

The Women's Football Magazine



MARTA IS CHAMP!

Ruth Fox opens up about her battle with depression in an honest and open interview with Helen Rowe-Willcocks

Phil Neville discusses Steph Houghton and the Lioness' friendlies

Jess Pratt looks at Manchester United's start to the Season whilst

Marissa Thomas analyses West Ham and Brighton

THE WOMEN'S FOOTBALL MAGAZINE



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Welcome to the issue!

It's time for Issue 17!

Well it has certainly been a busy month for women's football! The WSL has got off to a bang and there have been amazing performances and some shock results! It is great to see how competitive the top flight is going to be this season.

Well done to Chelsea and Glasgow City who are through to the next round of the Women's Champions League. The Blues will face Fiorentina whilst Glasgow have a tough challenge against Barcelona in the round of 16. Also commiserations to Manchester City who were knocked out in a tough battle with Barcelona.

Coming up in the issue I talk to Ruth Fox about her battle with depression. It is an open and honest interview and once you start reading about it, you will not be able to stop. We also have interviews with Phil Neville, Ammo's latest column and Jess Pratt looks at Manchester United women's start to the season.

Our 2019 calendar is out now! Make sure you get a copy. They are £6.50 and can be found on the website.

Helen Summers
Editor-in-chief



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About my month

Hey everyone,

Hope you have all had a great month.

I have loved getting to more games than I usually do in recent months and it has been no different in September.

I went to my first Champions League game at Chelsea for their match with Sarajevo which was great and also took my mother-in-law to her first women's football game. It definitely will not be the last!

I am delighted that our 2019 calendar is now available on pre-order. We have worked really hard on it and I hope you like it. It is available to buy on the

website so make sure you go and check it out!

We would like to send our love and support to Steph Houghton and her husband Stephen Darby. Everyone was shocked to hear about Stephen's diagnosis and retirement and we send them nothing but love and our wishes.

Thank you for your continued support.

Enjoy the issue,
Helen xx



Ex-Cambridge United footballer Ruth Fox reveals devastating self-harm and suicide attempts and how a simple act of kindness saved her

Ex-Cambridge star Ruth Fox was just 14 when she was first diagnosed with depression.

She says she went from being a happy-go-lucky schoolgirl surrounded by a loving family and friends, to a “crying mess” screaming out for help.

In one of her darkest moments, Ruth found herself in hospital trying to overdose only to be met by a doctor’s cold response of “Well that amount of pills wouldn’t kill you anyway.”

She says mental health services let her down time and time again but her love of football became a beacon of hope for the young teenager. Coaches, teachers and family had to fill in the gaps that

the system did not.

Sitting in a cafe near her home in Bedfordshire, Ruth, now 19, is sharing her story with The Women’s Football Magazine.

She wants her story of recovery to be an example to anyone else battling mental illness.

For Ruth, finding the hospital garden became her saving grace.

“There was one time when I was in hospital for three weeks in a day unit and was put on medication. I tried to overdose, I was thinking of throwing myself in front of cars, I was self-harming,” she admits.



“I guess for me that was the time that football was the beacon of hope.

“There was a little garden in the hospital and I used to kick a ball around whenever I got a break.”

As well as being an escape from the dreary walls of her hospital room, her desire to get outside was motivated by the agreement she had made with her coaches at her football club. As well as keeping up her fitness and training, she would get to play reserve football every week.

“It meant I had a guaranteed 90 minutes to play with no pressure and no other cares in the world. It was my saviour.

“Some games I had self-harmed the night before and my coaches would just bandage it up and let me play as they always had, whereas others just wouldn't have had a clue what to do.

“They were so understanding.”

Ruth calls football her sanctuary – the place she could go and just forget about everything else.

She says her depression was triggered by her sister leaving home for university at the same time she sustained an injury that prevented her playing football.

The A-grade student quickly was refusing to go to school and her parents were forced to drive her in floods of tears to the gates - her mum would even sit in the car park for hours knowing that she would eventually receive a phone call to come and collect her.

As her depression continued to take hold, Ruth quit football. The idea of camaraderie and team mates was too much.

She was put on antidepressants which triggered strong suicidal thoughts and a period of self-harm.

She feels that the mental health system continually let her down – she struggled to get appointments, ambulances never turned up and she was completely cut off the child mental health team the day she turned 18. This happens to a third of young people.

Ruth often found herself going for months on end without the support from the system she says she so desperately needed.

