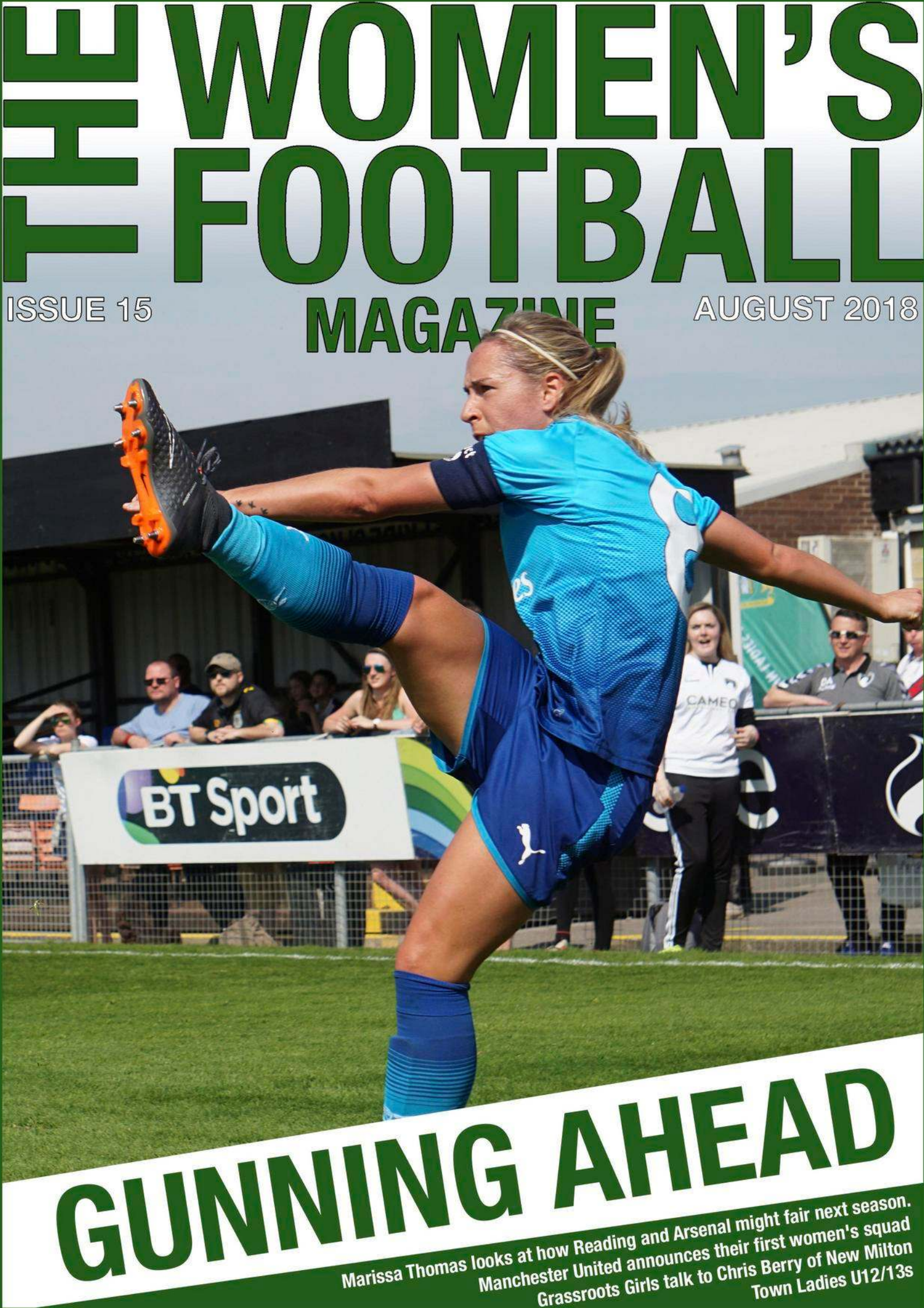
THE WOMEN'S FOOTBALL MAGAZINE

ISSUE 15 AUGUST 2018



GUNNING AHEAD

Marissa Thomas looks at how Reading and Arsenal might fair next season.
Manchester United announces their first women's squad
Grassroots Girls talk to Chris Berry of New Milton Town Ladies U12/13s

THE WOMEN'S FOOTBALL MAGAZINE

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Welcome to the issue!

It's time for Issue 15!

