricken squad and the lack of available players, the Austrian stepped up, drawing on her experience to keep Arsenal

together. Her lightning-fast instincts and show-stopping saves helped to secure a place in the Champions League next season. Conceding only 0.81 goals per 90 minutes, Zinsberger's importance within Arsenal's empire cannot be overlooked. Without her technical intelligence and deep understanding of the game, last season's catastrophe may have increased tenfold.

Ann-Katrin Berger

After bouncing back from illness, the Chelsea veteran kept 8 clean sheets in 15 games, clinching the Blues' 4th WSL title in a row. Berger is a powerful goalkeeper, one that leaves everything out on the pitch and has an intense love for the shirt. Her passion doesn't go unnoticed by Chelsea fans, each one adoring her as much as she does them. Berger doesn't crumble under pressure; in fact she thrives on it. The 32-year old made the decisive save in the Champions League quarter-final to deny Lyon's Lindsay Horan and send Chelsea through to the semi-finals, a feat that will, despite their performance in the tournament,

live on in the mind of supporters.

Janina Leitzig

An unlikely hero, given the way Leicester's season started. However, the Bayern Munich loanee tipped the scales from her first game, making six saves and keeping Brighton & Hove Albion at bay. From the very first fingertip save, Foxes fans sat up and took notice. They were witnessing something special. Leitzig recorded the best cross collection in the league (11.9%), showing her fearlessness and suave in the air. She is skilled at long ball distribution, often opting to fizz the ball wide to her attackers to catch her opponents off guard. Overall this season, Leitzig recorded a save percentage of 74.2%, saving over 70% from inside the box, the third best figure in the league. After this season, the German could comfortably slot into any side and perform well. With The Foxes scraping survival, Leitzig's move has been made permanent and all eyes will be on her to see how last season's performance will be topped.



THE LIFE OF A SUPER FAN

By Abbie Smith

penalties and lift the trophy in front of me.

Each month we chat to the fans that make women's football so great. From the fans who have been diehards for years to those who have recently fallen in love with the game.

What is your most valuable piece of memorabilia?
All of my pictures with the players I've met, such as my iconic selfie with both Leah Williamson and Katie McCabe.

This month, I spoke to Manchester United superfan Mia about her footballing journey and which rival player she'd sign for the Red Devils...

If you could sign one rival player for United who would it be?
Yui Hasegawa, for sure!

Who is your favourite player and why?

Currently I'd say Maya Le Tissier because she's very quickly showed what she can bring to United and I'm excited to see her achieve big things in the future.

What is the best game that you've seen live?

The Finalissima against Brazil at Wembley! Such a surreal experience getting to watch England win on



Could the Signing of Russo help Arsenal get back to the top?



By **Jamie Davies**

At the beginning of July, Arsenal had finally announced the inevitable news of Alessia Russo joining the Gunners on a free transfer from Manchester United.

It all felt like playing the waiting game wondering when the news was going to drop of Russo wearing the famous red and white colours of Arsenal.

The afternoon of July 4th arrived and out of nowhere the pictures came flooding in on Twitter, Instagram, online news outlets and Arsenal's club website proud to present their new arrival.

There was a leather chair with its back from the Emirates turf on pitch side of Russo sitting there in an Arsenal kit as well as a photo with her childhood hero, Kelly Smith. The North London club were unveiling their new No. 23 in style.

As a Man United fan myself, it is hard to see those pics and videos of Russo in a different team shirt but we had known this was going to happen since January when the 24-year-old rejected a new contract at Leigh Sports Village.

Russo spoke to Arsenal's media on their website and she highlighted that winning trophies is what she is after here, she said: "I'm really excited to be here and I can't wait to get going. I want to win trophies – as does everyone in this club. I can't wait to get stuck in and grow as a player – it's a new challenge and a new environment."

"I think the growth of the women's game has been incredible, but particularly at a club like Arsenal. The sell-out against Wolfsburg at Emirates Stadium last season was fantastic, and I'm just really excited to be part of this club."

The vibes of July 4th takes us

back to when Man Utd bagged the signature of Robin Van Persie in the summer of 2012. A bargain of a transfer, Van Persie left Arsenal for the Red Devils to help fulfil a striker role for a squad that had just lost to their neighbours, Manchester City, on the final day of the 2011/12 Premier League season.

Come the end of the following campaign, Man United got back their Premier League crown as Van Persie provided 26 goals in 38 matches and he also took home the Golden Boot. Manager Sir Alex Ferguson showed he just needed a proven world class striker to get one over City.

Over a decade on, Arsenal's latest signing may just be the key to getting Jonas Eidevall's squad over the line next year.

Last season was a challenging one for the team that finished third in the Women's Super League behind Man Utd and

Chelsea. With long term injuries for Beth Mead and Vivianne Miedema up front – their chances were thin as they were heavily reliant on Stina Blackstenius.

Blackstenius is a quality player but the Swede international had an almighty task to lead the line without the help of Mead and Miedema.

Before Mead's season ended so early on, the English forward scored three goals along with providing four assists in the WSL and two goals in the UEFA Women's Champions League.

Meanwhile, Miedema had found the net three times in seven games before she received an ACL injury last December. Thankfully their goal difference was enough to keep them above Man City to seal the final Champions League qualifying spot for next season.

A vital third place finish to attract Russo to come to Arsenal and play in Europe despite her former club claiming Champions League football for the first time.

Mead and Miedema are expected to be back to full match fitness when the new season kicks off at the end of September. The timing is perfect for Eidevall as the Swede will soon

have healthy options and great depth for his frontline and let's not forget that Russo scored 12 goals in all competitions. With Man Utd losing their star players of Russo and also Ona Batlle (to FC Barcelona) already this summer, the Gunners will feel confident they can at least pip the Red Devils to the top two finish.

Chelsea will no doubt be expected to be title favourites yet again as they will be fighting for a 5th straight successive crown but Russo's impact at Arsenal could be the game changer.

Arsenal were the last team to win the WSL before the London Blues took over and dominated English football. Even without their full squad, we saw the potential this Arsenal squad has when they beat Emma Hayes' players in this year's Continental Tyres League Cup final.

So what could Arsenal's line-up at the top of the field look like with Russo now in the picture?

Now during Russo's time at Man Utd we saw her as the main centre forward playing up front on her own under manager Marc Skinner. Russo was a free transfer so in a way Eidevall may not feel the pressure to start the Lioness in every game as

as Blackstenius can also play in Russo's position. But also Miedema plays in the middle – the manager has a nice problem to have with competition raising it's bar in the striker department.

There's been no signs or rumours of either Blackstenius or Miedema leaving the Emirates this summer, but this piece is written just hours after they learnt of their new team mate.

Going back to how Arsenal can play up front, Mead can of course play on either side of the wing and is used to linking up with Russo when it comes to their international duties.

They both sparked havoc during their European Championship winning campaign – could we see similar feats again from the two Lionesses?

Arsenal's latest signing will dent United fan's hearts for now and will also raise alarms to other rival clubs that they are going to step it up in their bid to knock Chelsea off their perch.

After two years into his role, is this the season Eidevall claims his best success as Arsenal manager?

The £1,000,000 Transfer Fee - An Exciting Prospect?

By Clare McEwen



The Women's Super League (WSL) only became fully professional in 2018. Just five-years later, the football world is starting to speculate when we might see the first million-pound transfer fee in women's football.

Beginning as a semi-professional 'league' in 2011 (more accurately a summer tournament), the WSL grew slowly over the next seven years. It couldn't compete with fully professional leagues like the United States Women's Football League (USWFL), finding it hard to attract and retain top players. Turning fully professional in 2018 changed that.

Despite now being a pro league, most women players are signed to new clubs for free. Transfer fees aren't yet standard like they are in the men's game. For example, in 2020, FIFA reported global spending on transfer fees for women totalled £0.88 million - only five transfer fees made up most of that fee. For ALL transfer fees added together!

In the last few years there are signs this may soon change. As I said above most women players are currently signed for free. But not all. Big name stars are beginning to command larger fees for moving clubs. In September 2020, Chelsea reportedly paid £250,000 for Pernille Harder to join them from Wolfsburg. At the time, this was the highest transfer fee into the WSL. Last summer, after her Euros 2022 performance, Barcelona paid a reported £400,000 for Keira Walsh to move from Manchester City.

Although no-one ever really knows the exact transfer sums involved, this was a clear world record price tag for a women's footballer. This bid was surpassed in January 2023 when Arsenal came in hot with a reported half a million quid bid for Alessia Russo. Although, since it was never accepted and Russo ended up leaving for free, it didn't get to be the new world record fee! It

does demonstrate how transfer fees are increasing, though.

Domestically, Lauren James was a between-WSL clubs record signing for Chelsea from Manchester United. But the £200,000 fee for James was then trumped by Spurs when they broke the WSL record this season, signing Beth England for, reportedly, £250,000.

Until recently, the flipside of this was youth academies losing young players to bigger clubs for free. Since players have to be 18 before they can sign a professional contract, bigger clubs would attract them away as soon as they're 18 for their first contract: without having to pay a fee. Lauren Hemp played through the Bristol City academy but was snapped up by Manchester City for her first pro contract. Bristol got nothing. Aston Villa recently lost Evie Rabjohn to Manchester United the same way. Sensibly, the loophole has now been closed though and

academies will be compensated for every year the player was there.

Even in the WSL's fully professional short history, it's clear transfer fees are rising and will continue to do so. Many players continue to move between clubs for free, but it seems unlikely this will continue in the future. As the game grows in popularity and stature, transfer fees will surely become the norm.

When will we get the first million-pound fee? Should it be something to celebrate or fear? When Trevor Francis broke the million-pound barrier for the first time in men's football - with his move from Birmingham City to Nottingham Forest in 1979 - the football media went crazy. It was considered madness. The men's game has definitely strayed into madness territory now! The media of the time had a point: where does it end.

As a demonstration of how mad the men's game has gone, the record Premier League transfer fee is now £106.8 million! Enzo Fernandez, recently crowned World Cup winning goalkeeper for Argentina, was snapped up by Chelsea during the 2023 winter transfer window. A million pounds for a player now seems laughably small: the average men's Premier

League player (average, not best) earns £61,000 per week, about £3 million per year! Is this something the women's game should be aiming for, or should we be avoiding it completely?

Although it's natural that bigger clubs will compete for top players, forcing fees up, we should be wary of what has happened in the men's game. In 2020, over £4 billion was spent on transfer fees, not to mention enormous salaries. Yes, I know, football is big business. But is that where the sport has gone wrong? I think it is.

Now, women players are accessible to their fans. At every WSL game, big name players are signing autographs, taking selfies, thanking fans, and inspiring young girls to play the game. They're winning over audiences with the family friendly atmosphere and they're becoming much needed role models. They're standing up for equality in all aspects of life and challenging stereotypes.

The male players were once accessible too. But when football became big business and large sums of money became involved, everything changed. Since I was a girl, men's football has changed beyond all recognition. From a skill, speed, and physicality point of view,

this has made for better football on the pitch. But players no longer interact with fans - they've become untouchable. The gap between player and fan is too wide. This isn't good for the game. The women's game needs to avoid the same mistakes.

Fortunately, the women have always done things differently, so hopefully can learn from the good and bad of the men's model.

Transfer fees and players' wages will and should increase - players and clubs should be compensated for their work. Players deserve a decent salary: their careers are relatively short. They don't need £60,000+ a week, though. Transfer fees need to compensate clubs for training players. But big clubs shouldn't do better simply because they have more money.

We'll see the first £1,000,000 transfer fee soon, and it's an exciting prospect. But we shouldn't be too keen to follow the path of the Premier League. Accessible players, family-oriented matches, and the joy of football shouldn't be compromised in the name of business.

QUESTIONS



DO YOU HAVE ANY RITUALS OR SUPERSTITIONS BEFORE A GAME?

I PUT MY LEFT SHOE AND GLOVE ON BEFORE MY RIGHT. I'M ALSO PARTICULAR ABOUT NEEDING MY UNDER ARMOUR TUCKED INTO MY GLOVES. ONCE I HAVE ONE GLOVE ON, I CAN'T DO THE OTHER MYSELF SO I HAVE TO ASK SOMEONE FOR HELP!

WHAT IS YOUR BEST MOMENT IN YOUR CAREER TO DATE?

IT HAS TO BE QUALIFYING FOR THE WORLD CUP!

WHO IS THE BEST PLAYER YOU HAVE PLAYED AGAINST?

VIVIANNE MIEDEMA. I DON'T THINK I'VE FACED SOMEONE THAT'S AS DANGEROUS AND KNOWS THE GAME SO WELL. PLAYING AGAINST THE USA IN THE RECENT CAMP, I WAS REALLY IMPRESSED WITH LINDSEY HORAN. SHE'S ONE OF THE BEST WITH POSSESSION AND ATTACKING.

DO YOU HAVE SET PRE-MATCH FOOD?

WE ALL LOVE PANCAKES BEFORE GAMES. ALSO OATMEAL, EGGS AND BAGELS.

WHO IS YOUR BEST FRIEND IN FOOTBALL?

LEANNE KIERNAN. I USED TO LIVE WITH HER WHEN WE PLAYED FOR WEST HAM SO WE'RE VERY CLOSE. SHE'S LIKE MY SISTER. I'M ALSO CLOSE WITH MARTHA THOMAS WHO PLAYS FOR MANCHESTER UNITED.

WHAT IS THE HARDEST MOMENT OF YOUR CAREER SO FAR?

I WAS SIDE-LINED FOR A BIT WHEN I WAS AROUND 18 AFTER I DISLOCATED MY KNEECAP WHICH REQUIRED SURGERY. I WAS OUT FOR ABOUT 14 MONTHS. THE RECOVERY DIDN'T GO AS WELL AS PLANNED SO THAT WAS DIFFICULT.

WHO IS THE MOST SKILFUL PLAYER AT EVERTON?

HANNA BENNISON. I'VE NEVER SEEN SOMEONE WITH SUCH GOOD CONTROL. ALSO JESS PARK, SHE'S GOT SOME GOOD FLICKS AND TRICKS.

WHO IS YOUR BIGGEST SUPPORTER?

MY DAD. HE'S BEEN MY BIGGEST FAN SINCE I STARTED KICKING A BALL. HE HAS COME TO ENGLAND TO SEE ME PLAY AND WAS AT THE SCOTLAND GAME TOO.

WHAT IS THE DRESSING ROOM ATMOSPHERE LIKE BEFORE GAMES?

WE HAVE A GREAT ATMOSPHERE. MEGAN FINNIGAN IS THE DJ AT EVERTON SO SHE MIXES IT UP AND THERE'S PLENTY OF LAUGHTER ALONG WITH PREPARATION.

IF YOU WERE NOT A FOOTBALLER, WHAT WOULD YOU DO FOR A JOB?

I STUDIED A BIOLOGY MAJOR IN THE US SO IDEALLY, I WANTED TO GO TO MEDICAL SCHOOL. I'D LOVE TO WORK IN THE HEALTHCARE FIELD.

Courtney
Nelson

BARCLAYS WSL NEWS



Manchester City head coach Gareth Taylor has signed a one-year contract extension with the club for the 2023/24 season. Taylor has won the Women's FA Cup and FA Women's Conti Cup during his three years in charge.

After signing, Taylor said "I'm very happy to be able to commit to City for another season, and 2023/2024 is one that I'm so excited about. "We have been in a transitional period over the past 12 months, and the women's game has changed so much during my three years in charge. "We were fortunate to win trophies in each of my first two seasons, and although we haven't been successful on that front this past year, the pride I've taken has come in different forms".