Despite failing to finish her A-levels, on a whim, Ruth found a foundation place course at the University of Hertfordshire but as she found herself alone and away from home – the thing she thought she had wanted for a fresh



start – she could feel her mental health deteriorating.

“I started having suicidal thoughts again,” Ruth admits.

“I remember one night I was taken into A&E and I was waiting nine hours to be seen and by the time I got seen I was obviously quite upset.

“They were just like: “We can’t talk to you like this, go have another ten minutes to control yourself.”

“I was threatening to overdose and the only response I got from the doctor was, “that amount of medication wouldn’t kill you anyway.”

Ruth got released that night with no referral or any other help and three

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weeks later she was admitted into hospital because her mental health had deteriorated further. After being discharged, she found that her place at university was no longer available due to lack of mental health support available and she moved back home with her parents. She had no mental health support at the time and it felt like no hope for the future.

Suicidal thoughts returned as once again she found herself in the depths of depression.

“I would sleep on my front so my parents could not hear me cry.

“I genuinely believed that I would get up the next morning and go.

“I planned to get up and jump in front

of a train and I knew that if I got out of bed, that’s what I’d do.

“I remember thinking that everything I was doing was the last time I would do it. It was a very surreal thing.

“I had been in a low for such a long time that when I had made up my mind that the end was near I was relaxed, I was understanding, content with the world - I didn’t look like someone who is depressed.”

Ruth even wrote her suicide note.

Yet it was the smallest act of kindness from her mother, who was oblivious to what her daughter was planning to do that morning, which was finally the turning point for Ruth.



“I remember I was so close to getting up and my mum knocked on the door, she had no idea what was going on in my head and she asked me if I wanted a coffee bringing back from town.

“She had no idea at that point how close she was to losing me but something about that conversation made me re-think and realise that people cared and it made me think back to my teacher and coaches.

“One conversation completely changed my way of thinking.”

Eight months after writing her suicide note, Ruth is in a much better place and after writing her thoughts down on paper – which she read to her dumbstruck family to explain how she felt – she is publishing a book on her experiences.

Because of the impact which her coaches had on her battle with depression, Ruth is now campaigning for coaches to have mental health training within their coaching qualifications.

“Every single coach should go on course just like physical health first aid is and I truly want to see this happen,” she says passionately.

“When I first opened up to my club, my only option was to see a Chaplain – I am not religious and they were not mental health trained.

“I was really lucky that my coaches were understanding and supportive. “They supported me in so many ways from ambulances, hospital visits and even wrapping up my arms which were bleeding from self-harming.



“I want to change the way that society views mental health but especially in football. I want to make support so much more accessible for players, right the way from grassroots to international level. “In terms of football you cannot play at your best if you are not mentally with it. I am honestly so passionate about it.”

Ruth’s book, “Within the White Lines: How the beautiful game saved my life” is available for pre-order on Amazon now.



England
Lionesses boss
Phil Neville
opens up about
'wonderful' Steph
Houghton and
Stephen Darby
after shock Motor
Neurone disease
diagnosis

B

By Helen Rowe-Willcocks

Phil Neville has spoken openly about the support Steph Houghton and husband Stephen Darby have been receiving ahead of the Lionesses' friendly game with Brazil.

The Bolton and former Bradford and Liverpool right-back was forced to announce his retirement in September

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after being diagnosed with Motor Neurone Disease at the age of 29.

The pair married during the summer and just days after the announcement was made, Houghton scored a late-minute equaliser against Bristol City in the Women's Super League - dedicating the goal to her husband.

Houghton, who is only three games off 100 caps for the Lionesses, has been training with the squad at St. Georges's as they begin their preparations for the Women's World Cup in France next year.

Talking about the England captain, Phil said: "Steph is good but obviously she is not. The professional side is good. I think she is playing some of the best football of her career. The last

three or four games she has been unbelievable. She has gone up so much in my estimations in her leadership skills because she has had to deal with something horrific and she has dealt with it in a class manner. She has gone out and played. Her and her husband have been overwhelmed with the well wishes but it just shows how well they are thought of. What I have said to Steph is that she is in charge of what she wants to do. If she wants to be on camp then she can be here, if she wants to train, she can train, if she wants to go home she can."

The squad face two difficult friendlies against Brazil and Australia over the next week with Neville targeting matches against as many of the ten sides as possible before the tournament next summer.



However, Neville is not just looking for impressive skill, he believes that there is more to football than being brilliant players.