The fixtures are out!! We can all get planning our seasons now! Let us know on Twitter which games you are most looking forward to at @womensfootiemag

Massive congratulations to Alex Scott who made history on the first weekend of the Premier League being the first female pundit on Soccer Sunday.

We are really enjoying the Under20's Women's World Cup in France too. Our journalist Dan Pentland is currently out in France reporting on the tournament and how Mo Marley's England side are getting on. He has been keeping updates online and you will be able to read all about it in the next issue as well as see photos from Daniela Pochelli.

If you have been enjoying the tournament, please have a look at our special edition. It is our first print issue and only £2!

Enjoy the issue!

Helen Summers
Editor

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Emirates
LIFE INS

About my month

I mentioned in the last issue that myself and Richard Laverty are attempting to bring to life a women's charity football match. We have had a few exciting meetings in the last month which has given us hope that we might be able to pull it off so watch this space.

We have started preparing our 2019 calendar and we are selling advertising space. There are still a few spaces available at £30 per month page. If you are interested then please get in touch at thewomensfootballmagazine@gmail.com

It has been a busy month with the fixture lists coming out, the end of the transfer window and the women's under 20s World Cup. We are loving that women's football is being discussed more and more - hopefully the future is bright.

There have been so many changes since the season finished in May that I don't know about you, I am looking forward to getting to watch some football again!

Enjoy the issue,
Helen xx

Manchester United Women: Meet the team

By Jessica Pratt
@redjess14

Manchester United Women have announced their first 21-player squad for their inaugural season in the FA Women's Championship.

The team will be managed by former England captain Casey Stoney in their maiden season and despite the average age of the squad being just 21, she believes that they are ready to challenge for the title and promotion to the top tier. Stoney commented: "We've gone young, we've gone exciting, we've gone entertaining. I'm more than aware that we're bringing 21 strangers together but I'm really excited about the squad and the future of this team."

The two stand-out names in the squad are experienced goalkeeper Siobhan Chamberlain and fellow England international and former young International Player of the Year, Alex Greenwood. Left-back Greenwood will captain the team and, along with Chamberlain, is among seven players poached by Stoney from her former side – and United's rivals, Liverpool.

Several members of the new team – Fran Bentley, Kirsty Hanson, Naomi Hartley, Emily Ramsey, Ella Toone, Millie Turner, Katie Zelem – are former United youth players who experienced the club's centre of excellence but were forced to leave by 16 as there was no pathway to a senior

women's team.

Arguably one of the most exciting players returning to the club is midfielder Katie Zelem, who has enjoyed a successful title-winning season with Juventus. The 22-year-old isn't the only player in the squad to return from a spell abroad, forward Leah Galton has spent most of her career overseas with Sky Blue FC in America and more recently in Germany – where she played just one match for Bayern Munich before taking a break from the game.

Assistant manager Willie Kirk has evidently used his connections to help recruit key members of the squad, with 17-year-old holding midfielder Aimee Palmer and fellow youth international Millie Turner joining from his former club Bristol City. Scottish internationals Kirsty Smith and Lizzie Arnot have also followed Kirk to Manchester after playing under him during his spell as head coach of Hibernian. Despite playing on the wing, Arnot finished the season as the third highest goal scorer in the league with Hibs. Up top, United have chosen two other prolific goal scorers in Jess Sigsworth and Kirsty Hanson – who notched 29 goals between them in all competitions last season playing for WSL 2 Champions Doncaster Rovers Belles – who, like Sheffield FC, have been forced to withdraw from the Championship. Sigsworth scored 18 goals in 21 games and won the golden boot as her partnership with Hanson led the Belles to the title.

Another proven goal scorer to join United's forward line is 17-year-old Ebony Salmon, who joins the Red Devils after four years with Aston Villa.

The squad has now begun their pre-season training under Stoney, although they will be without young goalkeeper Emily Ramsey for up to three weeks as she travels to France with England for the under-20 Women's World Cup.

United will play their opening fixture of the Championship on the weekend of 8-9 September, with their first competitive match to come before then in the FA Women's Continental Tyres League Cup, which begins on the weekend of the 18-19 August. The full fixture list will be available from 11am on 1 August.