United States international Catarina Macario has joined Chelsea from Lyon. Macario has already won the UEFA Women's Champions League, two Division 1 Feminine championships, two She Believes Cups, a Coupe de France Feminine and a Trophee des Champions.

Macario said "I'm really happy to sign for Chelsea and I hope to represent the jersey well over the next few years.

"I've been fortunate to have some great experiences in Europe already with Lyon, playing with many top players and of course winning the Champions League".

The Blues have also signed England international Hannah Hampton who left Aston Villa after her contract expired. Canadian international Ashley Lawrence has also joined the club from PSG.



A number of WSL clubs have already made signings during the summer transfer window.

Aston Villa have signed Netherlands international goalkeeper Daphne Van Domselaar from FC Twente, whilst Pauline Bremer has joined Brighton & Hove Albion from UEFA Women's Champions League finalists Wolfsburg. Women's Super League newcomers Bristol City have signed Amy Rodgers from Championship side London City Lionesses.

Brian Sorensen has brought Martina Piemonte in at Everton, whilst Leicester have signed Courtney Nevin permanently after she was on loan at the Foxes during the 2022/23 season.

Amongst those leaving Leicester is Natasha Flint who has joined Liverpool.



BARCLAYS CHAMPIONSHIP



New roles for match officials

Twelve match officials will operate in new roles during the 2023-24 season after securing promotions within the Women's Professional Game Select Group.

Melissa Burgin, Phoebe Cross and Adewunmi Soneye have been successful in reaching the level of 1W, meaning they will referee Barclays Women's Super League fixtures in the forthcoming campaign.

Supporting the aforementioned trio as assistant referees in the BWSL will be six officials as they combine that role with refereeing in the Barclays Women's Championship.

Meanwhile, three fellow officials will join them as assistants in the top flight of the women's game whilst continuing to referee at the level of 3W.

The full list of match officials promoted are as follows:

Promoted to 1W

Melissa Burgin

Phoebe Cross

Adewunmi Soneye

Promoted to 2W/TWAR

Jon Ashworth-Sears

Levi Gray

Grace Lowe

Callum Parke

Laura Van Lier

Megan Wilson

Promoted to 1WAR (and continue to officiate as 3W)

Harley Hetherington

Matt Joyce

Anastasiya Voloshchuk

Southampton and Strling Bank announce partnership



Southampton FC Women's team has announced the renewal of its partnership with principal sponsor Strling Bank following a successful first year working together.

The renewed collaboration, extending the partnership by three years, signifies the remarkable success and shared vision between the two organisations that remain passionate about the growth of the women's game.

The three-year deal will see Strling and the Saints create more grassroots football opportunities for women and girls in the Hampshire region, where the

bank has also created 500 roles in banking, engineering, and operations at its Southampton base.

The decision to extend the partnership comes following an extraordinary period for Southampton FC Women.

Throughout the 2022/2023 season, the team has experienced unprecedented growth, with average attendance for each match increasing by 35% compared to the previous 2021/2022 season, highlighting the passion and loyalty of its new and dedicated supporters.

Furthermore, Southampton FC Women has witnessed an

outstanding increase in season ticket sales, with a remarkable 180% growth between the 2021/2022 and 2022/2023 seasons.

The partnership renewal comes ahead of the team's new kit launch, which will be Strling's first sponsored shirt that's available for general purchase.

Marking the partnership renewal, Southampton FC has introduced a new milestone in its merchandise offering. For the first time in the club's history women's team shirts will be on sale, catering to the growing demand and dedication of the fanbase.

Charlie Boss, Chief Commercial Officer at Southampton FC said: "Our club is extremely proud of everything our women's team has achieved on and off the pitch. Starling's continued support and belief in our vision has been instrumental in the team's remarkable growth and success.

"This renewed partnership is a testament to the unwavering commitment of both organisations to achieving greatness together."

Rachel Kerrone, Brand and Marketing Director at Starling said: "There has been so much progress in women's football in the last year. We want to help the tide rise for women and girls everywhere, both in technology and in sport, and I can't wait to see what we can do with Southampton FC Women in the next three years and beyond."

Since launching their partnership in 2022, Southampton Football Club and Starling Bank have made fantastic progress in helping to propel women's football to new heights.

Over the last 12 months, they have focussed on bridging the gap between the matchday experience of the men's and

women's teams and fuelling the attendance of passionate fans. Moreover, they have introduced ground-breaking initiatives such as "Coaches of Tomorrow" – a visionary programme that aims to empower and inspire a new generation of women and girls to conquer the realm of football coaching. In the last year, the initiative has trained up 20 women from the region into qualified grassroots football coaches.

The bank also funded a free ticket giveaway to the Conti Cup in 2022, resulting in a record number of ticket sales (just over 8,000) for the women's team at St Mary's Stadium against Tottenham Hotspur Women.

Home kit launch marks another step for the Women's team

Southampton have launched their new home kit for the 2023/24 season.

For the first time you'll be able to buy a Saints Women's jersey in store and online with a unique front of shirt sponsor - Starling Bank.

In their first year working together, we've launched campaigns such as Coaches of Tomorrow which has supported 20 new female coaches into the beautiful game.

Head of Women's and Girls Football, Marieanne Spacey-Cale said: 'The front of shirt sponsor is such an iconic part of football – as fans we always want to know who's going to be on the front of the new kit?' It's exciting and pioneering that we have this amazing sponsor for the new season.

"Our sponsor is also really important. Starling's values are very much aligned to our own and what we want to achieve.

"It's the only bank in the UK to be founded by a woman, and it empowers women in the banking and technology industry, which is what we're looking to achieve with the next generation of female footballers.

"For the players and staff, it's recognition of the journey we've been on so far and where we want to go – it shows everything we're working towards.

"We're one club, but the fact we have a stand alone front of shirt sponsor highlights the work we've done to promote this team and the impact the programme's had in the community.'

Big Things for the Lionesses

By Peter Mann



London City Lionesses have gone big this summer following the recent announcements of both a new Head Coach, and Assistant Coach, for their first team, having missed out on promotion, by just three points, last time around.

Having battled eventual champions, Bristol City, for the Barclays Women's Championship title, and with it, promotion to the Women's Super League, for much of the last campaign, London City would see their then manager, Melissa Phillips, depart at the turn of the year, Nikita Runnacles being tasked with seeing them through the home stretch.

Now, as clubs prepare for the 2023/23 campaign, one of several capital sides are trying perhaps a whole new, different approach, towards potential promotion, and with it, the appointments of Carolina Morace (Head Coach) and Nicola Williams (Assistant Coach), both of whom bring varying degrees of

experience, and from opposite sides of the world. Morace, a 59-year-old former Italian striker who played for club, and country, over a two-decade spell between the late seventies and late nineties, immediately moved from the playing fields, to the dugout, and has added another two decades (and small change) there.

Meanwhile, Williams, a 41-year-old former Australian international who was born in North-West England, registered similar down under in her near, two-decade playing career, at one point running both playing, and coaching, alongside each other with the latter already spanning two decades.

"This is a very exciting opportunity to join a female-led football club who are paving the way for women & girls to realise their footballing ambitions and I look forward to playing my part in London City's journey.

"The Club is highly motivated to win the [Barclays Women's] Championship and I will work hard with the players, staff and leadership team to make sure that we build on London City's proud traditions and achieve the Clubs collective ambitions."

The Italian legend, who has led that of AC Milan, Lazio (twice), as well as the national teams of Italy, Canada and Trinidad & Tobago, and has also found time to gain a law degree from which she practices at a studio in Rome, is joined in the English capital by her spouse of near a decade, Nicola Williams.

Williams, who has a degree in Sports Science alongside her wealth of experience from across the globe, added of her own appointment: "Bringing my experience in high-performance football at both the international and domestic level, I aim to immediately create the professional environment needed to support our players and help

the team reach its potential.

"I see my role here as a great opportunity to build on the success of previous years and start a new chapter for the club, with a direction that has shared values and goals."

The Australian, born in Lancaster, England, moved to Australia in her youth, and was seen to carve out a career on, and off-the-field, coaching at numerous levels for the Australia National Team, a spell with the Trinidad & Tobago where she coupled being coach of the U20s alongside being Assistant to the Seniors, held similar positions in Italy with AC Milan and SS Lazio, and in England with Leicester City, before earlier this year being involved in the coach team with Papua New Guinea for their Women's World Cup qualifying campaign.

London's Head of Recruitment and Player Acquisition, Ronald Thompson added about the pair joining the club: "The word 'legend' is over-used in the modern game, but it truly applies to Carolina.

"When I knew there was a chance that we could bring her to the Club, I felt that it was something we just had to do. People in the sport will recognise the wealth of experience she will bring to London City, both as a player and a coach.

"We have been looking for a coach who shares our vision and can build on the positive work that has already been done – and Carolina is the perfect option to push us forwards.

"Carolina's leadership and knowledge will help shape and drive our academy to the next level, helping to develop our younger players with the aim to promote them through our player pathway and into the first team."

And of Nicola he furthered when saying: "We conducted a long and diligent search to find the right technical staff to help the Club fulfil its long-term ambitions. Nicola is an innovative coach, with a vast amount of experience, who takes players out of their comfort zone to unlock the very best performances from them. Her time working with younger players will also be valuable to our Professional Game Academy.

"The leadership qualities that Nicola brings to the role will drive the team forward, putting us in the best position to take the next step in our journey."

Elsewhere in the Championship, it's certainly all change at relegated Reading, the side having finished bottom of last season's WSL. The Royals will not only be working under a part-time model for the coming season, dropping into the second tier for the first time since 2015, they will

be doing so without club legend, and now former Director of Football, and First Team Manager, Kelly Chambers, she having departed the club for pastures new.

Speaking of the switch to part-time status, clubs CEO, Dayong Pang, said: "Difficult but necessary financial decisions are being made across the business following the club's relegation to League One last season and, after discussions with the FA, the decision to operate Reading FC Women on a part-time basis represents the most viable solution at the present time."

Meanwhile, as transfers come thick-and-fast across the world, a couple of major movers involving Championship sides have seen Maria Fuggia head south, from Durham to Lewes, the Maltese international having spent just one season at the North-East club she joined from rivals Sunderland the summer before, whilst Durham have added Eleanor Ryan-Doyle from Birmingham City.

Leaving Lewes is last season's Goal of the Season award winner, Ellie Mason, she's heading to the West Midlands having joined Birmingham, the Northern Ireland international's seventh club, Sunderland meanwhile have signed Katie Kitching from London City and Mary McAtter from Rugby Borough (formerly Coventry United).

CHAMPIONSHIP NEWS DESK



London City Lionesses have appointed Carolina Morace as their new head coach on a two-year deal. Morace has coached Italy, Canada and Trinidad and Tobago at international level, and has also been head coach at AC Milan and Lazio in recent years at club level in Italy. She scored 105 goals in 150 appearances for Italy as a player and is the second-highest goalscorer for the national side. Morace said “I’m delighted to have been appointed the new head coach of London City Lionesses. “This is a very exciting opportunity to join a female-led football club who are paving the way for women and girls to realise their footballing ambitions and I look forward to playing my part in London City’s journey. “The Club is highly motivated to win the Women’s Championship and I will work hard with the players, staff and leadership team to make sure that we build on London City’s proud traditions and achieve the Club’s collective ambitions.”

Long-serving Reading manager Kelly Chambers has announced her decision to leave the club following relegation to the Women’s Championship. Chambers had led the Royals for over 10 years where she was also director of women’s football. During their eight-year stay in the Women’s Super League, Reading finished in the top half of the table on a number of occasions. This follows the news that the club will be operating under a part-time model during the 2023/24 season to create a more sustainable platform going forward. Reading CEO Dayong Pang said “Difficult but necessary financial decisions are being made across the business following the (men’s) club’s relegation to League One last season. After discussions with The FA, the decision to operate Reading FC Women on a part-time basis represents the most viable solution at the present time”.



Sheffield United have announced that they will begin the transition towards operating a full-time playing model. Some of the Blades players and staff will sign full-time contracts in the coming weeks and they will play their home matches at Bramall Lane again during the 2023/24 season. They are also introducing a Professional Game Academy which will be managed by captain Sophie Barker. Sheffield United’s chief executive officer, Stephen Bettis, said “During an increasingly exciting time for women’s football, we are delighted to take these steps at Sheffield United to reaffirm our commitment to our women’s team and its continued development. “The investment in Sheffield United Women from our supporters as well as the club in recent years has been clear to see, and we’re all looking forward to continuing this journey together. “As with Paul Heckingbottom and the men’s team, the board will support Jonathan Morgan and the women’s team as much as possible to continue the club’s pursuit for success.”



GBE Criteria confirmed for the women's game

New criteria for Governing Body Endorsements [GBE] for international player visas in the women's game have been introduced today.

The main points-based system remains in place, but the points scoring model has been updated, including a change from two bands of leagues to three.

There is also the addition of a youth player exceptions panel for 2023/24 to provide clubs with access to high potential players who might fall outside the current criteria, but are of proven ability.

The introduction of more bands allows the system to differentiate more easily when assessing players from different quality of leagues, and the new route for proven young

talent provides clubs increased opportunity to develop the world's best young players here.

The overall system remains a delicate balance which welcomes the best overseas players and best potential to English football, while ensuring the development pathway is not blocked for the next generation of young England players.

Baroness Sue Campbell, FA Director of Women's Football said: "To continue developing women's football in England it is important that we have a thriving Women's Super League and Championship that attracts the world's best players.

"We must also ensure that there is a pathway for young English talent to fulfil their potential by playing

in our professional senior game.

"The revised GBE criteria is a result of an extensive and positive consultation process, and will allow our clubs to access more of the best young and established talent from across the globe, whilst also ensuring that the pathway for the next generation is not blocked.

"It's been encouraging to see honest and exciting conversations across the game on how we can keep improving and progressing.

"We will continue working with all stakeholders to achieve the best for all areas of women's football in England."





THE FA NATIONAL LEAGUE

Heald Ltd extends sponsorship deal



Yorkshire security manufacturer Heald Ltd has announced the renewal of their sponsorship of Hull City Ladies FC player Hope Knight for the 23-24 season.

The English women's football club was formed in 2001 and is currently playing in the FA Women's National League North.

Hull City Ladies' values align with Heald's, who are passionate about supporting local communities and organisations that empower women to chase their ambitions. This ethos is driven by Heald's Managing Director, Debbie Heald, who received an MBE for her services to export and the promotion of STEM careers for women.

Top goal scorer and attacker Hope Knight, proudly sponsored by Heald Ltd, contributed to a positive 2023 season for the Tigresses. Hull City Ladies finished 5th place and scored 46 goals, the 3rd highest in the league.

Hope Knight had a fantastic

season for Chris Hames's side, Director of Women and Girls Football, in which the number 24 was the FA Women's National League top scorer with 23 goals beating Bianca Owens and Georgia Gibson, who finished the season both on 19 goals. Hope also secured two hat tricks, including four goals against Bradford and four against Middlesbrough.

Danny Johnson, Hull City Ladies FC Managing Director, said: "Our goal is to provide Hull and the East Riding with a genuine and viable female pathway that allows us to inspire, train and retain the best talents from across the region within the women's game. We want to establish Hull City Ladies as a Tier 2 (championship) club and create a real belief in a career in football in the East Riding."

Danny continues: "It's brilliant that Heald Ltd have continued their sponsorship of Hope Knight. We're creating opportunities for females in our region to develop, empower and achieve, and with Heald's continued

"We're also proud to see a great business, who are the leading innovators of perimeter security technology and have a long history of supporting local charities and organisations supporting the Tigresses, once again.