He said: "At the end of the day it is just a game of football. The most important thing for us as a team – and we have sat down and spoke about it – family is far more important than kicking a ball round on a field. Carly Telford's mother died a month ago and the support we gave her was really good. We gave her time off, let her mourn and gave her support from a distance. And we will do the same for Steph.

He added: "She deserves it, she has earned it and she is a wonderful person. That is the most important thing. I want 23 people that are wonderful rather than 23 three footballers who are brilliant because if we get the characters right then we have a great chance of being successful."

England face Brazil at Meadow Park, Notts County on Saturday October 6 and Australia at Craven Cottage, Fulham on Tuesday October 9.

A friendly with Sweden has also been confirmed for the November 11 at the New York Stadium, Rotherham.

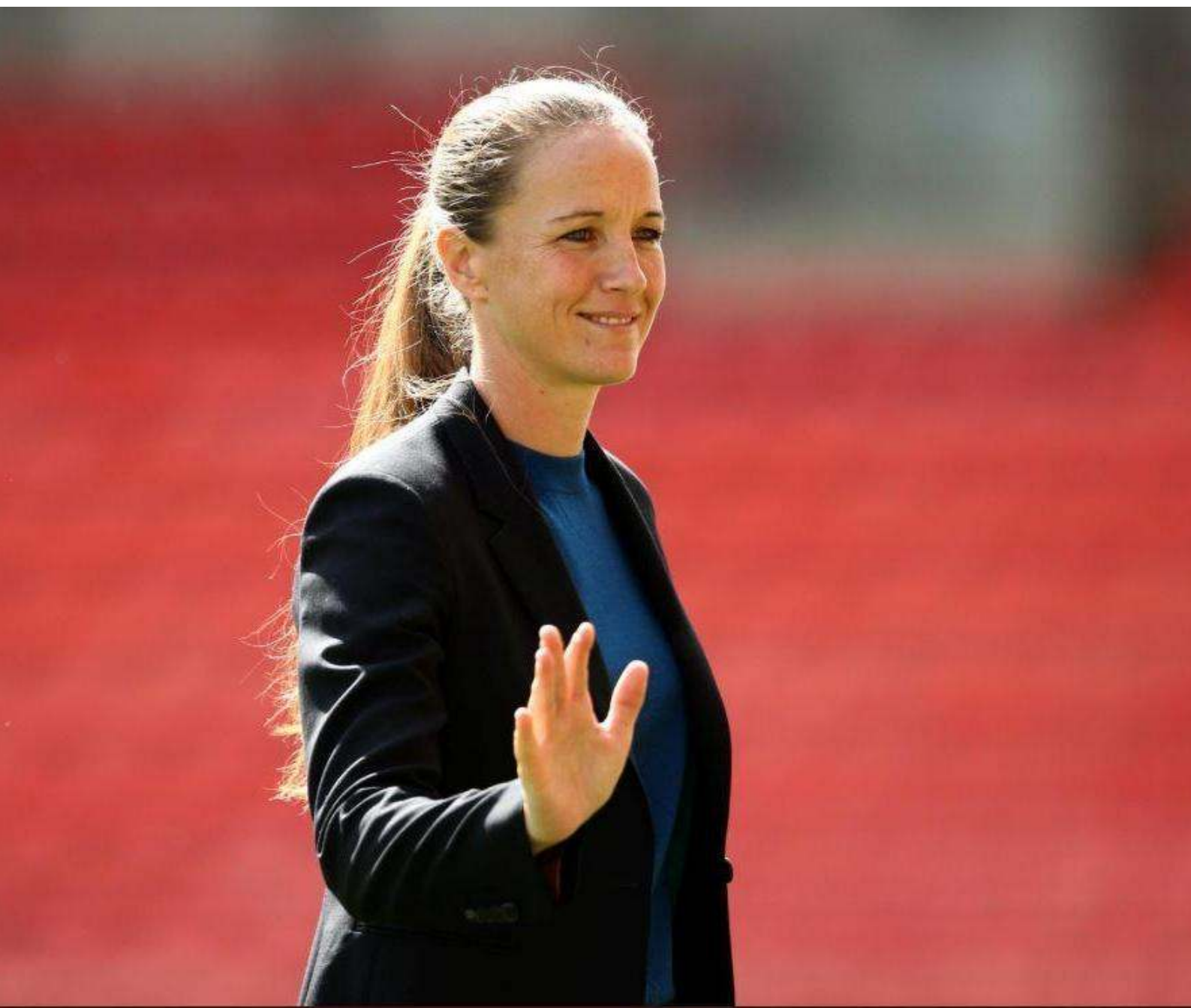
ENGLAND





**Congratulations
Marta on winning
the Best Women's
Footballer of the
year 2018**





Manchester United Women remain unbeaten in Championship By Jess Pratt



Casey Stoney's Manchester United side faced arguably their toughest test in the league so far as Durham visited Leigh Sport's Village prior to the international break.