JAMES
16
CHEVROLE

WSL Summer Transfer Deals

ARSENAL

IN: Viktoria Schnaderbeck (FC Bayern), Lia Wälti (Turbine Potsdam), Tabea Kemme (Turbine Potsdam), Pauline Peyraud-Magnin (Olympique Lyonnais)

EXTENDED CONTRACT: Jordan Nobbs, Danielle Van De Donk, Dominique Janssen, Sari Van Veenendaal, Louise Quinn, Katie McCabe

OUT: Shannon Cooke (LSU), Heather O' Reilly (NC Courage), Anna Moorhouse (West Ham), Lauren James (Manchester United), Anna Filbey (Tottenham), Emma Gibbon (Tottenham), Jess N'Gunga (Tottenham)

RETIRED: Josephine Henning, Alex Scott

BIRMINGHAM CITY

IN: Coral Haines (Spurs), Sophie Baggaley (Bristol), Lucy Staniforth (Sunderland), Chloe Arthur (Bristol)

EXTENDED CONTRACT: Kerys Harrop, Connie Scofield, Sarah Mayling, Lucy Quinn, Marisa Ewers, Emma Follis, Paige Williams

OUT: Coral Haines (Tottenham), Madeleine Cusack, Freda Ayisi, Jess Carter (Chelsea), Fran Stenson (Manchester City), Sophie Baggaley (Bristol), Abbey-Leigh Stringer (Everton), Tanya Oxtoby – Assistant manager (Bristol)

RETIREMENT: Emily Westwood

BRIGHTON & HOVE ALBION

In: Kayleigh Green (Yeovil), Marie Hourihan (Manchester City), Ellie Brazil (Fiorentina), Jodie Brett (Everton), Sophie Harris (London Bees), Victoria Williams (Sunderland), Emily Simpkins (Doncaster Belles)

EXTENDED CONTRACT: Kirsty Barton, Laura Rafferty, Fliss Gibbons

Out: Lucy Somes (Lewes), Amelia Ritchie (Charlton), Chloe Sansom, Marie Hourihan (Manchester City), Nina Wilson (Lewes)

BRISTOL CITY

IN: Sophie Baggaley (Birmingham), Gemma Evans (Yeovil), Katie Rood (Juventus), Ali Johnson (Liverpool), Lucy Graham (Hibernians), Eartha Cummins (Spartans FC), Tanya Oxtoby – manager (Birmingham City),

EXTENDED CONTRACT: Florence Allen, Carla Humphrey, Danique Kerkdijk, Loren Dykes, Frankie Brown, Poppy Wilson, Julie Biesmans

OUT: Sophie Baggaley (Birmingham), Corinne Yorston, Lauren Hemp (Manchester City), Millie Farrow (Reading), Jasmine Matthews (Liverpool), Yana Daniels (Liverpool), Aimee Palmer (Manchester United), Charlie Estcourt (Reading), Millie Turner (Manchester United), Chloe Arthur (Birmingham), Ellie Wilson (London Bees), Willie Kirk – manager (Manchester United),

CHELSEA

IN: Beth England (Liverpool), Elizabeth Durack (Everton), Sophie Ingle (Liverpool), Jess Carter (Birmingham), Ali Riley (FC Rosengard), Adelina Engman (Goteborg FC),

EXTENDED CONTRACT: Ji So-Yun, Maren Mjelde, Fran Kirby, Erin Cuthbert

OUT: Claire Rafferty (West Ham), Eniola Aluko (Juventus FC), Rebecca Spencer (West Ham), Fran Kitching (Sheffield United), Gemma Davison (Reading), Gilly Flaherty (West Ham)

RETIREMENT: Katie Chapman

EVERTON

IN: Inessa Kaagman (Ajax Vrouwen), Dominique Bruinenberg (Sunderland), Hannah Cain (Sheffield FC), Abbey-Leigh Stringer (Birmingham)

OUT: Marthe Munsterman (Ajax Vrouwen), Mollie Green (Manchester United), Elizabeth Durack (Chelsea), Courtney Sweetman-Kirk (Liverpool), Jodie Brett (Brighton)

LIVERPOOL

IN: Leighanne Robe (Millwall), Jasmine Matthews (Bristol), Yana Daniels (Bristol), Anke Preuss (Sunderland), Leandra Little (Doncaster Belles), Rhiannon Roberts (Doncaster Belles), Niamh Fahey (FCGB), Christie Murray (Glasgow City), Sophie Bradley-Auckland (Doncaster Belles), Courtney Sweetman- Kirk (Everton), Fran Kitching (Sheffield)