"It's important to have local businesses support Hull City Ladies, as they're inviting partners to join them on an exciting journey, be part of generating a vibrant community, and this is an opportunity for everyone to leave a lasting legacy for women and girls in our region."

Debbie comments: "We're really excited to extend our sponsorship of the talented Hope Knight after a great 22-23 season.

"The Heald team have attended numerous Tigeress games, and we're proud to be a part of such a driven, ambitious, and supportive team that is an integral part of the community. I look forward to supporting Hope Knight in the upcoming season!"



Ipswich Town





She Shoots, She Scores

Natasha Thomas radiates positivity. She's now in her ninth season at Ipswich Town, is their all-time record goalscorer, and sees the only way as up. Last season the Tractor Girls missed out on winning the National League South on goal difference - and this year it could be automatic promotion to the Championship, if they finish top.

Words: Helen Jerome

Her idols growing up were Messi, Ronaldo... and her brothers. She's highly competitive in every part of her sport and life - not to mention Uno - and she has one big wish for women's football...

How's preseason going - where are you in the schedule?

We started yesterday. So we did all our testing, jumps and making sure that we're all where we should be, that there's no underlying health issues or anything. Back in today, and I'm sure there'll be a lot of running and testing our speed and agility as well.

Do you each have personal benchmarks, as you're all different sizes and heights?

We start afresh. This new season, they look into what we're doing, how we can improve - and we want to improve season upon

season. We always look back at what we've been hitting. Obviously, sometimes it's going to go up and down. But that's the nature of it, and as soon as we've got that information, of course we want to beat it. We're striving to get better and better.

Rolling back the years, who first got you into football?

It was my brothers. When I was younger, we'd always go down to the field and play football there. Then I went to a Saturday football club for Waveney in Lowestoft. That's where my career really started when I was playing football competitively from the age of nine. I didn't watch a lot of football, I just played it a lot. In fact, I played a lot of different sports and was offered scholarships for basketball and triathlon. I enjoyed all sports, but I stuck to

football because it's what I love.

Would you like to go higher - either with Ipswich or elsewhere?

Definitely. I've always said I want to play at the highest possible level. I'd love that to be with Ipswich and we are pushing to do that this season, and every season I've been here. So for myself and as an Ipswich player I want to get to the highest heights. We've got all the backing, we've got the structure, we've just got to keep on pushing.

How did it feel to get so close to being champions, losing out on goal difference?

It was a bit disheartening, but at the same time, we knew we had to keep on grinding, because there were three of us in the title race. It could have gone any way. We just did what we had to do. We've done that, and



Ross Hall

unfortunately it came down to goal difference. So we know what we need to do. And we're going to keep on improving each season.

From next season, it's automatic promotion for the champions, with no playoff. That must give you extra impetus?

Yes, it does. Obviously, every season we've gone into it knowing that potentially - even if we win the league - we might not even go up. So to hear that's changed shows the development in women's football. It's a really good step and incentive to make sure we do everything we can to win the league and get automatic promotion. It's a lot better - and now you can celebrate!

If you could wave a magic wand, and change something about the way women's football - and especially your club and league operate - what would it be?

I think we just need more publicity. Really, that's the biggest thing. The more publicity we get, the more people can see what we can do and how much women's football has actually improved. Because not a lot of it does get shown, though I know a lot more does. You see the WSL and Championship a lot more than you do any of the tiers below. I think if people do actually see those tiers - as in the men's game - they'll see how much it's developing, and that there is real talent below the Championship.

It'll be hard to get TV to cover everything, so maybe it's about getting people involved?

Oh, yeah, certainly. But I think the club's trying to make sure that fans can come and watch us. We're doing as much as we can to make sure that people that haven't maybe watched us - what the reasons are, if it's something that we can look into, and help the community at the same time.

You score a lot of goals, so tell me about the art of goal scoring, what makes you different and always able to score?

I'm not a player that can just score certain goals; I think I'm good all around and I score quite a lot with my head. I'm dominantly right-footed, but



Ross Hall

I've scored my left as well. I've got a few good attributes: I'm fast, strong and tall, so that always helps in a forward.

When we go into the gym, and do our mobility, strength and conditioning, that really helps. It's underestimated and people don't realise how much that impacts your game and keeps you going, because some seasons are long when you've got cup games as well – and you're winning them. It's quite a few games, so it's making sure you're fuelling your body correctly and get rest as well.

Looking around the WSL and abroad, are there women's strikers you admire right now?

Yeah, definitely. There's a few. Sam Kerr is absolutely unbelievable, the way she strikes the ball... and how many goals she scores for her country as well. It's always nice to look at the higher-ranked players and try and reach those heights, and just keep on pushing myself.

Can you pick out a goal you're especially proud of from last season, one that sticks in your memory?

I'd say the first win of the season against Billericay, because we'd lost the first two matches. It was one of those games where we just needed to get the win, we needed to get the three points. And that's what got us started in the season. So I'd definitely

say the Billericay game, not just from the perspective of it being myself that scored – it was the impact of the goal and how it came about. So that's one that's definitely stuck in my mind.

Can you describe the actual goal? Was it your right foot?

It was, yeah. What happened was, our left back pinged it all the way to our left winger. She then crossed it into the box, and I've run from just inside our half, straight through, and it was a peach of a pass that literally landed on my foot and went straight into the top of the net on the left-hand side.

That must have been sweet, off the laces...



Ipswich Town

Yes, it was one of those, and of course you can imagine the scenes, everyone jumping on me. I think I was on the bottom, because I couldn't get up! But yeah, that was a really good feeling, not just for myself, but for the whole squad and the coaching staff as well.

How does it feel to have the status of being the all-time leading goalscorer for Ipswich?

It feels great. But I couldn't have done it without the teammates I've got now, plus previous teammates, and those hopefully to come. When I go in each day, I want to make sure that I can add to that tally for the team - to help us get to where we want to be next season.

More fans seem to be coming at all levels across the women's game. Have you noticed the trickle-down, even now post-Euros?

Yes. 100%. I think the Euros itself did spark another spark within the women's game. We get a lot of younger boys and girls coming to watch our games now, which is amazing. And I go to schools locally, so it's nice to see their little faces light up. Then you see them at the games and they're so excited that you're there and you're an actual footballer.

The numbers we're getting through the doors now are un-

believable. Ipswich have always had a really good fan base and that's the heart of the club. So it's good that the numbers for the women's game are now rising, as well as the men's.

Lots of young families are going, and I'm guessing you see some of them wearing your shirt?

Yeah, I think it was probably last season where we'd walk into a game day and see our names on the back of fan's shirts. They could've gone in the club shop and just got a Freddie Ladapo or Conor Chaplin name on their back. But they haven't; they've got the women's team's names there, which is really nice to see.

How closely are the men's and women's teams linked - is there an overlapping fan base?

Yeah, I'd say we do. It's nice, because you'll get tweets and get posted. And you'll be linked with the men's team. We all train at the same training round. So when we see each other, we say hello, have a quick chat and catch up. We're very close-knit club, and it runs all the way through down to the academy. Everyone's involved and it's not one of those where you turn up to the training ground and feel awkward.

Are there some young Ipswich players we should look out for this season?

Yeah, I think quite a few will break through. We've got a few will break through. We've got a few defenders who we'll probably see a lot more. You've got Leonie [Telford] and Evie [Williams], very good players, tall defenders, so they'll be good to see and obviously we've got Nia [Evans] who's also been within the ranks. I'm sure we'll see her push for even more this season.

You had teenager Freya Godfrey on dual registration from Arsenal, which is quite a neat trick. How do you view her future career?

Absolutely unbelievable player, and a really good person as well for such a young age. She's going to be a very good player and will go far, not just from what she does, but her attitude as well. She was such a good player to have in training as well as on game days because she helped us so much. And that showed in the games that she played. So yeah, you're going to see her hit the highest heights I think.

Will Ipswich do this next season, the dual registrations?

It'll be something we look into, but I'm not 100% sure. Because we're bringing our youth players through and putting a time investment into them. We've got the squad, the players here that we can improve and bring through to the first team.



Word How will you cope with losing Anna Grey and Abbie Lafayette?

They're big players and we're going to have to get replacements. But every season we lose players, unfortunately. That's the nature of the game. We've got a very good squad, we're still here, we're going to still do what Ipswich wants. We'll recruit as we do each season – and do as much as we can on the training ground to make sure we reach our goals.

Do you see yourself becoming a manager one day?

I haven't looked down that avenue yet. I want to keep within football after my career. It's definitely something I'll look into in the next one to two years. I'd like to keep within the football industry. We'll see what avenue I go down.

You're now a part-time pro, but still have to do other work to make ends meet. Is that right?

Yeah, I have another job. I work within a gym, so that's perfect to help me within my game.

How does that work in dividing up your week?

I'm very lucky with my job. We train on Tuesday, Thursday and Friday. So I work in the morning, then come down in the afternoon and it works really well. And obviously game day on a Sunday.

You're a trustee for Ipswich Town's Community Trust, can you tell me what that involves?

Mostly I help and support around the community. We have fortnightly meetings going through figures, but for me, the biggest part is helping the community. Being in Lowestoft, there was none of that when I was younger. So that's why I try to get to tournaments and go to primary schools to help with their football tournaments as well.

What do you think about being a leader at Ipswich and a role model?

I love it. Obviously, this is going to be my ninth season now – so I'm getting close to that 10th season. I've felt such a part of it and I've always been a loyal player. Previously, I've only ever played for Waveney, and Lowestoft – which are two local teams – and obviously, Ipswich. So that's three clubs. And if the club looks after me as well as I look after them, I'm someone that's going to stay and make sure we reach the heights.

Did you have your own role models when you were young?

Yeah, I looked up to my brothers when I was younger, and Ronaldo and Messi were the names then. I always wanted to make my family proud. They pushed me when I didn't believe.

Did particular teachers encourage you – maybe a PE teacher spotted you?

Yeah, through middle school and high school, my sports teachers were always pushing me.

They'd make sure I was getting my grades as well. They'd say: get these grades, otherwise you won't be able to play football. That spurred me on to make sure I could still play football for the school. So I'd definitely say my PE teachers, Mr Sonix and Miss Ross.

Finally, you've said football kept you on the straight and narrow.

What do you think you'd be doing now if you weren't involved in it? What else appealed?

I'm a competitive person. So if I didn't go for football, then it would've probably been athletics, because at sports day I was always in the winning team and always wanting to win.

We play Uno all the time on the coach. I love it, and we're all competitive at it. Some listen to music and chill, but there's a group of us who always play Uno. Yes, we take cards too, but every away game we have to play Uno before we go into the changing room!



Derby County integration

Derby County have announced the full integration of Derby County Women into the main club. The players and coaching staff handed deals as contracted employees of Derby County for the first time.

Speaking about the move, Derby County's Chief Executive Officer, Stephen Pearce, said: "This is another significant moment for us as a football club and we're delighted to formally welcome Derby County Women's first team as official employees.

"This has been a step that we discussed around a year ago, once our owner David Clowes completed the takeover of the club, so to see the dream become a reality inside 12 months is an incredible feat. "Some extremely stable foundations have been put in place by those associated with Derby County Women over the years and, with the work of several individuals remaining as part of the setup moving forward, we're looking forward to seeing how we can progress our support of the Women's game to another level."

Newcastle go professional

Newcastle United Women will become the first full-time professional football club in FA Women's National League history for the upcoming 2023/24 season – one year on from the club becoming an official part of Newcastle United Football Club. As well as receiving competitive salaries, the players will be able to train throughout the week and will have access to professional equipment, treatment and injury-prevention facilities, while continuing to play home matches at Kingstons Park.

New Belles management

Doncaster Rovers Belles are delighted to confirm the appointments of Sam Winch and Alexandre Brito Nogueira as the club's new management team.

Sam will take on the role of manager, working alongside Alexandre, who has been appointed head coach.

UEFA A Licence coach Sam has previously managed Nottingham Forest Women, followed by a spell as assistant manager at Leicester City. The 35-year-old has worked in the academies of Burton Albion and Nottingham Forest. Experienced Alexandre has most recently acted as lead international coach for Chelsea, delivering on projects across Europe.

"The Belles are a huge club with a massive history so it's a great opportunity and a prestigious position for me to take on," Sam said. "It was time for me to get back into management and the Belles just fit the bill for so many reasons.

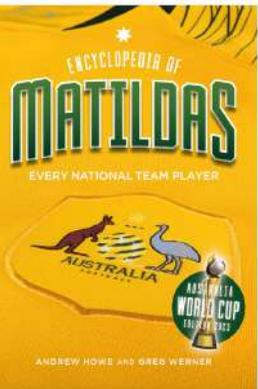
"The prospects for the club that we've spoken about just made me super excited for what is to come."



Bonas steps down

Keith Bonas steps down as manager of Welling United Women.

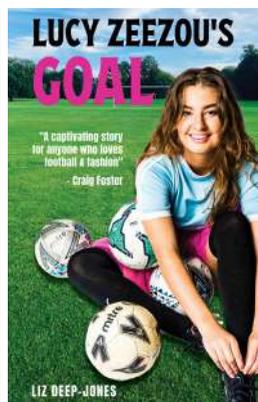
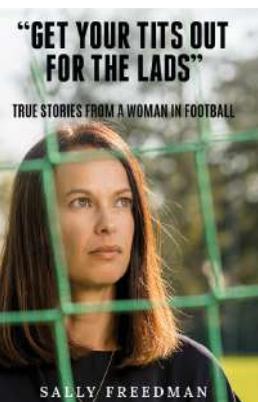
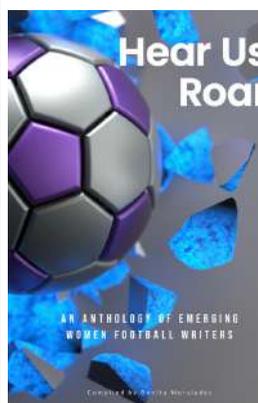
In his statement he wrote: I wish to go on record as apportioning no blame whatsoever to the guys at Welling who I know are fire-fighting to re-establish this club. I am proud of what we achieved and that we represented the club in a positive way on and off the pitch despite the tough moments.



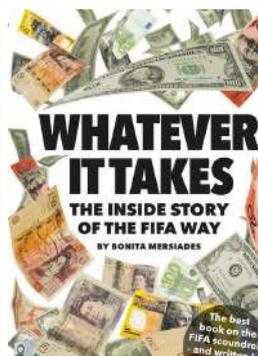
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GRASSROOTS FOOTBALL



Women's football celebrated at showhome launch in Worksop

Women footballers from Worksop were the VIP guests at the launch of a new showhome at Bellway's Gateford Quarter development in the town.

The housebuilder invited women and girls from SJR Worksop FC to cut the ribbon on the new Spinner showhome, which features a bedroom inspired by the England Lionesses' victory in the Women's Euro 2022 final.

The showhome launch event took place last month.

Claire Brown, Director of Football for SJR Worksop FC Women's and Girls' Teams, said: "We all had a brilliant day visiting Gateford Quarter.

"The girls enjoyed looking around the development and particularly enjoyed cutting the ribbon of the showhome and seeing the football-themed bedroom."

SJR Worksop Women, who are based at QTC Rockware Stadium off Sandy Lane, play in Division 1 North of the East Midlands Women's Regional League and will start training for the 2023/24 season soon.