The Wildcats have been in good form in all competitions so far this term as they look to improve upon last season's impressive 4th place finish, which saw them just two points off second place and promotion. United came into the tie on the back of a third successive victory as they put five past London Bees at the Hive.

The hosts dominated the opening exchanges and created some clear chances as Durham looked to keep them out. The best of the early opportunities fell to Lauren James, who recently celebrated her 17th

birthday, as Lizzie Arnot latched onto Alex Greenwood's cross and pulled it back for the teenager, who couldn't keep her close range shot on target.

Jess Sigsworth returned to the United starting eleven and tested Durham goalkeeper Hannah Reid throughout the first half but was matched by some fantastic saves from the Scot, including a block after James had put the striker through on goal.

At the other end, Siobhan Chamberlain sprang into action to save from Abi Cottam as the visitors grew into the game.

After the break, James was involved once more as her shot from distance was expertly tipped over the bar by Reid. United went close again from the



resulting corner as Sigsworth's effort was somehow cleared off the line.

United continued to press through substitute Leah Galton but couldn't get past Reid, even when they were awarded a penalty with just under half an hour to go. Skipper Alex Greenwood was brought down in the box by Abby Holmes which gifted Katie Zelem the chance to score from the spot, as she had done in United's victories over Villa and Sheffield United. Unfortunately for Zelem, Reid was once again on top form and dived low to save the spot-kick and keep the game goalless.

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Sigsworth made way for Charlie Devlin as the hosts went in search of a winner, but shortly after Stoney was forced into her third change as Galton was stretchered off after a collision. Kirsty Smith came on as the final replacement as ten minutes of stoppage time were indicated by the referee.

United's bright spark James continued her contest with Durham's standout Reid but was thwarted yet again as another long-range shot was tipped against the woodwork.



Beth Hepple had a late chance for the Wildcats but was denied by Chamberlain as both teams claimed a point and kept their unbeaten league records intact.

Durham are the first side to take points off United and couldn't hide their delight at keeping a clean sheet after a tough defensive test. Player of the Match Reid said after the game: 'I'm buzzing, I'm delighted and I'm really happy. I think it's credit to all the girls really, not just myself, as it was a team effort and we are so happy our hard work paid off today'.

Both teams will look to return to winning ways in the next round of the FA Women's Championship fixtures, to be played on Sunday 14 October.

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West Ham and Brighton: How are the new teams adjusting to life in the Women's Super League?



Two new teams entered the top flight of Women's football this season. West Ham United Women successfully applied to join the Women's Super League while Brighton & Hove Albion Women secured their place through promotion. Here, we assess the matches both teams have played so far and what can be improved as the season continues.

West Ham (played three: won one, drawn one, lost one)

West Ham secured a point on their WSL debut with a hard-fought draw against Reading. Keeper Becky Spencer was fantastic to keep Reading at bay with numerous saves while Brooke Hendrix had West Ham's best chance of the game. For their first league game against WSL opposition,

West Ham held their own.

Next up was a trip to league leaders Arsenal. West Ham became the first team to score against Arsenal this season and they would have felt hard done by not to come away with a positive result. West Ham took a surprise lead through Katie Longhurst before Danielle van de Donk equalised. Longhurst restored West Ham's lead before van de Donk scored again. Arsenal then raced into a 4-2 lead as van de Donk completed her hat-trick and Kim Little's low shot found the back of the net. Claire Rafferty scored five minutes from time to give West Ham hope but it was not enough as Arsenal won 4-3. The Hammers gave Arsenal their toughest test of the season so far and showed that they can cause the big teams real problems,



which will have been a massive confidence boost.

It was third time lucky for West Ham as they recorded their first ever WSL win against Yeovil Town. Leanne Kiernan put the Hammers in front before Ellie Mason equalised for Yeovil. Substitute Rosie Kmita came off the bench and made an instant impact as she converted a volley from 20 yards to secure West Ham's first three points of the season.

West Ham have started their debut WSL campaign well and there is certainly even more to come. They have a blend of youth and WSL experience which will stand them in good stead in some of their most difficult matches. In the two games where they have taken the lead, they have been pegged back so they need to work on holding onto a lead to ensure they come away with all three points.