LIVERPOOL

OUT: Beth England (Chelsea), Siobhan Chamberlain (Manchester United), Kate Longhurst (West Ham), Caroline Weir (Manchester City), Alex Greenwood (Manchester United), Amy Turner (Manchester United), Martha Harris (Manchester United), Emily Ramsey (Manchester United), Sophie Ingle (Chelsea), Gemma Bonner (Manchester City), Lucy Roberts (Manchester United) , Ali Johnson (Bristol), Ellie Fletcher (Sheffield) , Scott Rogers—manager

MANCHESTER CITY

IN: Marie Hourihan (Brighton), Lauren Hemp (Bristol), Caroline Weir (Liverpool), Gemma Bonner (Liverpool), Tessa Wullaert (Wolfsburg), Fran Stenson (Birmingham City), Janine Beckie (Sky Blue FC)

EXTENDED CONTRACT: Abbie McManus

OUT: Julia Spetsmark (KIF Orebro), Jane Ross (West Ham), Tessel Middag (West Ham), Ella Toone (Manchester United), Marie Hourihan (Brighton), Fran Bentley (Manchester United), Althea Paul (Sheffield United), Isobel Christiansen (Olympique Lyonnais)

READING

IN: Charlie Estcourt (Bristol), Rachael Laws (Sunderland), Sophie Howard (Hoffenheim), Gemma Davison (Chelsea), Millie Farrow (Bristol), Mayumi Pacheco (Doncaster Belles)

EXTENDED CONTRACT: Remi Allen, Jo Potter, Jade Moore, Kirsty Pearce, Charlie Estcourt, Rachel Furness, Brooke Chaplen

OUT : Harriet Scott, Kirsty Linnett, Mary Earps (WFL Wolfsburg), Sophie O'Rourke

RETIREMENT: Melissa Fletcher

WEST HAM UNITED

IN: Rebecca Spencer (Chelsea), Claire Rafferty (Chelsea), Brianna Visalli (Chicago Red Stars), Gilly Flaherty (Chelsea), Esmee De Graaf (PEC Zwolle), Lucienne Reichardt (Ajax Amsterdam), Anna Moorhouse (Arsenal), Jane Ross (Manchester City), Tessel Middag (Manchester City), Leanne Kiernan (Shelbourne Ladies), Brooke Hendrix (ACF Brescia), Julia Simic (SC Freiburg), Ria Percival (FC Basel), Alisha Lehmann (Young Boys), Kate Longhurst (Liverpool), Matt Beard—Manager

EXTENDED CONTRACT: Rosie Kmita, Vyan Sampson

OUT: Jasmine Auguste, Sindie Kanto, Cara Connatser, Amy Cooper,
Chenise Austin, Stephaney Bent, Chloe Burr (Crystal Palace) , Dayna Chong, Molly Clark, Kelly Weathall, Ellie Zopefl, Leanne Mabey, Chantelle Mackie (Millwall), Molly Peters, Paige Anderson-James,
Amber-Keegan Stobbs (Charlton), Georgia Miller (QPR), Whitney Locke (QPR), Andria Georgiou, Hannah Wheeler, Mollie Kmita (Gillingham Ladies)

MOVED TO OTHER ROLE: Karen Ray—manager—moves back to general manager role

YEOVIL TOWN

IN: Lee Burch—manager (Millwall)

OUT: Bow Jackson, Kayleigh Green (Brighton), Gemma Evans (Bristol), Jamie Sherwood—manager

Opinion piece: Reading or Arsenal?

Can Reading or Arsenal break into the top two?

Journalist Marissa Thomas takes an indepth look into the two London clubs as they look to lift trophies in the 2018/19 season.

2013. This was the last time a team other than Man City Women or Chelsea FC Women (formerly Chelsea Ladies FC) finished in the top two. Chelsea have been in WSL 1 since its inception in 2011 while Man City joined in 2014. The only time Man City have been outside the top two was in their first season when they finished fifth. Since then, the WSL 1 title and the two Champions League spots have been a two-horse race between the two teams.

Chelsea finished second in 2014 before winning title for the first time a year later. Man City Women finished second in 2015 and then claimed their first title in 2016. The Blues won the Spring Series title in 2017 while Man City came second. Chelsea were once again victorious during the 2017/18 season while Man City finished six points behind their rivals.

In all four of those seasons, Arsenal came third. They remain the most decorated side in the women's game but they have become a cup team in recent seasons instead of challenging for the league. However, new manager Joe Montemurro could be set to change that. He joined in November last year and had a very positive impact on the team. Now that Montemurro has got to know his players and made new signings over the summer as well as gone through a full pre-season, Arsenal are in a strong position to challenge for the title.