Andrew Guest, Chairman of SJR Worksop FC, said: "We're grateful Bellway reached out to us and thought it would be a great opportunity for us to have a social outing away from the pitch and check out the new show bedroom dedicated to women's football.

"Feedback from the girls as been very positive. They enjoyed visiting the development and were made to feel special.

"As Bellway are building new homes very locally to us, we're glad to have established a relationship with them and hope we can perhaps work together further down the line.

"We're currently looking for

seven, eight, and nine-year-olds to complete our squads and players can register their interest by contacting sjrworksop@gmail.com."

Gateford Quarter is located off Gateford Road in Worksop and will bring 110 new homes to the area alongside public open space and a Multi-Use Games Area, which is already complete.

Sales Manager for Bellway East Midlands, Adam Champion, said: "It was a pleasure to invite women and girls from SJR Worksop FC to Gateford Quarter and it's great to hear that they enjoyed viewing the Lionesses-themed bedroom and cutting the ribbon to the showhome.

"The club does so much to promote women's football locally and we wish the players the very best of luck for the 2023/24 season and beyond."

Yashmin Harun's achievements celebrated at 10 Downing Street



FA Council member Yashmin Harun BEM this week took her campaign to increase the number of women from historically underrepresented communities in sport to 10 Downing Street.

Yashmin won the Sport Award at the 2023 Asian Women of Achievement Awards in June for her tireless work and passion in striving to increase representation and provide opportunities for women in sport.

On Tuesday, the FA Council representative was one of around 30 winners and nominees from the 2023 Asian Women of Achievement Awards to attend the home of the Prime Minister.

There Yashmin met with representatives of the Government and other prominent figures in the Asian community to share their insights and experiences, whilst also celebrating their respective achievements.

Yashmin said: "It was a privilege and an honour to attend 10 Downing Street. It was a real pinch-me moment because it was surreal to be there.

"For someone from my background to be at 10 Downing Street, with all these other distinguished women who are achieving so much in their sectors, I was so humbled.

"Just to be among that wealth of knowledge and skillsets, with all those

incredible women, was such an honour for me.

"We are underrepresented in sports so to have conversations at 10 Downing Street, with representatives of the Government, was really important."

A banker by trade, Yashmin's love of sport saw her create the Muslimah Sports Association in 2014, with the aim of getting more women from the South Asian community involved.

This led to her helping to create a tailored course with the Essex FA and the FA to increase the number of women from the South Asian community going on to become coaches.

Yashmin's impact has continued to grow and now she is an FA council member and London FA director, whilst also having roles on the London FA's Inclusion Advisory Group and Women and Girls' Advisory Group.

She is also a member of the FA Asian female in football working party which contributes knowledge and experience to The FA's 'Bringing Opportunities to Communities' strategy focusing on Asian inclusion across the game. She is also Vice Chair of Inactivity of British Asians in Sports and Physical Activity.

"My day job is in banking, which is a traditional route for the Asian community, but I always wanted to be a footballer, before I quickly realised that wouldn't be a career path for me," Yashmin said.

"My passion for increasing representation comes from feeling like I missed out. I was a fast runner growing up and was very sporty but I felt like no one was there to support me or encourage

me and tell me 'perhaps you could have a career in sport'.

"I don't want the next generation to miss out on that and I don't want people to feel like they can't have a career in sport.

"Sport should provide equal opportunities for all, regardless of your background, which religion you follow or what clothes you wear.

"It is very important for me that we get representation right at all levels, whether that is at grassroots or the elite level".

Having worked closely with senior members at our organisation on several projects, FA Chair Debbie Hewitt said Yashmin 'makes a substantial and meaningful difference to the FA, to football and to society in general'.

And Yashmin feels progress has been made in recent years, adding: "The conversation about South Asian representation within football is on the table now, a lot more than it maybe was before.

"There is a recognition there isn't enough representation from that particular community and thanks to the likes of Debbie Hewitt, we are having conversations at an executive level to see what we can do as the FA to address that, working with other stakeholders and national governing bodies to see what impact we can have and what we can lead on.

"London FA are also making targeted programmes to try to increase representation within coaching and refereeing, so again the conversations are coming to the forefront now."



FA launches new five-year strategy



We have today launched a new five-year sustainability strategy, setting out our plan to make a positive impact on the environment and the communities in which we serve.

The new strategy, titled 'Playing for the Future', will drive forward our environmental ambitions until 2028, and will ensure that we continue to be a role model in shaping a positive football future for all.

The strategy has been created through extensive consultation with a wide range of football stakeholders and environmental experts, and focuses on three core areas:

1. SHOOT FOR NET ZERO – fight climate change and reduce emissions

- Achieve net zero status by 2040
- Invest over £35m to deliver the 2040 ambition
- Work towards reducing CO₂e emissions 50% by 2030 from a 2019 baseline, reducing

electricity consumption by 30% by 2028 from a 2019 baseline, and reducing gas consumption by 20% by 2028 from a 2019 baseline

2. SAVE OUR RESOURCES – optimise resource consumption

- Reduce resource consumption across Wembley Stadium and St. George's Park, and embed more sustainable practices across the organisation
- Minimise impact of waste through procurement choices, avoiding waste, identifying reuse opportunities and maximising recyclability
- Reduce water consumption by 30% by 2028 from a 2019 baseline
- Protect biodiversity across all FA venues – animals, wildlife, plants, micro-organisms

3. MAKE AN IMPACT – deliver and govern change across football

- As the governing body of English football, The FA is in a unique position to drive wider environmental and societal change across clubs, leagues, and with partners

- The FA will create the operational framework to embed this strategy across the whole organisation, including its facilities, and increase awareness and environmental sustainability practices across football, whilst governing and supporting wider change
- The strategy will also ensure FA partners are aligned and committed to the sustainability ambitions

The launch of this new sustainability strategy builds on the extensive work across Wembley Stadium and St. George's Park to drive operational sustainability efforts, particularly around waste, food and energy. The strategy will be reviewed every two years and further updates will be provided in due course.

Mark Bullingham, The FA's Chief Executive, said: "The climate crisis presents one of the most

significant challenges of our lifetime, and we are determined to play our part in inspiring positive and meaningful change. Through our new five-year commitment, we want to make tangible progress through our own sustainability initiatives, while raising awareness, and bringing the wider football community with us on this journey.

“We look forward to working with the leagues, clubs, County FAs and our partners to harness the unique power of football so that together we can have a beneficial impact on the planet and a positive

influence for future generations.”

Ruaidhri Dunn, The FA's Head of Procurement and Sustainability, said: “We are delighted to launch our new five-year Playing for the Future sustainability strategy during Net Zero Week, which sets out our clear direction of travel to drive positive change for the environment.

“We are very proud of our achievements in recent years to become more environmentally friendly, including Wembley Stadium being awarded the highest standard of sustainability by the ISO, however we

want to make further progress. Our new strategy focuses on a number of key areas including reducing emissions, significant challenges of our lifetime, and we are determined to play our part in inspiring positive change across football – and we look forward to driving forward with the next phase of our sustainability efforts.”





CUP COMPETITIONS

Lisbon to stage 2025 final



Estádio José Alvalade in Lisbon has been appointed to host the UEFA Women's Champions League final in 2025 by the UEFA Executive Committee.

The home of Sporting CP opened in 2003 ahead of UEFA EURO 2004 in Portugal, replacing another stadium of the same name. It

staged, among other games, the semi-final of that tournament and the following year was the venue for the UEFA Cup final.

It will be the second UEFA Women's Champions League final to be held in Lisbon after 2014, when Estádio do Restelo staged Wolfsburg's 4-3 win against Tyresö.

Upcoming Uefa Women's Champions League final venues

2024: San Mames Stadium, Bilbao

2025: Estadio Jose Alvalade, Lisbon

Where have the Champions League finals been?

2023: Philips Stadion, Eindhoven

2022: Juventus Stadium, Turin

2021: Gamla Ullevi, Gothenburg

2020: Anoeta, San Sebastian

2019: Groupama Arena, Budapest

2018: Valeriy Lobanovskiy

Dynamo Stadium, Kyiv

2017: Cardiff City Stadium,

Cardiff

2016: Mapei Stadium – Città del Tricolore, Reggio Emilia

2015: Friedrich-

Ludwig-Jahn-Sportpark, Berlin



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Women's Champions League Round 1 Draw



The UEFA Women's Champions League round 1 draw has been made in Nyon, beginning the 2023/24 season.

Round 1 is one of two rounds before the 16-team group stage, which begins in November. It is split into two paths: the champions path and the league path. In both paths, round 1 will consist of two stages, each of one-off knockout matches played in single-venue mini-tournaments: semi-finals on 6 September and finals/third-place play-offs on 9 September.

The winners of each final (11 in champions path, four in league path) will progress to round 2, which will decide the 12 teams joining holders Barcelona, Lyon, Bayern and Chelsea in the group stage.

The hosts of the knockout mini-tournaments will be confirmed from among

the clubs in each group.

Round 1 draw

Champions path:

41 teams are entering at this stage: the champions of the associations ranked eighth and below. They have been drawn into 11 single-venue knockout mini-tournaments: eight with four teams and three with three teams. The winners of the 11 finals will progress to round 2, into which three teams have direct entry. Seven group stage places will be on offer in round 2.

Group 1:

Semi-finals

Ferencvárosi TC (HUN) vs F.C.

Qiryat Gat (ISR)

AS FC Universitatea Olimpia Cluj

(ROU) vs Spartak Myjava (SVK)

Group 2:

Semi-finals

FC Vorskla (UKR) vs FC Flora

Tallinn (EST)

SFK 2000 Sarajevo (BIH) vs ŽNK Osijek (CRO)

Group 3:

Semi-finals

NŠ Mura (SVN) vs FC Samegrelo (GEO)

Apollon Ladies FC (CYP) vs ZFK Ljuboten (MKD)

Group 4:

Semi-finals

HB Køge (DEN) vs KuPS Kuopio (FIN)

ŽFK Spartak Subotica (SRB) vs KÍ Klaksvík (FRO)

Group 5:

Semi-finals

RSC Anderlecht (BEL) vs GKS Katowice (POL)

SK Brann (NOR) vs Lokomotiv Stara Zagora (BUL)

Group 6:

Semi-finals

WFC BIJK-Shymkent (KAZ) vs SFK Rīga (LVA)

SL Benfica (POR) vs Cliftonville

Ladies (NIR)

Group 7:

Semi-finals

Valur (ISL) vs Ankara Büyükşehir Belediyesi Fomget SK (TUR)
KFF Vllaznia (ALB) vs FC KFF EP-Hajvalia (KOS)

Group 8:

Semi-finals

FC Gintira (LTU) vs Cardiff City FC (WAL)
Glasgow City FC (SCO) vs Shelbourne FC (IRL)

Group 9:

Semi-final

A.C. PAOK (GRE) vs Racing FC Union Luxembourg (LUX)

Final

SKN St. Pölten Frauen (AUT) vs PAOK / Racing FC Union Luxembourg

Group 10:

Semi-final

FC Dinamo-BSUPC (BLR) vs CSF Agarista Anenii Noi (MDA)

Final

AFC Ajax (NED) vs Dinamo-BSUPC / Agarista Anenii Noi

Group 11:

Semi-final

FK Breznica (MNE) vs Birkirkara FC (MLT)

Final

FC Zürich (SUI) vs Breznica / Birkirkara

Enter in round 2:

Slavia Praha (CZE)
Rosengård (SWE)
Roma (ITA)

League path:

Thirty teams enter at this stage: the runners-up from the associations ranked seventh to 16th and the third-placed teams from the associations ranked first to sixth. They have been drawn into four knockout mini-tournaments of four teams each. The winners of the four finals will progress to round 2, into which six teams have direct entry. Five group stage places will be on offer in round 2.

Group 1:

Semi-finals

FC Twente (NED) vs SK Sturm Graz (AUT)
Levante UD (ESP) vs Stjarnan (ISL)

Group 2:

Semi-finals

Juventus (ITA) vs WFC Okzhetpes (KAZ)
Eintracht Frankfurt (GER) vs 1. FC Slovácko (CZE)

Group 3:

Semi-finals

Paris FC (FRA) vs FC Kryvbas (UKR)
Arsenal WFC (ENG) vs Linköping FC (SWE)

Group 4:

Semi-finals

Brøndby IF (DEN) vs Celtic FC (SCO)
FC Minsk (BLR) vs Vålerenga Football (NOR)

Enter in round 2:

Wolfsburg (GER)
Paris Saint-Germain (FRA)
Real Madrid (ESP)
Sparta Praha (CZE)
Häcken (SWE)
Manchester United (ENG)

How does the Uefa Women's Champions League work?

- The centrepiece is a 16-team group stage, which involves four groups of four playing each other home and away between October and December. The top two from each group progress to the knockout phase from March, with the quarter-finals and semi-finals played over two legs, and a one-off final.

- Four teams qualify directly for the group stage with the other 12 spots decided by two routes: champions path (7 qualifiers) and league path (5 qualifiers).

- Both paths will have the same format. Round 1 will be played as four-team knockout mini-tournaments with the final winners progressing. Round 2 will be played as two-legged knockout ties. If there had been more than 50 associations entering, the champions path would have had a two-legged preliminary round.

When will the final be?

The final of the Women's Champions League will take place on the weekend of 24 May. It will be played at the San Mames in Bilbao.



HOME NATIONS

Lionesses jet to Australia



The England Lionesses have arrived in Australia ahead of the 2023 Women's World Cup.

Ahead of leaving a few of the Lionesses spoke about the journey, packing and their excitement for the trip.

Captain Millie Bright said: "It's every player's dream, you dream of this when you were a little kid. We've got some players going to their second or third World Cup, some are going to their first, so there's a real variety across the group. Everyone is in good spirits. How can you not be when you're going to a major tournament in a beautiful country?"

Adding about the support from the fans, she said: "We've got a lot of things in place to make sure we stay connected with our fans. They've been such a massive part of our journey so far so that's really important."

Laughing about packing for the trip, she said: "Rachel Daly has brought a full bag of wires which she says are all

necessary. She's got HDMI cables, adaptors, the lot. I'm not sure how they're all necessary - it's literally a full bag of them!"

Defender Lucy Bronze is heading to her third Women's World Cup: "We speak about the differences of tournaments and things like that. And obviously we won the Euros, but World Cups are actually my favourite tournaments because they're just so much fun. Regardless of the pressure and the games, there's just so much going on, so many games, so many crazy atmospheres."

On how it feels to be going to Australia: "At the moment all I can think about is the flying which I'm not too impressed about - we'll see you in two days! But going to be Australia is going to be pretty cool."

Katie Zelem is heading to her first major tournament with England: "I'm sure you know by now that we all got a FaceTime call. So I was sat staring at my phone for two hours. I was actually that focused on staring at my phone

that I was still in my pyjamas when Sarina rang me. But at least they were nice pyjamas. When she told me I was selected I was absolutely over the moon. As soon as I ended the call I rang my mum and dad and they were just so happy."

On the flight: "I was absolutely fuming the other day. Everyone was doing a Q&A where they were asked who's the worst person to sit next to on a flight and they all said me!"

Staniforth joins Lionesses standby squad as Park leaves

Lucy Staniforth has joined the England squad on standby for the FIFA Women's World Cup.

The Aston Villa midfielder will join the group at St. George's Park today and replaces Jess Park who will return to Manchester City for rehabilitation on her shoulder injury.

Staniforth joins Maya Le Tissier on standby and both will remain with the squad until the opening match.