Brighton (played four: won none, drawn none, lost four)

Brighton began life in the WSL with a narrow defeat at the hands of Bristol City. Their best chance of the game came through Kayleigh Green whose close-range shot was saved by Bristol keeper Sophie Baggaley. Lucy Graham's second half strike gave Bristol the victory.

The Seagulls travelled to Birmingham City where they were again beaten 1-0. Defender Aoife Mannion scored from the spot in stoppage time during the first half and that was enough to settle the contest.

Liverpool became the third consecutive team to secure a 1-0 win over the league newcomers. Brighton



were most unlucky in this match. In an even contest where both teams seemed reluctant to attack, Hope Powell's side were five minutes away from their first clean sheet and point of the campaign. Unfortunately, Rinsola Babajide struck in the 85th minute to deny Brighton the point they deserved. Brighton travelled to Chelsea in their latest match where they were beaten 2-0.

The defending champions hadn't scored or won until they faced Brighton but goals from Fran Kirby and Erin Cuthbert ensured their first win of the season. Brighton had seven shots on target with Ini Umotong going closest on two occasions but Carly Telford denied her.

It has been a dismal start to life in the top flight for Brighton. They have lost all four matches so far and look to be struggling with the step up to the WSL. The obvious improvement is to start scoring some goals. Hope Powell's side have had 14 shots on target in their first four matches but are yet to find the back of the net. Brighton have not played badly but if they don't get their shooting boots on soon, the season will be a long hard slog.



Ammo's Antics

Hi everyone!

I've had really a busy football packed month this month, so lots to tell you about. First things first though. If this is your first time reading the Womens Football Mag.. I'm Ammo and I play for Birmingham City RTC U12's. I write a monthly blog about the highs and lows of a girl footballer in the RTC system.

We had our first league games this month. We play in the highly competitive and challenging Junior Premier League. Their motto is "to be the best you have to play with the best" Playing against such talented opposition each week is definitely helping us to become stronger and better footballers. In our first game of the season all of our hard work in training just clicked and we came away with a 3-2 away win against a good boys team. We went into our second game of the season with loads of confidence but came up against a very strong boys team from Stoke and we suffered a heavy defeat. Despite the score we didn't ever let our heads drop and we kept fighting right until the final whistle. We also had our first Futsal game of the season this month. It's a fast indoor version of the game. We gave an excellent performance against Aston Villa and I scored 6 goals. As well as my performances for Birmingham I this month I made my debut for my new secondary school team. I got 5 goals in a comfortable 7-0 win. I even played in goal for a portion of the game. Didn't use my hands once.

We do lots of varied training at Birmingham City and as part of our psychology work we were all asked to prepare a presentation on

ourselves. It gave me an opportunity to share my hobbies etc to all the coaches and players. I was able to talk about my dream of playing for England, winning the Ballon Dor and going on I'm a Celebrity Get Me Out Of Here. It also gave me a chance to give The Women's Football Mag a plug. (Brownie points from the editor for that) At the end of the month we played a mid-week game in front of some representatives from the F.A in the United States. They wanted to see a girls team play a boys team, something they don't do in the U.S. We won 6-1 so I think it gave them some encouragement that it works.

This month ended with a derby match against my old team Aston Villa.

To be honest, I was disappointed with my performance. Although we won the game by a large margin, Aston Villa gave us plenty of problems. They were physical and never gave up. I was hoping to get a goal or two but it wasn't my day. So, although I've had lots of highs this month and I've scored a load of goals it ends with me reflecting on my personal contribution against Villa. I could have done a lot better, I know that.

But no matter what the result, no matter how hard things get. I'll keep smiling and I'll keep training hard to get better every week.

I'll leave you with this thought. Don't be afraid of what could go wrong.. become excited by what could go right!

Don't forget to tell your friends about The Womens Football Mag!!

Ammo

**THE WOMEN'S
FOOTBALL
MAGAZINE**



Top tier teams dominate in September fixtures

By Jess Pratt

As the FA Continental Tyres League Cup continued with its round of September fixtures, WSL champions Chelsea and current league leaders Arsenal were among the tier one teams to secure victories.

Bethany England's brace gave the Blues a 4-0 win at Crystal Palace to take them top of the Group One South with three wins out of three. Elsewhere in the Group, Championship side Tottenham won by the same scoreline at struggling Yeovil thanks to midfielder Coral-Jade Haines' fine hat-trick and Sarah Wiltshire's close range opener against her former club.