Since the season ended, Viktoria Schnaderbeck, Lia Walti, Tabea Kemme and Pauline Peyraud-Magnin have joined the club. Signings such as these will help Arsenal as they aim to compete in the Champions League for the first time since 2012.As well as new signings, many key Arsenal players have signed new contracts with the

club.

Jordan Nobbs, Leah Williamson, Emma Mitchell, Danielle van de Donk, Sari van Veenendaal, Dominique Janssen, Katie McCabe and Louise Quinn have all committed their futures to Arsenal which is just as important as signing new players.

Reading FC Women joined the WSL 1 in 2016 and finished eighth in their first season. Since then, Kelly Chambers and her side have gone from strength to strength. They finished sixth in the Spring Series and then improved on that last season when they finished fourth. Reading have a talented squad filled with youth and experience and plenty of goalscorers.

Like most clubs, Reading have made several signings during the summer to improve their squad. The most eye-catching capture so far is Gemma Davison from champions Chelsea. The winger will bring plenty of experience to the club which will help them build on their success from last season. In addition to Davison, Reading have also signed goalkeeper Rachel Laws and defender Sophie Howard.

Players who have been crucial to Reading's success such as Remi Allen, Jo Potter, Jade Moore, Charlie Estcourt and Rachel Furness have signed new contracts with the club.

Both Reading and Arsenal have made big steps to try and bridge the gap between themselves and Man City and Chelsea. Rather than just competing with them, they want to challenge them for the top honours. With all the new changes coming into the leagues this season, it would be good for the

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leagues this season, it would be good for the league if either Reading or Arsenal could break the duopoly of Chelsea and Man City.

Marissa's predictions

Reading: 4th place and FA WSL Continental Tyres Cup

Arsenal: 2nd place and Women's FA Cup

Opening fixtures | 8/9 September

Arsenal	v	Liverpool	
Birmingham City	v	Everton	
Brighton & Hove Albion	v	Bristol City	
Chelsea	v	Manchester City	
Reading	v	Yeovil Town	

#FAWSL

Opening fixtures | 8/9 September

Aston Villa	v	Manchester United	
Crystal Palace	v	Leicester City	
Millwall Lionesses	v	Lewes	
Sheffield United	v	Durham	
Tottenham Hotspur	v	London Bees	

#FAWC

MIEDEMA
11

Continental Tyres Cup Opening fixtures

The FA Women's Continental League Cup

Opening fixtures	18/19 August

GROUP NORTH

GROUP ONE NORTH

Aston Villa	v	Sheffield United
Birmingham City	v	Manchester City
Leicester City	v	Bristol City

GROUP TWO NORTH

Liverpool	v	Manchester United
Reading	v	Durham

*Everton have no fixture this gameweek

GROUP SOUTH

GROUP ONE SOUTH

Chelsea	v	Brighton & Hove Albion
Crystal Palace	v	Tottenham Hotspur
London Bees	v	Yeovil Town

GROUP TWO SOUTH

Arsenal	v	West Ham United
Lewes	v	Charlton Athletic

*Millwall have no fixture this gameweek

#ContiCup

Final to be played on Saturday February 23 2019 (Subject to broadcast)

Fan of the Month: Eva Flitney

1. Do you have any rituals or superstitions before a game?
I always listen to Little Mix as it pumps me up before a match!

2. What is your best moment since starting to play football?
In the same week in June 2017 I both signed for Bristol City Women U12s and my Grassroots team (Ross Juniors U10s) won the National Futsal Finals!

3. How did you start playing football?
In 2010 (when I was 4 years old and the youngest player) my Dad started a girls section at Ross Juniors. The girls section grew and grew and I ended up with an amazing team in my age group. I would also play football in the garden with my good friend Fin who taught me a lot!

4. Which team do you support?
Arsenal men and women but now obviously Bristol City too!

5. Who is your best friend in football?
Amelia who plays for Ross Juniors, she is the funniest person I have ever met!

6. Who is your idol/ favourite footballer?
Alex Scott

7. What is your favourite thing about playing football?
My favourite thing is the friendships you make. I also love the learning outcomes of each training session and playing matches especially against boys in the JPL as that is a big challenge!!

8. Who is your biggest supporter?
My Dad, he has done so much by coaching my old team at Ross Juniors and now also driving me to Bristol.

9. What is the dressing room atmosphere like before games?
Most of the time it is a fun place to be but occasionally tense if it is a big game!