Lionesses 'disappointed' to not receive World Cup Bonuses from the FA



Words: Jamie Davies

England Women travel to Australia and New Zealand on Wednesday July 5th to begin their preparations for this summer's FIFA Women's World Cup.

It is a huge few weeks coming up for England Women's football as Sarina Wiegman and her squad of players look to have the nation's best chance to win their first ever Women's World Cup.

Their European Championship success last year of picking up their first major tournament victory now makes them a serious contender to stop the USA from winning it again.

But despite all the recent success as well as wins in the Finalissima in April and another Arnold Clark Cup last February, the FA look reluctant to pay their players bonuses this summer.

This news has left the England players 'frustrated' just before their long flights down under. It is believed that players from other rivals nations will receive bonus

payments but at this moment in time, the Lionesses will not receive anything.

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It is estimated that the FA will lose money at this World Cup no matter how well the Lionesses do on the pitch even if they win the entire tournament. This is due to the big costs of travelling to the other side of the planet as well as hotels, equipment and other members of staff.

It is understood the players are disappointed the FA cannot provide bonuses to them instead of the world governing body of football.

Normally when the England men's players receive wages or bonuses from the FA they traditionally donate all of their national team incomes to charity.

Ahead of the 2022 Men's World Cup in Qatar, a report from the Mail suggested the FA 'more than doubled' the size of the players' bonus pot from the 2018 World Cup in Russia. If England were to have gone on to lift the trophy last December, the players would have received £500,000 in win bonuses.

The England squad were also set to gain more bonuses from a successful tournament through their sponsors.

However, for the Lionesses, there is said to be a frustration with the commercial strategy as they were unable to make physical appearances for their sponsors after 17 June and can no longer take part in social media promotions from July 5.

Jill Scott is back!



For the first time since being crowned 'Queen of the Jungle', former England international Jill Scott MBE will be returning to Australia in July as co-host of *Lionesses: Down Under*, connected by EE, alongside TV presenter and media personality Kyle Walker. The daily show gives fans exclusive access inside the England camp and updates from the squad throughout the duration of their tournament.

Scott, who was capped 161 times by England and was part of the squad that won the UEFA Women's EURO last summer, will present from the Lionesses camp with popular sports presenter Kyle Walker. The pair will bring the latest news and updates from the team to fans watching across the world as the competition progresses.

After the success of *Lionesses Live*, connected by EE, which aired throughout the EURO, *Lionesses: Down Under* connected by EE will be broadcast for the

duration of England's time at the FIFA Women's World Cup. Taking fans on the Lionesses' journey, the show will be aired every non-game day with all the latest news and reaction from the tournament, giving fans a variety of content including interviews with members of the squad and insights from behind the scenes.

The show will also include a variety of special guests and a number of competitions and giveaways for fans back home to get involved in as they watch the tournament unfold.

To kick off the Women's World Cup proceedings, a one-off departure show will air on Wednesday 5 July to send the Lionesses off, hosted by Kyle Walker and Abbie McCarthy as the squad prepares to travel to Australia. The daily broadcasts will then start on Wednesday 19 July and will air every day at 12.30pm UK time for the duration of England's tournament, except for on matchdays.

Jill Scott MBE, Host of *Lionesses: Down Under*, connected by EE, said: "This is the first tournament since I retired, so I would have had FOMO (fear of missing out) if I wasn't out there, and if I hadn't been asked to do this show, I think I would have been out there as a fan. It is a real honour to be presenting with Kyle and to have the chance to chat with the girls behind the scenes. Knowing their personalities and how much fun we had doing *Lionesses Live*, connected by EE last year, I'm hoping we can be that link to give fans the best experience of the tournament possible from the other side of the world."

Matt Stevenson, (Head of Group Sponsorship, Hospitality, Ticketing & Events) at EE commented: "As Lead Partner of the Lionesses, EE is once again excited to collaborate with The FA to ensure England fans stay connected to the players during the tournament with *Lionesses: Down Under*. EE is committed to making football accessible to everyone, supporting the women's game through initiatives encouraging growth through participation and coaching. During this one-of-a-kind show we are looking forward to sharing details on how other aspiring players and coaches can get involved with these initiatives."

Top Tooney Terrific



Words: Clare McEwen

Ella Toone made a name for herself at last year's Euros, but Manchester United fans have known her for a while. A lifelong United fan, she burst into the club's life when aged only 7.

By then she'd already racked up some football history! Her dad claims it began at Hindsford, their local club, soon after she was born. He'd taken her to a match but ended up on the pitch because they were a player short. At some point, her pram was hit by a ball - the rest is history.

She'd regularly go to Hindsford with her dad and play on the sidelines with her brother and cousins. Both her brother and dad have played for the team, her dad managed them, and her cousins still play for them. Ella still watches when she can.

She joined Astley & Tyldesley girls' team when aged 5/6 and remained there for two years. One of the coaches knew someone at the Manchester United academy and she went for a trial.

She remained at the academy until under-15s but the lack of a United senior women's team meant she had to leave. She moved to Blackburn Rovers, playing at under-17s and senior level. For a while she had a dual registration, playing for Blackburn and training with Manchester City.

In the summer of 2016, she joined City, making her senior debut in an 8-0 win over Aston Villa in the Continental Cup. In July 2018, the Manchester United

women's team formed and like several other academy players, she went back to the club she loved.

Her senior debut came as a half-time substitute in a League Cup win over Liverpool in August 2018. Her first goal came in September, shortly after her 19th birthday. In February 2019, she was awarded player of the month for five goals in two league games, including four against Leicester City.

As an attacking midfielder, she is both provider and scorer. In 2020-21, she finished as United's top scorer with 10 goals. The 2022/23 season saw her help United reach the FA Cup Final and come second in the Women's Super League (WSL), with eight assists and three goals.

Her Lionesses experiences began at the 2016 World Cup in Jordan. But it was during the under-19s 2017 Euros qualifying stage she left her mark - finishing the campaign with five goals. She got her first senior call-up to an England training camp in September 2020.

Since then, her rise has been swift. Highlights include her senior debut in February 2021 as a half-time sub, scoring a penalty in a win over Northern Ireland; a hat-trick in October 2021 against Latvia in the 2023 World Cup qualifiers; in the Arnold Clark Cup winning squad in 2022; coming on as a sub in every Euros 2022 match and scoring two crucial goals; helping win the 2023 Arnold Clark Cup; and scoring against Brazil in Finalissima to put England ahead.

And, I just know I'll have to extend this piece after the summer!

SCOTTISH STORIES



Liverpool have signed Scotland defender Jenna Clark from Glasgow City on a two-year deal.

Clark, 21, spent five years at Glasgow City, winning four league titles and one Scottish Cup.

The centre-back made 137 appearances for her former club, scoring 28 goals and earning six senior appearances for Scotland.

"It's something I'll never take for granted, getting this opportunity," said Clark.

"My dad's always been a Liverpool fan, ever since Kenny Dalglish came here, so growing up there was only one team for me to support.

"My Christmas present from my girlfriend [last year] was an Anfield stadium tour so to be here as a player and not just a fan is amazing."

Lizzie Arnot and Charlotte Gammie have won the 2022/23 Scottish Women's Premier League (SWPL) Goal of the Season awards, selected by an SWPL panel of judges involved in the women's game.

Arnot's wonder strike for Rangers in the Sky Sports Cup Final beat 13 other goals to the SWPL award. It was the opening goal at Tynecastle Park and the first SWPL goal broadcast on Sky Sports.

With just over a quarter of an hour played in the final, the forward collected the ball just beyond the halfway line. With defender Leah Eddie in front of her, Arnot drove forward before rifling the ball into the top corner with her left foot from the outside the box. Her effort gave the Hibernian goalkeeper no chance and was described as 'incredible' by Scotland legend Julie Fleeting on co-commentary.

The panel selected Arnot's strike with Spartans' Rebecca Galbraith's goal against Aberdeen coming second and Shelley Campbell's long-range free-kick for Glasgow Women in third.

Charlotte Gammie wins the SWPL 2 Goal of the Season award for her stunning half volley against Boroughmuir Thistle, beating seven other goals.

The Montrose midfielder received the ball on the edge of the box and her left footed touch bounced up nicely. Gammie proceeded to let it take one touch off the surface before smashing it accurately passed Lisa Rodgers in the Thistle goal. This was the opener in a game which ended 3-3 with Gammie scoring twice at Links Park.

Finishing second was Lauren Kerr's goal for Gartcairn away to Queen's Park and Carrie McGorm's left-footed finish for Stirling University at home to Gartcairn.



Scottish Power announces landmark partnership

ScottishPower has announced a landmark partnership deal with Scottish Women's Football (SWF) and the Scottish Women's Premier League (SWPL), dedicated to energising women's football at every age and stage across the country.

The pivotal deal will see the leading renewable energy company become the exclusive Principal Partner for Scottish Women's Football and the Scottish Women's Premier League, sponsoring the Scottish Youth Challenge Cups at all three age groups and the Scottish Women's Highlands and Islands League.

ScottishPower will work closely with both SWF and the SWPL over the next three years to invest in supporting the women's game for both this and future generations by driving

equality and diversity all the way from grassroots to elite.

The partnership is dedicated to further developing the women's game at the top level with the SWPL and its 20 member clubs, and also focus on opportunities to inspire more young girls into the game while opening doors for girls and women in remote communities across the Highlands & Islands.

The sponsorship was announced with iconic photography and videography captured at ScottishPower's Whitelee Windfarm - the UK's largest onshore windfarm - which brought together around 50 footballers from across Scotland, of all ages and levels together to celebrate the partnership and the impact it'll have on the game.

Keith Anderson, Chief Executive

of ScottishPower, said: "As a business, we're committed to promoting equality at all levels and I'm delighted that we're supporting girls and women in our communities the length and breadth of the country access and benefit from sport.

"We want to energise women's football for both current and future generations and build a community of players that inspire even more people to play and enjoy the game.

"It's an exciting time for the women's game in Scotland with record attendances and fiercely contested competitions and I'm thrilled ScottishPower will play its part in helping to inspire girls to participate and support the development of infrastructure around the country to make this easier than ever.



"We'll work closely with the SWF and SWPL uniting as a powerful force for positive change for women and girls in Scotland, both on and off the pitch."

Fiona McIntyre, Managing Director of the SWPL, said: "We've just enjoyed one of the most dramatic and entertaining league finishes ever, with bumper crowds and interest in the women's game at an all-time high. There is an incredible opportunity now to build on that and inspire both current and future generations through this exclusive new partnership that's importantly 100% committed to the women's game in Scotland."

"We are delighted with the fantastic commitment ScottishPower has shown to the SWPL, and our clubs and players, through this significant investment into the women's game overall. This Principal Partnership is a triumph of collaboration connecting all parts of the girls' and women's game, and we are excited to work together to push boundaries and take the SWPL and women's football in Scotland to new levels over the coming years"

Aileen Campbell, CEO of Scottish Women's Football, said: "ScottishPower's support represents another major moment

in what's an incredibly exciting time for women's football.

"As the game continues to grow and develop, having ScottishPower's investment offers us even more opportunities for women and girls across the country to help us build the game from the grassroots up.

"The Scottish Youth Challenge Cup is our biggest competition, involving hundreds of teams from across the country at 14s, 16s and 18s, while this partnership will provide unprecedented support and visibility to our Highlands and Islands league.

"I'm excited to see the partnership develop over the coming years as we help new talent to emerge and support regional communities, clubs and players to enjoy the game."

ScottishPower is at the heart of communities across the country, whether it's through the 1,000 green jobs being created this year, the renewable power it generates or the secure, stable electricity it supplies - keeping the lights on from power to plug.

It is also a major employer in Scotland with a key focus on encouraging more women to consider STEM careers. ScottishPower's partnership joins parent company, Iberdrola, which has been promoting equality through sport since 2016, through competitions and federations in Spain and Brazil.

It supports more than 100 competitions, 32 of them as Iberdrola leagues, reaching an estimated 600,000 female athletes.



Leslie joins as SWPL Partnerships Manager



The Scottish Women's Premier League (SWPL) has appointed Hannah Leslie as their first ever Partnerships Manager. The creation of the position is a sign of the growth and increasing number of partnerships within the elite women's game.

The appointment provides vital additional resource and ensures that the SWPL is in a strong position to successfully deliver on current and future partnerships as well as driving new, commercial investment into the game.

Hannah joins the SWPL having most recently been the Head of Sport & Student Partnership at Robert Gordon University where she has worked since 2014. Hannah has also worked for Aberdeen City Council after studying Sport and Exercise Science at Heriot Watt University.

Fiona McIntyre, SWPL Managing Director, said: "We are delighted to have Hannah join us. She

was the standout candidate through the recruitment process and we're excited for her to continue her professional development with us at the SWPL.

"Hannah joins at an exciting time for the game off the back of a hugely successful first season. We have recently announced two new partners ahead of the 2023/24 season in the form of ScottishPower and PUMA. Hannah will play an important role in managing these partnerships and delivering success for the women's game.

"The appointment of a Partnerships Manager emphasises the progress of the elite women's game in Scotland and the growing commercial interest. The SWPL is in the strongest position possible to deliver success for our partners and clubs, which will ensure we continue our current momentum."

Hannah Leslie, SWPL Partnerships Manager, said: "I am

delighted to be joining the SWPL, especially at such an exciting time for girls and women's football.

"I am a huge supporter of women's sport and followed closely, along with so many others, the end to a thrilling 2022/23 SWPL campaign.

"I'm excited to be part of the continuing development of the game.

"The recent announcements of global brands as partners are a sign of progress for the elite game here in Scotland.

"I'm excited to be working with all of our current partners to deliver success for them and our clubs, as well as working to build new potential partnerships who can also add value to the women's game."

SWPL Fixtures announced



The Scottish Women's Premier League (SWPL) have announced the fixtures for the 2023/24 ScottishPower Women's Premier League (SPWPL) and SPWPL 2 seasons which get underway from Sunday 13th August.

The opening round of ScottishPower Women's Premier League fixtures will see reigning champions Glasgow City at home to Hibernian. It means new Hibs boss, Grant Scott, will be up against his former side where he was interim Head Coach. It will be a tricky opening test for Scott with City having beaten Hibernian in the league on all four occasions last season. This will also be Leanne Ross' first full season as Head Coach of City having taken the role permanently in March and leading her side to the title.

Newly promoted Montrose start life in the top division at home to runners-up Celtic. Fran Alonso's side missed out on the title in dramatic fashion on the final day of last season but did qualify for the UEFA Women's Champions League (UWCL) by

finishing second. After back-to-back promotions, Links Park will be right behind Craig Feroz as his side look to cause an early shock in the campaign.

New Rangers Head Coach, Jo Potter, will take her side away to Spartans on the opening day. The Edinburgh side went unbeaten in their final 10 games of last season after the split and Debbi McCulloch will be hoping her side carry over that momentum into 2023/24. For Rangers, a positive start to the season will help to put the disappointment of finishing third behind them and get Potter's reign off to the best possible start.

Hamilton Academical also begin life under a new Head Coach. Robert Watson, who was assistant to former boss Gary Doctor, and his side are at home to Heart of Midlothian. The Lanarkshire side maintained their status in the top-flight with victory in the play-off final against Gartcairn and Watson said they must aim to finish 10th at a minimum this season. For Hearts, Eva Olid's side were a somewhat surprise package as they comfortably finished fourth last season. Their aim will likely be to solidify that position whilst pushing the top three as far as possible.