In the Group's final matchday three fixture, Brighton staged a first half

comeback at the Broadfield Stadium to defeat London Bees after the visitors had took the lead against the run of play through former Seagull Paula Howells. Less than five minutes later the home side were back on level terms through Ini Umotong, before Ellie Brazil headed home to give Hope Powell's team the lead. Aileen Whelan wrapped up the points with a third goal late on as the Seagulls secured their first win of the season and kept themselves in contention for the knockout stages with two group matches remaining.

Arsenal put former table-toppers Lewes in their place with an emphatic 9-0 beating as Vivianne Miedema and Kim Little both hit hat-tricks at the



Dripping Pan. The Gunners now lead the way in Group Two South with maximum points so far after two games played. Over in East London, West Ham showed they mean business with a clinical 4-0 win over Championship side Millwall that puts them level on points with Arsenal having played a game more. Three goals inside the opening 15 minutes proved too much for the Lionesses, who remain bottom of the Group.

Up North, Manchester City remain top of Group One thanks to a comfortable 3-0 victory away to Bristol. After a goalless opening half, Claire Emslie's deflected cross opened the scoring, followed by a Nadia Nadim penalty and a stunning debut long-range strike from Caroline Weir at the Stoke Gifford Stadium.

Elsewhere in the Group, it continued out to be a successful matchday for the away teams as Birmingham's fantastic form continued with a 2-0 win at Sheffield United through second half

goals from substitutes Lucy Staniforth and Shania Hayles. Aston Villa also won on the road to claim their first points in the competition at the expense of Leicester, who were unlucky not to score after Villa's Canadian 'keeper Aja Aguirre made a string of fine saves either side of saving Freda Ayisi's penalty. However, Kerri Welsh's early goal was enough to lift the visitors to 4th in the Group.

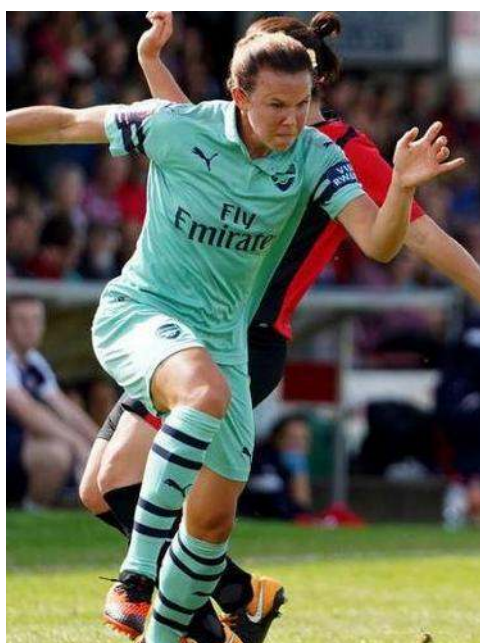
Last, but by no means least: the Group Two North did not disappoint this round - serving up two pulsating matches with plenty of goals. Everton began life at Southport's Merseyrail Community Stadium in fine fashion, putting past results behind them with a 3-2 win over Reading. A brace from Claudia Walker either side of an own goal by 'Toffees' defender Megan Finnigan, gave the hosts the lead at half time before Dutch midfielder Inessa Kaagman's audacious chip and first Everton goal secured the points. Former Everton midfielder Brooke Chaplen netted a consolation late on, but it was not enough for the Royals – who remain Group leaders, to stage a comeback.

Up in the North East, Liverpool showed fighting spirit to come from behind to draw 3-3 at Reading despite uncertainty off the pitch with the surprise departure of manager Neil Redfearn. The Reds, under caretaker Chris Kirkland, fought back from 3-1 down before winning on penalties to take an extra point back to Merseyside.

Two goals inside the opening three minutes got the game off to a quick start as Liverpool's Sophie Bradley-Auckland struck first, before Emily Roberts responded instantly for Durham.



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The Wildcats then scored two without reply either side of half time as Roberts got on the scoresheet again and Abi Cottam went from provider to finisher to head in Durham's third. Rinsola Babajide's super strike from the edge of the box twenty minutes from time launched the Liverpool fightback as Kirkland's substitutions turned the game on its head. Courtney Sweetman-Kirk got the crucial equaliser that sent the tie to penalties, which the Reds won 5-4 through Sophie Bradley-Auckland's deciding spot-kick after Anke Preuss had saved from the excellent Roberts.

The Conti Cup returns on 5th December.

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