10. How do you find it playing for a mixed team?
I played in a mixed boys and girls team aged 8-10 and I found this enjoyable and challenging- it certainly toughens you up!

About Eva:

- Plays for Bristol City
- Eva is 11 years old
- She will be starting secondary school in September

Ammo's Antics

Hi everyone,

So.. the trials have all come and gone. Hundreds of girls have received either good news or bad news, it's always a tough time, particularly if you are unsuccessful. If you didn't get into an RTC this year my advice would be to never, ever give up. Continue working hard to become the player that you are, not the player you think they want you to be. Show resilience, determination, creativity.. and keep trying. But don't ever give up on your dream.
I've had one preseason training session with Birmingham at the newly named Trillion Trophy Training Centre and I've met my awesome new team mates for this coming season. I'm now looking forward to getting started in the league. We play in the super tough JPL against some top boys teams across the Midlands.
In August we already have a couple of friendlies booked against Man City and Man Utd girls. Plus a tournament against some other girls RTC's. I'm really excited about testing myself against what I'm sure will be some top class players. I'll let you know how we get on next time.

During the off season I've also played three tournaments for my old grass roots team Ross Juniors. It was great to see my old team mates and against tough opposition we managed to secure another three tournament wins.

I also took part in an athletics event representing my school. I was asked to run the 1000metres. I had never even run that distance before the event so was feeling quite nervous. My tactics were simple. Run as fast as I could for as long as I could. Happy (and surprised) to say I finished first in the small schools section and second to a regional cross country athlete overall. Not bad for my first attempt. Not sure my tactics were quite right though.

I've also spent a couple of days at my new secondary school in Tewkesbury. This year I move from my small village primary school to a big secondary school. It's daunting but I'm excited to make new friends... and play for the school football team.

So, back to training soon with Birmingham City, I really can't wait for the coming season.

A couple of seasons ago Fran Kirby gave me her Chelsea shirt after a game against Birmingham. On that day I promised her I would send her my first shirt when I became a professional footballer. She has inspired me to keep working hard and whenever I'm feeling down or I'm doubting myself I just look at the shirt she gave me..and I keep going.

I hope that one day I can inspire young girls to follow their footballing dreams. Like Fran Kirby did with me.

Until next time,
stay cool
Ammo

Be a Flamingo in a flock of pigeons

Mum turned coach!

My name is Gill and I coach grassroots football in my spare time. I'm also a thirty something, working mum of 2 girls with a husband and a dog to take care of!!

I started coaching because of my eldest daughter Olivia (7¾). She's football mad and she's trained/played for our club since she was about 2. Over the last few years she's been to many varied coaching sessions alongside her regular training and I noticed that there weren't many that were particularly focussed on girls—or other girls in the sessions she went to. Olivia couldn't be in a minority, could she?

The turnaround!!

2018 is an important year for girl's football as there is so much focus and effort being put into the girl's game and I, and other like-minded coaches, need to capitalise on this. There are new girl's teams popping up all over, new social media groups being set up, new funding and more entries into the girls leagues than previous years... it's a truly fabulous thing!!

2018 is also important as it should herald the turnaround in terms of equality in the grassroots game. Girls playing football, whether as a squad of girls or as part of a mixed team either competitively or for fun, is something I'm very passionate about. So, imagine my horror when, at a recent tournament, I heard a male coach say to his squad of boys "Am I sending out a bunch of boys onto the pitch or a bunch of little girls". Now, my Mum always said to me if you have nothing nice to say then say nothing and boy did her words serve me well on this day! Of all the things I wanted to say to 'Coach-a-saurous' top of my list was that opinions will never change on the pitch whilst he hides in the 1950's.

I genuinely believe that girls work harder than boys as they always feel like they have to earn their place on the team and work that bit harder to be awarded the pass or the chance to score. All this is done whilst avoiding the opposition player who decides he will target the girl on the pitch for an easy steal of the ball or that a bit of rougher tackle will see her subbed off in tears... this doesn't work with Olivia by the way, it just means your cards are marked!!

Here come the Girls!

So, what am I doing to ensure girls in my area have a chance to play football?

We have started working with girls aged from 3-13 to provide football in a girls only setting. We have good numbers and have just started getting between 20 and 25 turn out each week for training. I am hoping to grow our 'Academy' enough to recruit a couple more coaches so we c an start forming a couple of teams from the girls we have. It's all so exciting!!

I always encourage my girls to have a go, not be shy, laugh with their friends and most of all put 100% effort into enjoying their football. I read a quote the other day and thought it was so appropriate so I'm going to leave it with you....