There will also be a new Head Coach in the dugout

at the Balmoral Stadium as Aberdeen host Motherwell. Who that person will be is unknown, but the Dons will be looking to improve on a season which saw them finish eighth and just three points above the relegation play-off spot. Paul Brownlie's Motherwell defeated Aberdeen four times last season and will be looking to repeat that form as they push for a top-six finish.

The final tie will see Dundee United at home to Partick Thistle. The Jags finished an impressive sixth last season, securing their place in the top-half in the final match before the split against United. While struggling for results in their final 10 games, they will hope to use the experience against the top teams to push them on this season. For Dundee United, they avoided the relegation play-off on the final day of the season and will hope they can avoid a similar fate in more comfortable fashion in the campaign ahead.

Fiona McIntyre, Scottish Women's Premier League (SWPL) Managing Director, said: "I think we can expect two extremely competitive divisions. For the first time in a long time there is a real unknown about who the favourites are to finish as champions and to be relegated in both the SPWPL and SPWPL 2."

WELSH WORD



S4C to show highlights of Cymru Women

S4C will broadcast highlights of the Cymru women's football team's matches starting with their game against the USA.

Highlights of Cymru's Nations League matches over the Autumn will be shown, with games against Germany, Iceland and Denmark.

Angharad James, Cymru vice-captain, said: "I'm delighted to hear S4C will be broadcasting highlights of our national fixtures, starting with the game against the USA.

"It's really important that the highlights are available on S4C to promote the Welsh language and to inspire girls to fall in love with football."

Cardiff City Stadium to host Cymru Women

Cymru's opening UEFA Women's Nations League home match against Denmark on Tuesday 26 September will take place at the Cardiff City Stadium (KO 19:15), with tickets going on sale at 10:00 Thursday 6 July.

Record crowds were witnessed three times at the Cardiff City Stadium during the recent FIFA Women's World Cup qualifying campaign, including 15,200 fans for the play-off semi-final against Bosnia & Herzegovina.

The campaign will start away to Iceland on Friday 22 September before the home fixture against Denmark five days later.



Women's U17 & U19 Euro draws

Cymru have discovered their opponents for Round 1 of the UEFA Women's U17 and U19 Championships following today's draw in Nyon, Switzerland.

Nia Davies' under-17 side, who were placed in Pot 1 in League B, were drawn in Group B4 with Faroe Islands, Kazakhstan and Albania.

Albania will host the mini-tournament, which will be played between 20 and 27 November 2023.



Aber Town Awards

Libby Isaac and Bethan "Cheeks" Roberts were the big winners at the Aberystwyth Town Women end-of-season awards.

Coaches and players picked out those they felt deserved recognition for their efforts during the season - and the trophies were awarded at a lunch at Harry's Bar in Aberystwyth on Saturday.

Isaac - unable to attend the ceremony - was named players' player of the year. Usually a forward, she shifted to defence midway through the campaign after injury ravaged the backline, and proved herself a classy centre-half as well as a major attacking threat.

Midfielder Roberts, the manager's player of the year, was reliably consistent all season, and an instrumental part of the Seasiders' run to the semi-finals of the FAW Women's Cup and the Genero Adran Trophy.

Emily Thomas - celebrating her 19th birthday on the day of the awards - picked up two trophies, young player of the year and sharing top scorer with Amy Jenkins.

Modlen Gwynne and Ella Thomas, who made their first-team debuts as 15-year-olds this season, picked up prizes for their contributions to the under-19s.

The winners were:

Players' player of the year: Libby Isaac

Manager's player of the year: Bethan "Cheeks" Roberts

Young player of the year: Emily Thomas

Top scorers: Amy Jenkins and Emily Thomas

Development team players' player of the year: Alice Croot

Development team manager's player of the year: Steph Land

Development team most improved player of the year: Olivia Evans

Development team top scorer: Jess Baker

Under 19s players' player of the year: Modlen Gwynne

Under 19s manager's player of the year: Imi Scourfield

Under 19s most improved player of the year: Ella Thomas

Under 19s top scorer: Ella Thomas



Bute Energy & FAW partnership



The Football Association of Wales is excited to announce that Welsh renewable energy developer Bute Energy will become the official sponsor of the FAW Women's Cup and FAW Girls' Cup for the next two seasons.

The partnership will advance the vision of creating a greener and more inclusive future for football and energise the women's game while fostering growth within the sport. It represents a shared commitment to empower young women and promote gender equality of community football across Wales.

Due to the high demand for STEM skills in Wales, we will see the development of bespoke initiatives linking women and girls playing football to STEM subjects, employment opportunities in the clean energy sector, and a co-produced Sustainability Policy that can be tailored and adopted by clubs in the future.

The partnership, which will run

until the end of the 2024/25 season, will see the FAW Women's Cup be renamed the Bute Energy Welsh Cup and the FAW Girls' Cup become the Bute Energy U16s Cup.

Annaliese Lewis, senior team player and junior team coach at Cascade YC, said: "The investment from Bute Energy will not only empower our young players to dream bigger and play better, but it also enables us to work with a renewable company to create a sustainable environment where they can thrive. We're setting a powerful example of responsibility and care for the environment, ensuring that the future generations of women's football have a greener and more inclusive home."

Catryn Newton, Community Benefit Director at Bute Energy, said: "It's been great to see the rapid growth of women and girls' football in the last few years, and we're proud to be supporting this growth in communities across Wales.

"Sport is a powerful way of improving people's confidence and enabling them to be part of a community. We're proud to be a part of that, while also supporting women's and girls' development as leaders and helping young people access STEM subjects and employment opportunities.

"At Bute Energy we're acting now to respond to the Climate Emergency and cost-of-living crisis in new and innovative ways. We're excited to start working with clubs, in particular those that are located near Bute Energy's proposed parks, to help them become more sustainable. I'm immensely proud to be partnering with the FAW team who are just as forward looking and innovative, and excited to be working alongside them over the coming year."

Lowri Roberts, Head of Women's and Girls' Football at the FAW, added: "Our aim is to work with committed partners who can Invest in HER, Support HER and

Elevate HER to enable the women's game to continue to grow.

"The Bute Energy sponsorship will enable us to enhance and develop our national cup competitions for all women and girls' teams across Wales. Bute Energy are passionate about supporting the FAW to develop sustainable clubs and provide more opportunities for women and girls to reach their full potential."

Bute Energy is based in Wales and has a vision of a healthier, wealthier Wales that uses energy generation as a positive

power for the world, for Wales, for local communities – for this and future generations. The company is based in Cardiff and is tackling the climate emergency by powering Wales with clean, green energy, and empowering our communities through investment, jobs and skills.

Each of Bute Energy's Energy Parks will have associated Community Benefit Funds that together will be worth millions of pounds a year. Bute Energy are talking with local people and organisations about the projects, groups and services

they are engaged with and how they can help, focusing on cost of living support, recreation & health, education, environment & culture, and employability. The company's investment in this area demonstrates the commitment to maximising the benefits for Welsh communities, with above industry standard levels of financial support.

To read more about Bute Energy, visit the website, or follow them on Instagram, LinkedIn and Twitter..



NORTHERN IRELAND NATTER



Northern Ireland squad

Simone Magill is expected to be back in a Northern Ireland shirt next month just over a year after damaging her knee at UEFA Women's Euro 2022.

The Aston Villa Women striker, who returned to FA Women's Super League action with her club last month, has not played for her country since suffering an anterior cruciate ligament injury in the opening Euros group game with Norway last July.

Interim Northern Ireland Women manager Gail Redmond has chosen a 23-strong panel for the challenge matches against the Scots in Dundee on 14 July and the Czechs in Opava on 18 July.

Also returning to the fold alongside Magill, who picked up her injury on 7 July last year, are Cliftonville striker Danielle Maxwell and Cliftonville defender Fi Morgan, who were both in the squad for the friendly international against Italy in Belfast late last year but missed out on the Wales game. Cliftonville striker Kirsty McGuinness is not available due to injury.

Women's Challenge Cup

The draw for round two of the Electric Ireland Women's Challenge Cup has been made.

The Premiership big hitters enter the fray at this stage and holders Glentoran Women begin their defence of the trophy with a trip to Larne Women. Elsewhere Linfield Women host Cliftonville Ladies in the tie of the round while last year's beaten finalists Sion Swifts welcome Mid Ulster Ladies. Craigavon City Ladies' reward for their 5-1 success over Belfast Celtic Ladies is a trip to Lisburn Ladies.

Crusaders Strikers, runners-up in 2021, have been handed a home draw against Bloomfield FC.

All matches are set to be played Friday 28 July (kick-off: 7.30pm).

Electric Ireland Women's Challenge Cup Round 2 draw in full.

Sion Swifts v Mid Ulster

Lisburn v Craigavon City

Crusaders Strikers v Bloomfield

Bangor v Lisburn Rangers

Valley Rangers v Ballymena United

Linfield v Cliftonville

Larne v Glentoran

Derry City v Ballyclare Comrades



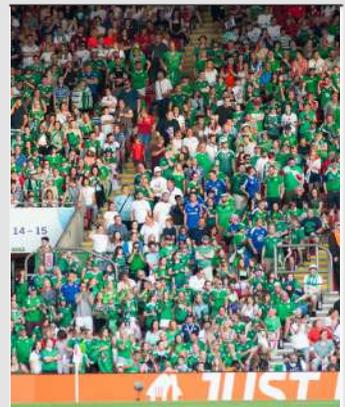
WU19s & WU17s draw

Northern Ireland's Women's Under-19 and Women's Under-17 teams will face strong opposition in stage one of the qualifiers for the 2023-24 editions of their respective European competitions.

Both teams will be competing in League A in the first round of Euro qualifiers this autumn.

The WU19s were drawn in Group A1 alongside France, Italy and Hungary.

The WU17 team are also set to face Hungary as well as England and Belgium, in Group A6.



Appointment update

The Irish Football Association's Director of Women's Football, Angela Platt, has provided an update on the recruitment process to appoint Northern Ireland's new senior women's team manager. She explained: "We have been working hard on this for several months and had identified a suitable candidate. Unfortunately, this individual has accepted an offer elsewhere more suited to their personal circumstances."

Irish FA and Ulster GAA in bid to save PE in school



A delegation from the Irish FA and Ulster GAA plus MLAs has requested an urgent meeting with the Department of Education's Permanent Secretary after he took the decision to cease funding the Schools Sports Programme.

The programme delivers statutory curriculum physical education for children in primary schools across Northern Ireland – and sporting bodies and political representatives are seeking its continuation.

The Education and Training Inspectorate has endorsed the Schools Sports Programme, which resources 22 Irish FA and Ulster GAA coaches to work in partnership with 900 teachers.

It is aimed at improving the physical literacy, mental well-being, resilience, confidence and motivation of 24,000 children by delivering 450 PE classes per week in more than 200 schools each academic year.

Irish FA Foundation Director James Thompson said: "This decision has been taken at a time when physical inactivity risks long term harm to the physical and mental health of children.

"One in five primary schools is unable to deliver the statutory curriculum for PE and the Education and Training Inspectorate has recommended the Schools Sports Programme as a best practice response to this societal challenge.

"Three quarters of primary schools are unable to provide the recommended two hours per week for PE. If this was the case for any other statutory subject there would be government support rather than a reduction in provision and we are asking our MLAs to take all possible action to protect this vital programme and, most importantly, the health, wellbeing and resilience of children in Northern Ireland."

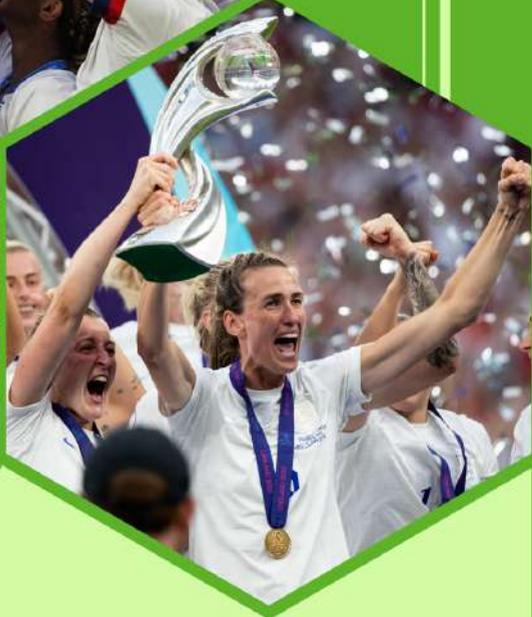
Funded by the Department of

Education, the School Sports Programme is aimed at pupils aged 7-11 and is designed to provide specialist expertise to support delivery of the Key Stage 2 PE curriculum.

Ulster GAA Director Eugene Young said: "The cessation of the successful Schools Sports Programme would be a significant loss to our children and schools.

"Many primary schools partner with Schools Sports Programme coaches to deliver the statutory curriculum for PE and a structured programme which develops confidence, self-esteem and skills for healthy living at a time when the physical and mental health of children are under significant challenge.

"We cannot allow children to have decreased access to the statutory curriculum for PE and call on our political representatives to support the campaign to retain the wide-ranging benefits of this programme."



INTERNATIONAL TOURNAMENTS

Official Women's World Cup song announced

FIFA Women's World Cup 2023™ Official Song, Do It Again – BENEÉ ft. Mallrat, will be released in full on 29 June.

The highly anticipated Official Song for the FIFA Women's World Cup 2023™ is nearly here, as Do It Again – BENEÉ ft. Mallrat is revealed as the title ahead of the anthem's full release on 29 June*.

Performed by two female artists from the host nations, BENEÉ from Aotearoa New Zealand and Mallrat from Australia, Do It Again embodies the spirit of unity, celebration, and empowerment that characterises the FIFA Women's World Cup™ and delivers an unforgettable backdrop for the tournament.

BENEÉ, the billion-streaming New Zealand alt-pop artist, joins forces with Mallrat, the Australian singer and producer, to create a vibrant and infectious track that will captivate fans worldwide.



In just one month's time, the two artists will take centre stage to deliver a performance of Do It Again at the Opening Ceremony of the FIFA Women's World Cup 2023 to be held at Eden Park on 20 July.

This performance will set the tone for the unforgettable tournament that lies ahead, starting with co-hosts New Zealand against 1995 winners Norway in Auckland/Tāmaki Makaurau.

"Being a small part of this incredible celebration of women's sport is an absolute dream come true for me," said Stella Bennett aka BENEÉ.

"As a keen young football player I just couldn't have imagined this!

"I've loved the experience of writing

a song which I hope reflects my excitement at having the world's biggest women's sports event held on my home turf, and I can't wait to perform Do It Again live with Mallrat at the opening ceremony."

Grace Shaw aka Mallrat added: "I was so excited when FIFA asked me to be involved in this massive event, alongside BENEÉ, who is one of my favourite artists and also people.

"I am really looking forward to this experience and feel super grateful that I get to share it with my friend."

FIFA's Creative Entertainment Executive, RedOne, said: "My two loves are football and music – this new FIFA song is the next instalment of our push at FIFA to celebrate and bring the world together for the FIFA Women's World Cup 2023."

Welcome to New Zealand

By Kylie Hawker Green



Kylie Hawker-Green, Major Events Manager at the Ministry for Business, Innovation and Employment, the lead government agency for the FIFA Women's World Cup 2023™ in Aotearoa New Zealand shares a glimpse into how the country is preparing to co-host the world's largest women's sporting event and what visitors and viewers can expect to see from the host nation when the tournament kicks off at Eden Park in Auckland on 20 July.

Aotearoa New Zealand is a country that champions women's rights - we were the first self-governing country in the world to give women the right to vote - so it's fitting we are co-hosting the world's largest women's sporting event from 20 July to 20 August this year.