"Be a Flamingo in a flock of pigeons" x

Grassroots Girls: Poole Town Ladies

Chris Berry, the new manager of Pool Town Ladies has been in women's football for a number of years. He recently moved from New Milton Town Ladies and he chats to TWFM about his career so far.

How did you get into coaching girl's football?

About three years ago I responded to an advert for what was then, AFC Boscombe Ladies, a grassroots team asking for 'assistance' in coaching at the club. I already had my Level 1 coaching badge but never really put the theory into practice. I remember the first evening turning up and meeting the wonderful Lou Fern who introduced me to the group of five or six girls and said, 'here is your team'. That evening, somehow, I went from offering my assistance to becoming a manager of an U10's girls football team. As the years went on, more and more girls joined the team and the successes they achieved is a credit to each and every one of them. I am just glad I was there to witness the start of their footballing journey. This year I was honoured to receive from the New Forest Sports Council the Sports Award for 'Making A Difference Award' though the work I have done with the players.

Have you ever coached boys and if so what differences have you noticed?

I have never held the title of coach for a boys' team. Through the work I was doing at the time, I took the chance to undertake my Level 1 coaching badge which enabled me to volunteer taking football sessions at the local YMCA.

Stories often come out about parents on sidelines, do you find parents at women's games can be as equally loud?

I have been blessed with the parents of my team. They have been supportive and respectful when it comes to match day. Silent weekends (where supporters can only clap in support) can sometimes cause frustrations with mixed feelings as to why such weekends exist.

Have you ever had any problems with parents on the sidelines?

Football is about opinions and that's what makes the game as interesting as it is. My aim is to be transparent as possible as to what my aims and objectives are for the team and for the individuals within it. Communication is key in my eyes, therefore reducing perceived problems. That said there was one dad who came storming across at fulltime after a game to express his opinion a tad too strongly. The matter was referred to the correct people and dealt with how I would expect with full backing of the club and welfare team.

Do you think more media coverage has helped the girl's game gain number? Have you seen an increase in girl's joining the club?

For sure. And media coverage is not just viewing of the games being played on the BBC red button or Women's Football Show, it's all the positive interaction of social media from the players and clubs. 90% of my twitter feed are international players tweeting back to fans messages of good luck messages and photos before or after game.

I was told that one of the hardest things to achieve is retention of players at a club from season to season.

"I was told that one of the hardest things to achieve is retention of players at a club from season to season."

So, with that in mind, I am pleased to say that from the six players I started with, the club did not only retain but gained a further twelve players over time. That is alongside the growth of neighbouring teams around the area across all age groups.

You spent three years with New Milton women, how do you feel about the change?

Without New Milton Town Ladies (formally AFC Boscombe Ladies) I would not have been introduced to the wonderful world of developing inspirational girls who love the sport they play. It is only through change of circumstances I left New Milton Town Ladies and wish them all the best of luck and know I have left my team is the best of care with coaches who share my philosophy of developing players and providing opportunities.

What more do you think can be done for grassroots clubs in the game?

Information recently published suggests that the FA is already reaping the rewards of increased girls' involvement as they look to reach their target of doubling female participation by 2020, having recently announced a 15.9 per cent year-on-year increase in girls-only Mini-Soccer teams.

The all-female environment amongst friends, key to nurturing the girls' passion for football, has given many of the girl's confidence to take the next step on their footballing pathway.

As for grassroots as a whole, well, with the Premier League setting the agenda, the sport has become increasingly detached from its organic roots. The emphasis is too heavily slanted towards the spectacle and entertainment of the Premier League and perhaps not enough is being done by the League, its clubs or the Football Association to address the persistently low levels of participation that now exist in the English game.

What are your opinions on the new league structure? Do you think it will be good for the game?

What a question. I am lucky enough to be involved in the Women's game at a time of change and at a time where hopefully opinions are shared and listened too. At the time of writing the talk is about League logo, Blackburn losing their appeal, a new era at West Ham, MK Dons playing at Stadium MK … Have I done enough to dodge the question as it is one I can't answer yet!

Manchester United have announced their first squad, do you think the club finally having a women's team will be good for the sport?

Firstly, lets wish Casey Stoney and her team well. Feelings as to where they have entered into the league structure will rumble on I am sure. But why did it take so long. Up until this year, United did have a focus on women's football at some level – anything less would seem negligent – with their girls' football programme awarded Tier 1 status by the FA. But the fact is, when the girls reached adulthood, they had to find another club. Former Manchester City stars Izzy Christiansen and Ella Toone, Liverpool's Ellie Fletcher and Emily Ramsey, ex-Juventus player Katie Zelem and the Sheffield United keeper Fran Kitching all began their careers at United. Just a shame that those behind making the decision took so long. Perhaps they got a voicemail from Phil Neville, after he was quoted to say "I will be encouraging them. A club of the size of United should be the leaders, the pioneers."

joma
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services
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By Helen Summers
@helenrw11

Poole Town Ladies captain Rebecca Witherington chats to TWFM about her career so far.

Poole Town Ladies are the FA Women's Premier Division One - South West for the 2018/19 season.
The side finished fifth in the division last season and play at the County Ground, Poole.
They will make the short trip to Southampton on the opening day of the season.

How did you first get into football?
I started liking football as my dad used to be a referee and my brother used to play. But it wasn't until university that I actually joined a team and have continued playing ever since.

Who is your idol in the game?
Lucy Bronze. I think She's an incredible icon for female football.

Do you go to watch football and if so do you go to men's/women's or both?
I go to watch both. However with more male teams playing locally it is easier to watch more men's football.

What is your favourite thing about playing football?
I love the team spirit of the game.

Are you hoping to become a professional footballer or is it a hobby?
For me it is more than a hobby in the sense that I always want to be the best I can be at anything I do. With football I don't think being a professional is on the cards however I will always strive to be better and push my self to go as far as I can with it.

Do you think more women's games should be on the television like the men's?
Definitely! I think football is football whether it is men's or women's the game is the same, therefore should be treated that way.

What has been your biggest achievement in football so far?
I would have to say being able to captain Poole town ladies at FA Women's National South West division is my greatest achievement in football.

What do you think can be done to make women's football more popular in the UK?
I believe if there was more coverage on television people would have more access to the women's game. Even having more coverage in the newspapers would be great too.

Poole Town Ladies league fixtures 18/19

Sunday August 19 Southampton vs Poole Town Ladies
2pm Blackfield and Langley FC

Sunday August 26 Poole Town Ladies vs Larkhall Athletic Ladies
2pm Dorset FA County Ground

Sunday September 9 Poole Town Ladies vs Swindon Town Ladies
2pm Dorset FA County Ground

Sunday September 16 St Nicholas Ladies vs Poole Town Ladies
2pm Yate Town FC

Sunday September 30 Poole Town Ladies vs Cheltenham Town Ladies
2pm Dorset FA County Ground

Wednesday October 3 Southampton Saints Girls & Ladies vs Poole Town Ladies
7.45pm Universal Stadium

Sunday October 14 Buckland Athletic Ladies vs Poole Town Ladies
2pm Homers Heath

Sunday October 21 Keynsham Town Ladies vs Poole Town Ladies
2pm The AJN Stadium

Sunday November 4 Poole Town Ladies vs Brislington Ladies
2pm Dorset FA County Ground

Sunday November 18 Poole Town Ladies vs Maidenhead United FC Ladies
2pm Dorset FA County Ground

Sunday December 16 Chesham United Ladiesvs Poole Town Ladies
2pm The Meadow

Sunday January 13 Poole Town Ladies vs Southampton Womens
2pm Dorset FA County Ground

Poole Town Ladies league fixtures 18/19

Sunday January 20 Larkhall Athletic Ladies vs Poole Town Ladies
2pm Plain Ham

Sunday February 3 Swindon Town Ladies vs Poole Town Ladies

2pm Fairford Town FC

Sunday February 10 Poole Town Ladies vs Buckland Athletic Ladies
2pm Dorset FA County Ground

Sunday February 17 Poole Town Ladies vs St Nicholas Ladies

2pm Dorset FA County Ground

Sunday March 10 Cheltenham Town Ladies vs Poole Town Ladies

2pm Petersfield Park

Wednesday March 13 Poole Town Ladies vs Southampton Saints Girls & Ladies

7.45pm Dorset FA County Ground

Sunday March 24 Poole Town Ladies vs Keynsham Town Ladies

2pm Dorset FA County Ground

Sunday March 31 Brislington Ladies vs Poole Town Ladies

2pm Brislington Stadium

Sunday April 14 Maidenhead United FC Ladies vs Poole Town Ladies

2pm York Road Stadium

Sunday May 5 Poole Town Ladies vs Chesham United Ladies

2pm Dorset FA County Ground

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