It's not the first international women's sporting event we've hosted recently though. The FIFA Women's World Cup 2023™ will round off an amazing two

years of Aotearoa New Zealand hosting four major international women's sporting events, the ICC Women's Cricket World Cup, the Rugby World Cup, and the International Working Group on Women and Sport Conference.

The recent Rugby World Cup drew record crowds for a women's sporting event in Aotearoa New Zealand as the country really got behind the event and our home side, the Black Ferns. We are hoping to build on this momentum and excitement for women's sport when the FIFA Women's World Cup 2023™ rolls into town later this month.

Co-hosting an event of this magnitude presents us with an exciting opportunity to further champion women and girls in sport and wider society here in Aotearoa New Zealand and across the Pacific region. A lot of work is going on behind the scenes to ensure people living in Aotearoa New Zealand

benefit from us co-hosting the FIFA Women's World Cup 2023™ long after the final whistle has blown.

For many people in the UK, Aotearoa New Zealand is a desired holiday destination. Prior to COVID-19, more than 230,000 people from the UK visited Aotearoa New Zealand each year and it's not hard to see why. Diverse scenery and unique culture that you can't find anywhere else in the world mean there is a wide range of things to see and do while travelling around Aotearoa New Zealand.

Our country is home to snow-capped mountains, sweeping beaches, ancient volcanic peaks and craters, lush native forests, glassy lakes and fjords, and the rising steam and bubbling mud of our otherworldly geothermal areas. This spectacular scenery has been the backdrop for many major motion pictures, such as The Lord of the Rings film trilogy, thanks

to its unique features and unspoilt nature. But it's the people that really make Aotearoa New Zealand special.

Wherever you go, you will be embraced with manaakitanga (a Māori concept that can loosely be explained as the process of showing respect, generosity and care for others) and made to feel at home.

People visiting during the FIFA Women's World Cup 2023™ can make the most of all the exciting off-field activity happening across the country throughout July and August, like the FIFA Fan Festivals in each of our four Host Cities (Auckland, Hamilton, Wellington and Dunedin), and other exciting events being planned across the country.

Information about all the activity available to get involved with during the tournament can be found at www.eyeson.nz.

We can't wait to welcome some of you to Aotearoa New Zealand later this month. For those of you watching from home, I hope coverage of this year's tournament inspires you to seek adventure in Aotearoa New Zealand one day soon, we'd love to welcome you here.



MARIE HOURIHAN



**LONDON
BEES
ESTABLISHED**



By Helen Jerome

In case you have been living under a rock, Ireland are going to the Women's World Cup!

A late goal in their final play-off game against Wales secured their historic moment and everyone in the country is ready to get behind them.

One of those ready to pull on her jersey to watch on the TV and shout loudly is ex-Ireland international goalkeeper Marie Hourihan.

The London Bees boss racked up 24 caps between the sticks for her country and she chats to us about everything Ireland.

It's amazing to qualify. Do you wish you were still part of the set-up? Tempted to go and watch?

Obviously I've retired now but that would have been the missing piece. I know most of the girls in there and I'm just absolutely delighted that all that hard work, perseverance and effort, what they've been through, some of them two, three or four campaigns to get to this point. And it's brilliant for the country. The country needs it. You know you're just going to see thousands of Irish supporters over there.

This is the best generation of Irish players. It's the fruits of the labour of the last 10 years, so in terms of Irish football right now it couldn't be in a better place.

In terms of Irish women's football this is just the beginning, the door is now opening. You're seeing it in the younger age groups, in the level of players coming through. The amount of players that are playing the game, it's only going to get better and better.

Tell me a bit about the squad, especially some of those breaking through - like youngsters Ellen Molloy, Abbie Larkin, Tara O'Hanlon?

Ellen Molloy I played with a few times in a few squads I think she was only about 16 when she first came in. You know straightaway when you go onto the pitch and start a training session and your eyes are just drawn to someone, well, she's that type of player. She was playing against 30+ year-old players in that training session but we didn't think that she was 16, 17 years of age.

You don't get many players like that in a generation, so for me she's definitely the one you're going to see big things from, especially over the next two or three years. She's playing in Ireland at the moment, but it wouldn't surprise me to see her moving into full-time football within the next year or two, once her education is completed. The only issues she's had have been with injuries. If she's fit and available she's going to be a fantastic asset. Going into these competitions you want players that are a little bit 'hidden gems' that teams don't really know about.

You played with [defender]

Niamh Fahey too?

Niamh I've obviously known for years, we played together at Chelsea and with Ireland, but when I spoke about players that you're delighted for who have been there since the very beginning, it's someone like her. Obviously she's got over 100 caps now.

This is the pinnacle of someone's career and I'm delighted with Ireland to go to a major tournament, having seen that they got so close in play-offs previously. When they beat Scotland she was one of the first players I sent a message to. I completely understand what she's been through to get this point, and for her to now see the fruits of the team's labour and that hard work, it's absolutely brilliant.

On keepers, what do you think of Courtney Brosnan?

Courtney came in 18 months before I finished playing for Ireland and you could see then the potential she had. I've had several conversations with her where I've basically said you could be Ireland's number one for the next 10 years. You just need to go away, get your head down, get into a first-team environment, playing consistently, and the sky's the limit.

And you've seen that in this last campaign. For me she was the player of the year in the qualifying campaign, and now at Everton she's really showcasing

herself. This will be a fantastic tournament for her to push herself into the world's focus and be one of the top goalkeepers.

How important is it to have a Katie McCabe in your team, a big, vocal character? What are her unique qualities?

She's probably got one of the best left feet in the game. She's undoubtedly one of the best players in Europe, never mind in the WSL, in my opinion. Her delivery, her creativity, her crossing ability, there's not many players I'd take over her. That's how highly I rate her. And she's got that fantastic personality, she's a very likeable person.

She's all or nothing. You know what you're going to get from her. The other thing about she is consistently fit, she is very rarely injured, she keeps herself in fantastic condition. That's the best thing about her, you know you can consistently rely on her. She and Denise [O'Sullivan, who plays club football for North Carolina Courage] are the world class players within that squad.

Also Aoife Mannion coming back?

Definitely. Two ACLs, and having played against Aoife and knowing her character I'm not remotely surprised, because she's one of the most professional people you could meet.

You knew that she was always going to be extremely diligent with her rehab. Then you saw



against Arsenal she was probably the best player on the pitch. That just shows you the character of the person. She's not played regularly for United, but she's called upon into a massive game and is outstanding.

What does the Dutch manager Vera Pauw bring to the team? (ex Scotland, Netherlands, Russia, South Africa manager)

She's done a lot of management in international football. I think she's had a stint in America as well, in the NWSL. She's highly experienced, she had success with Holland in Euro 2009, and she's well versed in international football.

She's taken lesser nations - she had a fantastic effect on Scotland - so she's very good at galvanising teams that aren't necessarily fancied, and getting the best out of them.

I'm not surprised that she's come in to Ireland and had that effect because she's used to those environments and coming into qualifying campaigns. Maybe there isn't the highest expectation level, but she brings expectation and is adamant that we want to qualify, we're going to qualify!

How do you think Ireland will fare in their group? Really hard draw... v Australia, Canada, Nigeria...

Yes, but the hardest thing is to qualify. Once you get there... now you're the dark horse. You're going into games and playing the hosts and all the pressure is going to be on them in that first game. They've moved the stadium as well. Everyone is watching, there's no expectation on Ireland. We know how to go into games expecting to get nothing, and get a result.

I wouldn't be remotely surprised to see them come out of that group. I know there's big odds against, but especially being set up for individual games, the girls will be so well-prepared. And they played America in two friendlies recently and it was two 1-0 games. They're used to playing against the big nations and enjoy playing against them.

You've played under Colin Bell, how do you think his Korea side will fare? Germany, Morocco and Colombia in their group? Some stars in there...

One thing I know about Colin, he will be the most prepared coach you will ever find. If the game was tomorrow he would be ready. He's that type of coach. I watched their game against England and was speaking to him before the game, and they were missing a few players with injuries and at the start of their pre-season, they hadn't started their season. He's been there two years now and they got to the final of the Asian Cup, which is the first time they've ever done that. They're another team that I'd stick my money on, potentially getting to the later rounds. Knowing him and the level of players they've got like Ji.

You played with Ji So-yun. Has she still got it?

She's one of the best players in the world, fantastic player. And when you have players like that in your team you've always got a chance.



Anna Black 'This Girl Can Play'

Anna Smith is a footballer with a dream.

In the book 'Anna Black: This Girl Can Play' you get to follow the journey of a young footballer as she discovers the highs and lows of navigating her dreams.

Sitting in a coffee shop in Manchester Texi Smith, the Australian author, talks to Helen Rowe-Willcocks passionately about the book, women's football in Australia and how much he is looking forward to this summer's Fifa Women's World Cup.

Tell us a bit about yourself.

I have been writing for years whether it's been match reports for the kids or things online and I realised I wanted to give it a go properly. I started writing the first book and thought I would



see how it would go.

My first two books came out at the same time at the Football Writer's Festival in Sydney and since then I have been bringing out a book a year. I just love the writing process. I have done a bit of journalism in the past, it's a passion I have.

What inspired you to write 'Anna Black: This Girl Can Play'?

I was at a part of my life that kind of mirrors the story a little bit about making changes and doing what you want to do.

My daughter plays at a decent level in Sydney and I am just around women's football all the time. I take her to training three times a week, go to the games, take photos, do the match report. It just felt natural. The book is for anyone, it's

been set as an age 15 book but there are some themes in there which are so important for young adults. It's not just women who should read it.

Is the character based on your daughter?

In the first few chapters yes, but then in the rest of it, it's all fictional.

Alongside the book, there is an interactive element with a website which features match reports from the teams in the book, tell us about the inspiration behind that idea.

That was not my idea. Originally the book was too long so the publisher came up with a clever idea to put a QR code in the book which could be used alongside the book. It's such a great idea and we can change and update things if we need or want to.

Have you got any plans to bring out a second one?

I am writing another women's football book at the moment – not a sequel to this one but I would definitely love to revisit her.

How excited are you for the Women's World Cup?

It's going to change women's football in Australia forever. I am really excited about it, I have loads of tickets and I have scheduled a month off. I am not doing anything apart from football. It's going to be amazing. We saw the European Championships last summer from a far and the hype round the tournament in England and we all just sat and thought 'we want that too'.

Your daughter plays football, do you think the World Cup will help grow the game?

It's important for all the players like my daughter to be able to see what they could achieve. The level my daughter plays in plays in the off-season and she gets to play alongside players in the A-League. If we get the fans and the hype that the tournament could bring,

it's just going to bring so much more to the game in Australia.

Are you hopeful for

Australia's chances?

All of a sudden, yes. We have been very doubtful of Tony. He's a nice guy, he says all the right things but on the field it's been abysmal up until recently. I am quietly confident.

How widely watched is women's football in Australia at the moment?

Not at all. There are some double headers but you only get a handful of people at the women's game. It's not on free to watch TV anymore, now you have to pay and people cannot afford that or are interested enough.

We are trying to build a legacy in a World Cup year but that doesn't help. The game doesn't have the tradition and the history yet. There are some very new clubs which don't have any fans. Women's football – no one watches. It's a niche thing.

People don't talk about the football, they talk about the rugby league, the cricket, Aussie Rules. There are so many other sports, I sincerely hope that changes thanks to the world cup.

Do the players like Steph Catley and Sam Kerr get a lot of coverage about how they are doing over her in the Women's Super League?

It does if you are in the football sphere. If you are not then you won't know anything about it. It's never in the news and it's very rare that you will see anything to do with football about.

If it is it will be about Australia, but never the leagues either in Australia or across the world. People on the street would not know who Sam Kerr is. It's different to in the UK, football is low down in the pecking order. It's a funny market to crack but I think we will get there. Ticket sales have been amazing so I am hoping this is the moment for the sport.

People think Australia, they think sandy beaches and glorious sunshine but it's easy to forget that it's going to be winter when the tournament is on. What can fans expect of the weather?

I am a bit concerned about that! Last winter was horrible, it poured with rain! Come to Australia when it's dark at 5pm, the Sydney Bridge will be in clouds – it doesn't sound appealing does it but it's not always like that. It's crisp mornings, you get dew on the park, it warms up and it's t-shirt weather. You might need a coat though for the games so don't just pack your shorts!

You can find Anna Black on Amazon and GoodBooks.

Football Unites The World on iconic Sydney Harbour Bridge



Over 4,000 football-loving fans joined a festival of football on the Sydney Harbour Bridge, celebrating 25 days to go until the FIFA Women's World Cup 2023™.

A giant Unity Jersey was revealed, reflecting the diverse spirit of the game and solidarity between the 32 participating nations.

The iconic Sydney Harbour Bridge on Gadigal land was transformed into a festival of football today in a celebration of culture, bringing together diverse people and communities to mark the 25-day countdown until the FIFA Women's World Cup Australia & New Zealand 2023™.

Amidst the sparkling backdrop of the Sydney Harbour, over 4,000 fans kicked-off festivities on the Sydney Harbour Bridge and took part in this once in a lifetime opportunity to be part of the FIFA Women's World Cup 'Unity Celebration'.

Hosted by former Australia international and FIFA Women in Football Leadership participant, Amy Duggan, soaking up the buzzing festival atmosphere were grassroots football and multicultural communities, local and international football greats including FIFA Legend Joy Fawcett, NSW Minister for Jobs and Tourism, John Graham, representatives from co-host Member Associations Football Australia and New Zealand Football, as well as FIFA officials.

Several of the tournament's Beyond Greatness Champions were also in attendance, and they helped to carry the flags of the 32 nations preparing to compete on the international stage.

Eager to celebrate the tournament and the talented players who will represent the very best of women's football, fans gathered on the world-renowned landmark to hear a preview of the tournament's official song,

and dance to the tournament's 'Unity Beat', and view live cultural performances and presentations.

Representing the tournaments' Beyond Greatness™ slogan and distinctive cultural elements, the 17-metre-tall Unity Jersey was unveiled in spectacular fashion on the Sydney Harbour Bridge. The Unity Jersey design reflects the vibrant local landscapes and rich colours of the two host countries, building a palette based on the rainforests, earth, mountains, cities, and water. A radial motif featuring 32 colourful squares celebrates the 32 participating nations coming together, serving as a visual testament to the spirit, values and diversity that defines the sport and tournament.

Speaking at the event, FIFA Council Member, Johanna Wood, said: "What a fabulous morning of football, culture and community coming together. We are committed to delivering an exceptional tournament and

experience that will not only captivate the hearts and minds of football fans but also empower women in sport across the globe. We are ready to go Beyond Greatness and football, once again, has demonstrated how it unites the world."

NSW Minister for Jobs and Tourism, John Graham, added: "Today we stand on one of Australia's iconic structures, excited to host the world's best players and their passionate football fans in NSW. I am excited to have 11 matches scheduled here in NSW and welcoming all the world class football teams and their fans at what is set to be the biggest FIFA Women's World Cup ever.

"This tournament has the potential to be one of the biggest sporting events in Sydney since the 2000 Olympics and the NSW Government is happy to support the FIFA Women's World Cup 2023."

While Football Australia CEO, James Johnson, remarked: "Today marks three years to the day since we won the right to co-host the 2023 edition of the FIFA Women's World Cup and what a fitting way to celebrate atop one of the most iconic and recognisable structures in the world. Today, the Sydney Harbour bridge was closed to celebrate football. This is a significant moment for our game and is something which the

Australian football community should take pride in and savour - this is our time."

The FIFA Women's World Cup 2023™ will run from 20 July - 20 August 2023 across five Australian host cities: Sydney/Gadigal, Melbourne/Naarm, Brisbane/Meeanjin, Adelaide/Tarntanya and Perth/Boorloo and four New Zealand host cities, Auckland/Tāmaki Makaurau, Hamilton/Kirikiriāroa, Dunedin/Ōtepoti and Wellington/TeWhanganui-a-Tara.



2023 FIFA

New payment model at WWC



FIFA has now announced its new member association distribution model for the FIFA Women's World Cup Australia & New Zealand 2023™, with a financial contribution specifically earmarked for all players at the tournament. Under this ground-breaking new model, Participating Member Associations (PMAs) will receive record distributions to support football development in their countries, while all participating players will receive guaranteed remuneration for their achievements at the tournament.

The initiative marks another concrete step taken by FIFA to develop women's football and ensure players receive a fair deal.

Participating Member Association Allocation (Per PMA)

Final Position	USD
Group Stage	1,560,000
Rd of 16	1,870,000
QF	2,180,000
4th Place	2,455,000
3rd Place	2,610,000
2nd Place	3,015,000
Winners	4,290,000

Financial Allocation (Per Player)

Final Position	USD
Group Stage	30,000
Rd of 16	60,000
QF	90,000
4th Place	165,000
3rd Place	180,000
2nd Place	195,000
Winners	270,000

FIFA President, Gianni Infantino, said: "Under this unprecedented new distribution model, each individual player at the FIFA Women's World Cup 2023 can now fully rely on remuneration for their efforts as they progress through the tournament.

"The captain that ultimately lifts the iconic FIFA Women's World Cup Trophy on August 20 in Sydney will receive USD 270,000, as will each of her 22 teammates."

"The global salary of women's professional footballers is approximately USD 14,000 annually so the amounts allocated under this unprecedented new distribution model will have a real and meaningful impact on the lives and careers of these players. Beyond this,

all member associations will also receive a record financial distribution based on their performance, which they can use to reinvest back into football in their countries and which we believe will help to propel the women's game even further."

FIFPRO President, David Aganzo, said ensuring all players at the FIFA Women's World Cup will be supported with guaranteed remuneration was a major milestone for football and women's sport.

"FIFPRO is very pleased with the steps taken by FIFA in establishing this guaranteed player payment mechanism. The key behind the success of this model is that it is universally applied, and it is fair, which is what female footballers tell us they want above all else. We see this is as only the beginning of what will be a transformational journey for the women's professional football landscape together with FIFA."

In addition to the introduction of the player payment model, FIFA has already confirmed the provision of the same conditions and service levels as were provided to the PMAs at the FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022™. FIFA's total investment in the FIFA Women's World Cup 2023.

Football to highlight social causes



FIFA, in partnership with several United Nations agencies, will use the FIFA Women's World Cup Australia & New Zealand 2023™ to highlight a range of social causes, selected following extensive consultation with stakeholders including players and the 32 participating member associations.

Under the global campaign, Football Unites the World, eight specific messages will be sent during the final tournament:

- Unite for Inclusion – in partnership with UN Human Rights
- Unite for Indigenous Peoples – in partnership with UN Human Rights
- Unite for Gender Equality – in partnership with UN Women
- Unite for Peace – in partnership with UNHCR, the UN Refugee Agency
- Unite for Education for All – in partnership with the UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)
- Unite for Zero Hunger – in partnership with the UN World Food Programme
- Unite for Ending Violence Against Women – in partnership with UN Women
- Football is Joy, Peace, Love, Hope & Passion – in partnership with the World Health Organization (WHO)

"Football unites the world and our global events, such as the FIFA Women's World Cup, have a unique power to bring people together and provide joy, excitement and passion," said FIFA President Gianni Infantino. "But football does even more than that – it can shine the spotlight on very important causes in our society. After some very open talks with stakeholders, including member associations and players,

we have decided to highlight a series of social causes – from inclusion to gender equality, from peace to ending hunger, from education to tackling domestic violence – during all 64 matches at the FIFA Women's World Cup."

FIFA Secretary General Fatma Samoura said: "It's not just about what happens on the pitch. We are committed to using football's power as a force for good and leveraging our partnerships with United Nations agencies to achieve our goals. We want to say thank you. Thank you to the players and the teams for sharing your support, for these causes. United, we can make a difference."

The FIFA Women's World Cup Australia & New Zealand 2023™ will be followed by an estimated audience of over two billion people around the world, providing an ideal platform to raise awareness for important social issues. Each message will be promoted via the team captains' armbands, pitchside digital LED boards, large flags presented on the pitch, giant screens in stadiums and via social media.

With regard to the armbands, team captains will be given three options: they can wear the "Football Unites the World" armband for the entire tournament; an armband corresponding to the theme of their choice for the entire tournament; or the armband corresponding to the theme of the specific matchday.

In addition, the tournament will also feature activations for other long-term campaigns, namely #BeActive, in partnership with the WHO, and #NoDiscrimination which aims to take direct action to tackle all forms of discrimination, including racism, in society.

No change at the top



Nearly three months have gone by since the FIFA/Cola-Cola Women's World Ranking was last updated, with no fewer than 101 international matches taking place in that time. National teams around the world have been engaged in warm-up matches for the upcoming FIFA Women's World Cup Australia & New Zealand 2023™, while the Asian qualifiers for the Women's Olympic Football Tournament Paris 2024 have also been taking place.

Those games have led to quite a few changes in the global hierarchy, except at the very summit, with the Top 5 remaining unchanged. USA (1st, -) are still out front, followed by the European quartet of Germany (2nd, -), Sweden (3rd, -), England (4th, -) and France (5th, -). There have been changes below, however, with Spain (6th, plus 1) and Canada (7th, minus 1) swapping places and Brazil (8th, plus 1) and the Netherlands (9th, minus 1) doing likewise, along with a good

few other teams in the Top 50.

Among the sides occupying that elevated part of the Ranking, Denmark (13th, plus 2), Nigeria (40th, plus 2) and Philippines (46th, plus 3) have all made modest moves, though the biggest changes can be found further down.

IR Iran (61st, plus 6), Lebanon (138th, plus 4) and Pakistan (157th, plus 4) have all made significant jumps, though the highest climbers of all are Bhutan (171st, plus 7), courtesy of win over Jordan (73rd, minus 5) and Timor-Leste (156th, minus 3). The biggest fallers are Indonesia (105th, minus 6), who have slipped six places.

Some 11 countries have also broken their FIFA Ranking points records: Spain (2002.28), Republic of Ireland (1743.59), Slovenia (1556.25), Philippines (1512.97), Zambia (1298.31), Cambodia (1144.56), Cyprus (1134.28), Lebanon (1062.88), Pakistan (944.58), Saudi Arabia (844.30) and Bhutan (841.86).

Finally, Slovenia (39th), Philippines (46th), Cambodia (118th) and Saudi Arabia (170th) have achieved their all-time highs in the Ranking, which is sure to change again when Australia & New Zealand 2023 comes around.

Fifa Top 10

1. USA
2. Germany
3. Sweden
4. England
5. France
6. Spain
7. Canada
8. Brazil
9. Netherlands
10. Australia
22. Ireland
23. Scotland
30. Wales
45. Northern Ireland

Leader USA (unchanged)

Moves into top 10 None

Moves out of top 10 None

Matches played in total 101

Biggest move by points Bhutan (plus 64.59)

Biggest drop by points Jordan (minus 45.96)

LOOKING AT THE BIGGEST DISCUSSIONS IN THE GAME

Who will win the Golden Boot?

As the World Cup edges closer, the discussion over who's nabbing the Golden Boot is rising. I spoke to a range of football fans to figure out who's really taking it home!

So...

Who will win the Golden Boot this summer?

Mia, 14, Man United fan: Sophia Smith

Emma, 15, Chelsea fan: I think it's going to go down to the last moments. There are so many talented attackers lining up for each country that'll fight hard for it. I'm going to go with Marta- it's her final World Cup and she'll be wanting to bow out on a high!

Milena, 22, Arsenal fan: I think Rachel Daly will bring it home.

Karen, 56, Aston Villa fan: For me, it's got to be Rachel Daly. She's cool on the ball; she never looks like missing!

Michael, 25, Man City fan: I'd love to see Bunny Shaw win it. She's certainly got it in her to do so.





AROUND
THE WORLD

Rapinoe announces retirements



USA legend Megan Rapinoe has announced that she will retire at the end of the NWSL season.

The 38-year-old will feature for the fourth time at this summer's Women's World Cup in Australia and New Zealand.

Highly regarded as one of the most successful players of her generation, Rapinoe won the Ballon d'Or back in 2019.

"I did want to do it my own way," the 38-year-old said.

"I feel very grateful that I'm here and that I have the trust of this team and that my body has held up this long."

Two-time World Cup winner Rapinoe will retire at the end of her club side OL Reign's NWSL campaign, with the regular season ending in October and the play-off final on 11 November.

She made the announcement ahead of USA's friendly against Wales on Sunday.

"It is with a really deep sense of peace and gratitude and excitement that I want to share with you guys that this will be my last season, my last World Cup and my last NWSL season," she said.

"I could have never imagined where this beautiful game would have taken me.

"I feel so honoured to have represented this country and this federation for so many years, it's truly been the greatest thing that I've ever

done and is something I'm so grateful for."

She has been capped 199 times and scored 63 goals for USA since making her debut in a friendly against Republic of Ireland in 2006.

She also won an Olympic gold medal at London 2012.

Her career began in 2002 playing for Elk Grove Pride in the Women's Premier Soccer League.

She had spells in Australia and France before joining Seattle Reign, now known as OL Reign, winning three NWSL Shields and one Women's Cup.

USA head coach head coach Vlatko Andonovski called her "one of the most important players in women's soccer history and a personality like no other".

Rapinoe's achievements on the field have been mirrored off it - she is one of the most influential voices in sport.

She publicly came out as gay in 2012 and has spoken out about racism, sexism and homophobia, as well as being a leading voice in the campaign for equal pay for the USA women's team.

In 2016, she was the first white athlete and first female to take a knee during the national anthem in a show of solidarity with Colin Kaepernick.

Rebecca Sowden



Former New Zealand international Rebecca Sowden cannot wait for this summer's Women's World Cup.

She made her Ferns debut in 2004 and went on to make ten caps for her country.

In 2016 she was named as a NZ Woman of Influence finalist for her inspiring contribution to sport and she now spends her time educating and enabling brands, media and rights holders to be part of the 'tidal wave of opportunity that women's sport currently presents'.

Inspired by the 1999 USA's Women's World Cup win when Brandi Chastain famously tore off her shirt after scoring the winning penalty, she achieved a football scholarship at a US college. Later she experienced her idols, including Mia Haam and Abby Wambach, out-run, out-jump and out-muscle her whilst representing the New Zealand Football Ferns from 2003-2007.

Ahead of the Women's World Cup we had chance to chat to Sowden about her career and what it's going to be like in New Zealand this summer.

Tell us a bit about yourself.

I'm a Kiwi who started playing soccer at the age of 5 and back then was one of the only girls playing. I went on to play division 1 college soccer in the USA and after having a 15 year career in media, partnerships and events I founded Team Heroine, a women's sport sponsorship and marketing agency during the last FIFA Women's World Cup after feeling like brands and right's holders weren't unlocking the power of women's sport.

You are an ex-Fern yourself, what was the game like when you played?

Unfortunately we didn't have many of the opportunities players have today and had to balance full time work with representing our country. Often we paid our own way to tournaments

representing our nation and were often supplied over-sized men's hand-me-down uniforms.

How much have you seen the game change since you played?

Hugely, not only in terms of visibility but the playing standard and of course the opportunity to make a career out of it. In saying that, we don't want to progress-wash just because things have improved as there is plenty more to do!

The hype around the Women's World Cup is really building, what's it like in New Zealand?

The excitement is real and like all women's sport is growing every week as the popularity of the game grows. I would have like to have seen the New Zealand players profiled more but we are starting to see more and more promotion around the tournament roll out. Ticket sales aren't quite as strong as they are in Australia but I hope that picks up in the days before the tournament kicks off.

What can fans expect if they are coming to watch any of the games in NZ? A warm welcome from Kiwis and a sporting mad nation that will get right behind the tournament when it kicks off.

Why do you think hosting the WWC will be beneficial for the country? It will not only benefit women's football, football in general, women's sport but women in the country. I believe that once people actually get to experience women's sport and women's football first-hand, especially when it is of this quality they will become fans for life.

What is women's football like in NZ going from grassroots and upwards? Like everywhere, we could be doing more but it's all heading in the right direction. Being a rugby mad nation, we often battle for the limelight but after the Women's World Cup I truly believe this will change.

What do you think are the biggest barriers in playing women's football in NZ? Being so far away from the rest of the world makes global competition harder. We are also a relatively small nation competing for participation against our national sport of rugby so aren't performing on the global stage like we would like to.

What is your prediction for NZ in this WWC? The whole of New Zealand is hoping to see them go through to the second round. We open the tournament against Norway which is going to be a tough game but if we can perform at our best in all 3 of our games, we have a good chance of making it through.

Who do you think will win the tournament? Obviously the big football powerhouses like USA, Germany and Netherlands will be

ones to watch but I'm secretly hoping Australia lift the trophy. I think with a home crowd and an on-form team they are going to be tough to beat.

Are you going to games? And what are you most looking forward to? Absolutely I wouldn't miss this once-in-a-lifetime opportunity for the world. I'll be at the opening game and final rounds but also heading to Wellington for a re-match of the 2019 final between USA vs Netherlands which is going to be highly anticipated.



News from Around the World

Zambia coach accused of misconduct

The head coach of Zambia's women's football team, due to compete in the Women's World Cup, has been investigated over allegations of sexual misconduct.

Bruce Mwape was appointed in May 2018 and helped Zambia qualify for the World Cup for the first time.

The Football Association of Zambia (FAZ) said in September 2022 that it had referred an investigation into sexual abuse allegations over to Fifa.



Players accused of mocking Haka

Spain and Netherlands players have been filmed appearing to mock the Maori haka ahead of the Women's World Cup.

A video of four Spain players attempting the traditional dance briefly appeared on the national team's social media channels before being taken down.

The clip was taken during the team's first training session in Auckland on Saturday night, shortly after they had arrived in the country to begin their preparations for the tournament. Last week, the Dutch national team also drew criticism for posting a video of a team member appearing to mock the haka on Instagram.



Kerr moves to Bayern Munich

Scotland midfielder Sam Kerr says she thought "someone was playing a prank" when first hearing of a potential move to Bayern Munich.

The 24-year-old agreed a three-year deal with the German champions following three years with Rangers, helping them to their first Scottish Women's Premier League title in 2022.

Kerr, who is the current Scotland women's player of the year, was sceptical as to whether Alexander Straus' side were pursuing the 'right' Sam Kerr - and not the Australia superstar who leads the line for Chelsea.





THE 2023 WOMEN'S WORLD CUP EDITION

The perfect momento
for the tournament

Featuring interviews with Beth England, Rachel Daly, Sarina Wiegman, Courtney Brosnon, Jayde Riviere and more...

ABOUT THE WOMEN'S FOOTBALL MAGAZINE

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Formed in 2017, we have grown to an award-winning team who are dedicated to telling the stories of the women's game

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I don't want to just be
a participant at a
World Cup.

I want to have a
legacy.

I want people to
remember me.

CARLI LLOYD